

Developing Online Environmental Information Resources for International Waters Management in Southeast Asia

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This paper highlights the approach being taken by the Southeast Asia Regional Learning Centre (SEA-RLC) in developing online environmental information resources for supporting transboundary waters management in Southeast Asia. The SEA-RLC is part of the GEF-funded global IW:LEARN¹ project, and works to promote information exchange and networking through improved online access to environmental information and communication technologies for GEF projects and partners in the region.

SEA-RLC focuses on providing information and communication technology (ICT) support and project management services. Central to these efforts is the application of open source solutions through the development and application of Plone-based content management systems and web-based ICT tools including geographic information systems (webGIS). With rapid development and innovation of these technologies, SEA-RLC seeks to leverage such knowledge to improve access to environmental data and information for stakeholders and decision-makers.

In Southeast Asia, SEA-RLC has developed a regional online portal for sharing information and worked with partners in the region in developing online environmental databases. Collaboration with the UNEP/GEF South China Sea² project and Southeast Asia START Regional Centre³ of Chulalongkorn University, Bangkok, has seen the development of the South China Sea GIS Regional Database and South China Sea Meta-Database, which provide users with access to data and metadata for better managing coastal and fisheries resources in Southeast Asia. Another activity in cooperation with the IW:LEARN office Nairobi, involves developing a webGIS tool for the IW:LEARN Website Toolkit, an initiative to provide a more user-friendly alternative for delivering maps and geospatial content over the internet.

For project management services, SEA-RLC focuses on developing information resources for an online 'Library of Practical Experience' addressing diverse issues including: transboundary diagnostic analyses and strategic action programmes; stakeholder participation; public awareness; public-private partnerships; and sustainable financing. The first of these information resources, a report entitled 'Practitioner Guidelines for Formulation of Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Programme in East Asian Seas Region' can now be accessed online at http://www.iwsea.org/information/TDA_SAP; additional reports will be released online in the near future.

Seeking to provide better access to better information for stakeholders and decision-makers, SEA-RLC offers state of the art content management systems to share information and promote dialogue, and the creation of new information products that address issues of concern. It is through collaboration with GEF projects and their partners that SEA-RLC is able to support their environmental needs and efforts.

¹GEF IW:LEARN project: Global Environment Facility International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (<http://www.iwlearn.net>)

²UNEP/GEF South China Sea Project: <http://www.unepscs.org>

³Southeast Asia START Regional Centre: <http://www.start.or.th>