

Chairperson's Summary
Water Environment Partnership in Asia (WEPA)
Inception Workshop

Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia

9 - 10 March 2004

1. The Inception Workshop of the Water Environment Partnership in Asia (WEPA), hosted by the Ministry of the Environment of Japan (MOEJ), the Ministry of Environment of Republic of Indonesia, and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), was held in the Mandarin Oriental Hotel, Jakarta, Republic of Indonesia, on 9-10 March 2004. The workshop was attended by 43 persons, including representatives from ten governments, an international organization, and experts on the water environment in Asia.

2. WEPA is an initiative that was proposed by the MOEJ at the Third World Water Forum, held in Kyoto in March 2003. WEPA aims to develop an information platform to strengthen governance and capacity building in addressing water environmental problems, thereby promoting sustainable development in the region through partnership with relevant stakeholders. The inception workshop was intended primarily to give the opportunity for discussion on the grand design of future activities and partnership under WEPA, with particular focus on the contents of the databases to be developed. The workshop was co-chaired by Dr. R.T.M. Sutamihardja, Lecturer of Bogor University of Agriculture, Ir. Aboejoewono Aboeprajitono, Special Assistant for Local Government, and Dr. Mitsumasa Okada, Professor of Hiroshima University, the chairperson of the Japanese Steering Committee of WEPA.

3. Water quality has been degraded in many Asian countries, which has brought about various negative impacts, such as damage to human health, reduction of the amount of water available in good quality, and degradation of watershed ecosystems, all of which constrain sustainable development in the region. Making reference to key international documents on water issues, such as the Ministerial Declaration at the Third World Water Forum in Kyoto in March 2003 and the A G8 Action Plan on Water adopted at Evian in June 2003, the workshop participants reaffirmed the importance of effective governance and capacity building for pursuing a sound water environment, and thereby their importance for sustainable development in each country. The participants welcomed the WEPA project as a new regional collaborative action, aiming towards enhanced governance and capacity building for a better water environment.

The Co-chairs of the workshop summarized the discussion as follows.

Major Issues of Water Environment Management Policy

4. The degradation of water quality hinders the supply of safe drinking water and causes the deterioration of ecosystems. Taking this into consideration, water quality monitoring and water pollution control need to be further promoted and strengthened.
5. Raising the levels of both participation and awareness are essential in the promotion of water environment conservation.

Grand Design of the WEPA Project

6. With regards to water environment issues, WEPA will provide the “database on policy-related information”, “database on technologies for water environmental conservation”, “database on activities by NGOs and communities”, and the “database on information sources.”
7. The timely and effective provision of environmental information is key for the improvement of water governance. In addition, information exchange between the countries in the region is important in the promotion of regional efforts towards water environment conservation, which plays a vital role in the realization of sustainable development in the region. Databases developed under WEPA are expected to serve as a useful information platform of water environment in the region, in which all stakeholders can participate and share necessary information.
8. Partnership is vital to the success of the WEPA project. Collaborative efforts in developing the database contents and sharing the outcomes of the WEPA project will enhance mutual understanding between the relevant stakeholders, thereby strengthening the ties between them to conserve water environment.
9. The WEPA database should be structured in a user-friendly manner, enabling simple access to necessary information. English will be used as the common language. However, information in other local languages will also be provided where appropriate.
10. The contents of databases will be updated regularly. The maintenance of WEPA should be conducted through collaborative work between the participating countries.
11. To ensure the WEPA database is attractive to potential users, the information provided should be needs-oriented, practical and unique to WEPA. Proposed activities by WEPA, such as the analysis of current water environment management policy and the evaluation of the adaptability of promising technology, are expected to ensure that the WEPA database is unique from other existing databases.
12. WEPA will provide analysis of the current problems in water environment management policy and of

various policy practices in its policy-related databases. Such information will be utilized as good reference to encourage practical implementation.

13. It was pointed out that the factors and standards necessary to the applied areas and the objectives of the relevant technologies should be included in the databases on technology. In this regard, to promote the application of appropriate technologies to local conditions, the applicability of relevant technologies of water environmental conservation should be assessed, in consideration of local natural, climatic, and socio-economic conditions. For example, on-site treatment system of domestic wastewater (Johkasou system) was introduced as a technology highly applicable to various areas of the region.
14. The database on activities of citizens and NGOs should serve as an information platform of residents of the Asian region. It should be also utilized as a platform from which to promote mutual understanding among relevant stakeholders.
15. Technical and institutional aspects of water environment management must be considered simultaneously: this fact should be carefully considered in the development of WEPA databases.

Recommendations for Future Actions

16. To maintain the momentum of the inception workshop, the WEPA Secretariat should further elaborate the plan for WEPA activities, taking into full consideration the outcomes of the inception workshop, and should carry the plan into action promptly. For the WEPA project to be launched smoothly, the focal points for the respective countries should be identified in cooperation with the workshop participants.
17. The 12th Session of the Commission of Sustainable Development (CSD12), to be held in New York in April 2004 will be an excellent opportunity to publicize the WEPA project and to gain further inputs from various stakeholders, in order to improve the grand design of the WEPA project. The proposed grand design and outcomes of the inception workshop should be presented at CSD 12.
18. It is also recommended that the progress of the WEPA project should be reported to key international and regional dialogues, such as the Fourth World Water Forum to be held in Mexico in March 2006, as a good example of concrete action towards water environment conservation in Asian countries.
19. The next WEPA Workshop should be held within a year, to enable further discussion on the detailed implementation plan. Participants of the inception workshop should make all efforts to promote the WEPA project.