

Asian Wetland Inventory http://www.wetlands.org/awi/

A Tool for Socio-Economic Development and Poverty Reduction

Asian Wetland Inventory

The situation in Asia:

Over the past five decades, wetlands in Asia have come under intense pressure and it is estimated that over 60% have been degraded. Rapid population increase and dramatic changes in production and consumption patterns have transformed the way wetland resources are used.

Despite the impressive economic growth in Asia in the recent past, improvement in the quality of life has been uneven across and within the countries as Asia is still home to almost two thirds of the world's poor. The poor are often caught in a downward spiral, whereby they are forced to deplete or degrade resources to survive. This increasing degradation of the environment further impoverishes them.

Natural disasters like floods often result in great economic and human loss. Often these consequences can be reduced by better planning and management of ecosystems, including wetlands, and the services they provide.

People's health and well being have suffered, natural resource-based livelihoods have been compromised, and wetland ecosystem services and resources that underpin long-term economic development are at risk.

Limited access to, or more commonly, a lack of vital information on wetlands to assist in decision making and planning are often the cause of degradation of wetlands.



Major factors contributing to the deterioration of wetlands:

- Conversion to other land uses
- Altered water regimes
- Poor land use planning
- Poor governance
- Unsustainable harvesting of natural resources
- Pollution of water supplies
- Habitat modification
- Unregulated land and water use in the catchment
- Poor polic, framework and inappropriate management
- Invasion by non-indigenous plant and animal species

Wetland services:

Wetlands provide innumerable natural products for local communities and economically important produce for national economies. Uses of wetland resources amongst others include:

- harvesting of timber and fuelwood
- agricultural products in the form of rice and vegetables
- peat for fuel
- protein in the form of fish, shellfish, eggs, meat and birds
- construction materials reed, bamboo, rattan, palm fronds, wood and thatch
- resins

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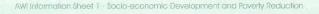
- medicinal products
- water for irrigation, home consumption, and industry

Important functions of wetlands for the well being of humankind:

- Regulation of hydrological cycles and flood peak reduction
- Water storage and streamflow regulation
- Water quality improvement
- Soil erosion reduction and sediment accretion









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How will the Asian Wetland Inventory help?

A broadly supported protocol for wetland inventory has been developed through the Asian Wetland Inventory (**AWI**) programme. This will serve as a platform for assessment and monitoring of wetland resources. The **AWI** is needed to provide information critical for addressing wetland issues that range from those operating on individual sites to those across river basins. These include, amongst others, the:

- identification of wetland resources and management issues
- identification of issues affecting water quality and information for formulation of remedial measures
- information gathering to enable the formulation of better water management practices
- gathering of information to explore possibilities of alternative income generation activities e.g. ecotourism
- gathering of information to improve catchment management



Wetlands services:

- Food
- Peat
- Local transport
- Water for irrigation
- Medicinal products
- People's homes



Local communities involvement in the wetland inventory

Overharvesting

Pollution Catchment management

issues

Lack of core data for effective management

Land conversion

Poor land use planning

Weak policy



The AWI encourages the participation of stakeholders at all levels in the implementation of the information gathering process. At the site level, the AWI encourages the involvement of community organizations to contribute to the inventory through community-based resource inventories of wetlands; resulting in a sense of stewardship over the resources that will lead to sustainable or even increased economic benefits from the resources.

"Healthy wetlands support healthy people"



- Floods people homeless
- No drinking water
- Transportation hampered
- No tourism and alternative income potential
- Reduced fisheries
- Reduced harvest of other natural resources

How to address the situation?



Using the AWI approach:

- Resources identified and mapped
- Water quality issues identified
- Information for better water management practices obtained
- Information for better catchment management
- Stakeholders involved at all levels
- Monitoring programme established
- Better planning
- Better catchment management

Sustainably managed wetlands with good economic potential