REGIONAL APPROACH TO PEATLAND CONSERVATION IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

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INTRODUCTION:

Southeast Asia has more than 60% (approximately 25 million hectares) of the tropical peatlands of the world. Management of peatlands in the region are guided by the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy (APMS) 2006-2020.

To implement the APMS, the ASEAN Peatland Forests Project (APFP) and SEApeat projects were designed to work together in protecting peatlands in the region. From 2010 to 2015, these two projects played key roles in peatland conservation and rehabilitation through information and knowledge sharing, joint training, workshops and peer learning programmes. They engaged government institutions, private sector and local communities. Activities included joint peat surveys between local community and local authority, regional peer-to-peer learning programmes on good management practices on peatlands, training/capacity building to enhance knowledge on peatland management, policy development to minimise further peatland degradation, rehabilitation efforts with public-private partnership with multi stakeholder, and many others.

KEY ELEMENTS:

SHARE RESOURCES

through:

- information & knowledge sharing;
- joint training;
- workshops; and
- peer learning programmes.

COOPERATION

with stakeholders including:

- government institutions;
- private sector;
- line agencies;
- research institutions;
- NGOs; and
- local communities.

ACTIVITIES & OUTCOMES:

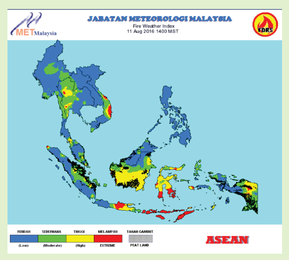
The projects enabled surveys and confirmation of previously unknown peatland areas, especially in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and the Philippines. Regional/International peatland experts led the peatland assessment in the countries as part of the capacity building programmes to the local government officials and community.

The projects enabled expeditions to update ground information based on the peatland assessments undertaken within the country to support development of the National Action Plan for Peatlands. The projects also provided technical input for the review of government policies and regulations such as the ASEAN Peatland Management Strategy 2006-2020, National Wetland Policy and National Policy for Biodiversity of Malaysia, National Wetland Policy of the Philippines, National Regulations on Protection and Management of Peatland Ecosystems for Indonesia.

Public-private Partnership or Smart Partnerships were developed with key stakeholders who were working on peatland management. This tripartite partnership is important to tackle the peat fire and smoke haze issues in the country as well as in the region.

Community engagement was very much part of the project, from local communities in Riau and Kalimantan of Indonesia; U Minh Thuong and U Minh Ha peatland regions of Viet Nam; Caimpugan and Visayas of the Philippines; as well as the North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest in Malaysia. Through the projects, they learnt to manage their lands more sustainably and explore new ways to protect the lands from fire. Awareness and capacity building were created through Technical Training courses, Peer Learning workshops that led to technology transfer among ASEAN Member States.

Fire and haze is one of the major issues, and to tackle this problem, the capabilities of the Fire Danger Rating System, hotspot monitoring and community firefighting were enhanced. A series of technical training workshops were organised to enhance capacity of the relevant agencies in the region as well as the utilisation of the hotspot information produced by the ASEAN Specialised Meteorological Centre and Fire Danger Rating System by the Malaysian Meteorological Department for prevention and preparedness measures in order to minimise the implications to be caused by peat fires.



Publications and awareness materials were developed and disseminated, also made available online at www.aseanpeat.net.

DISCUSSION:

Progress can be seen, especially in places where the presence of peatlands were not confirmed before. The regional approach is especially beneficial in terms of learning from each other and saving on consultancy costs.

The project utilised experts from different countries in the ASEAN region to guide activities in other countries. For example, Vietnamese experts assisted other countries with remote sensing and peat surveys in other Mekong sub-region countries. Stakeholders from the Philippines learnt from on the ground experiences in Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia. Malaysians learnt from the Philippines, Indonesia and Vietnam.

Compared to the single country approach, which often benefits only a few communities and issues at a time, the regional approach is able to magnify and combine efforts to achieve greater results. Countries learn from each other across borders and share project templates. It saves time and effort to organise and replicate activities across the region. Even research and publications can be combined and replicated. Some materials such as the Training Module on Peatland Assessment and Management were translated into several languages, saving time and effort in redeveloping the same material across borders.

When countries share their progress during meetings, other countries sometimes adopt and replicate efforts which are applicable. This creates a synergy between countries and information flows more freely as everyone is basically working on the same platform. It also eases the way for cross border information transfer and advisory.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS:

Much appreciation is recorded to the Environment Division of the ASEAN Secretariat for bringing everyone together for this project. Thank you to funders, Global Environment Facility (GEF), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) and the European Union for making this project possible. All work was done through our country governmental and NGO partners to benefit local communities.

ASEAN PEATLAND FORESTS PROJECT (APFP)

SUPPORTED BY: gef, IFAD Investing in rural people

EXECUTING AGENCY: ASEAN

NATIONAL EXECUTING AGENCIES:

REGIONAL PROJECT EXECUTING AGENCY: Global Environment Centre

SUSTAINABLE MANAGEMENT OF PEATLAND FORESTS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA (SEAPEAT PROJECT)

SUPPORTED BY: European Union

EXECUTING AGENCY: Global Environment Centre

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