



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

# Asian Wetland Inventory

## A Tool for Socio-Economic Development and Poverty Reduction

### 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.



Wetlands provide major source of protein in the form of fish



Rivers provide an important means of transport for rural communities



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

Mangroves provide an important economic fuel source - wood and charcoal



### 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

### 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 policy framework and inappropriate management guidelines
- Invasion by non-indigenous plant and animal species

The seeds of Sacred Lotus *Nelumbo nucifera* are economically important



Conversion to other land uses



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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. eco-tourism
- gathering of information to improve catchment management



Local communities involvement in the wetland inventory

### Multi-stakeholder involvement:

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"*

Wetlands services:

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

Overharvesting  
Pollution  
Catchment management issues

Lack of core data for effective management

Land conversion  
Poor land use planning  
Weak policy

- 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**