

QUARTERLY UPDATE

Name of the Programme : Thematic Programme for Environment and Sustainable Management of Natural Resources, including Energy
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Contract reference no.: DCI-ENV/2010/221-659
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Project Title: Sustainable Management of Peatland Forests in South East Asia
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Name of Beneficiary: Global Environment Centre (GEC)
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Period covered by this Quarterly Update: 1 April 2012 – 30 June 2012
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Due date of this Quarterly Update: 31 July 2012

<i>Project Budget</i>	
<i>Funds Disbursed by Commission to date</i>	Euro 446,869.88
<i>Expenditure Incurred by Project to date</i>	Euro 382,728

I. Summary

Peatland assessments were carried out in Myanmar and Cambodia. Results of the peat assessments in both countries were encouraging and approximately 4,580 ha of peatlands were identified for the first time in Cambodia. TOT trainings were conducted in Myanmar and various awareness materials were developed to raise awareness of peatlands amongst the stakeholders in the region. The project also participated actively in the 14th International Peat Congress, and contributed to the peatland and climate change issues in the FAO Workshop and IPCC.

Various innovative mechanisms to promote best management practices in peatlands were initiated and carried out in Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines and received positive response from the local communities. The Community based rehabilitation programme through “Friends of Peatland Forests” in Malaysia; the Community radio and participatory mapping in Riau, Indonesia; the development of the Information, Education and Communication (IEC) and ecotourism plan in Philippines have all stimulated the interest of different stakeholders in peatland conservation.

Peat fire prediction and monitoring through the development of the Fire Danger Rating System (FDRS) has progressed significantly through the on-going efforts of the Malaysia Meteorological Department (MMD), relevant stakeholders and ASEAN Member States. The progress of the FDRS was endorsed in the Ministerial Steering Committee (MSC) for Transboundary Haze Pollution meeting for southern ASEAN on 8th May and will be discussed in the ASEAN summit in late 2012.

Carbon financing proposals for the North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest (NSPSF) was presented to the State Government of Selangor, Malaysia and a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Code REDD was discussed to support the development of funding proposals for identified peatlands in Agusan Marsh, Philippines.

GEC continues to provide its support to finalise the manuals on Best Management Practices for cultivation of oil palm on peatlands through RSPO-PLWG. A workshop on Enhancing Sustainability for Forestry Practices on Peatlands in June in Bogor, Indonesia, was well received by stakeholders who agreed to the development of guidelines for best management practices for existing forest plantations on peatlands.

Divergence:

The activity in Philippines was brought forward as the opportunity was available earlier than planned. This was made possible by the keen interest shown by the relevant institutions and corporate stakeholders on peatland conservation and their wanting to make a difference through public awareness. A Local Ordinance, called the Unified Ordinance on Peatlands for Municipalities in Agusan Marsh, was reviewed by the National Technical Working Group and was presented for second reading on June 29, 2012.

Difficulties encountered:

Due to the delay in submission of the audit report, the project funds for year 2 are yet to be received by GEC. Although planned activities in 2012 are ongoing through remaining funds from 2011 and co-funding, some activities may need to be rescheduled until sufficient funds are received.

The implementation of project activities in Thailand is still on hold as there is an outstanding issue on the fund transfer mechanism within the Department of National Parks, Wildlife & Plant Conservation, although the Department has identified the Focal Point/ Person and workplan of activities for the Project.

II. Implementation of Activities

Output 1.1

- a) **Peatland assessment** in Koh Kong Province, Cambodia on 9-12 May 2012 with 12 participants, including a soil scientist from the Institute for Environment and Natural Resources, Vietnam National University who provided technical support. Approximately 4580ha of peatlands were discovered (Annex 1) (Activity 1.1.2 and Activity 2.1.1).
- b) In Myanmar, a series of **training of trainers and rapid assessments** of potential peatland areas were conducted. Training sessions were conducted in: i) Nyaung Shwe, Southern Shan State from 14 to 18 May, 2012 with 24 participants, followed by peatland assessments in Nyaung Shwe, Heho, Kalaw and Taunggyi from 19 to 23 May, 2012; ii) Pyin-Oo Lwin (Mandalay Region) on 12 June with 22 participants, followed by field assessment; iii) Shwebo on 15 June with 22 participants; and iv) Sagaing on 16 June with 19 participants, followed by field assessment. A total of 28 soil samples were taken and sent for soil analysis from 3 locations in mangrove areas of the Ayeyarwady delta, 14 locations in Southern Shan State, 10 locations in Pyin Oo Lwin, Mandalay Region and 1 location in Sagaing, Sagaing Region (Activity 1.1.2). A Core Technical Working Group for the SEApeat Project was formed in April 2012 at the office of the Planning and Statistics Department (PSD), Ministry of Environmental Conservation and Forestry (MOECAAF) in Nay Pyi Taw (Activity 1.1.2 and Activity 2.1.1).
- c) Awareness materials such as a peat folder and a Southeast Asian peat poster were developed and distributed at meetings and workshops. The BMP poster was reprinted and distributed at the 14th International Peat Congress in Sweden, 3-8 June 2012 (Activity 1.1.3).

Output 1.2

- a. The **final draft report of Financing and Incentive Options** was pending and awaiting feedback from Malaysia. A stakeholder consultation meeting was scheduled to be held on 16 July 2012 in Putrajaya, Malaysia.

b. International and Regional Meetings/Conferences

An Oral presentation titled “Sustainable management of Peatlands in Southeast Asia – Issues and challenges” (Annex 2) and a poster presentation on “Integrated Management of Tropical Peatlands” in the 14th International Peat Congress, 3-8 June 2012 in Stockholm, Sweden. In the panel discussion of a Strategy for Responsible Peatland Management (SRPM), the sole panelist from Southeast Asia was Mr. Chee Tong Yiew, the GEC Project Manager, , who was invited to be on the panel (Activity 1.2.2).

One representative from the project team participated in the “Haze and Peatland Management” training course organised by the Regional Haze Training Network (RHTN) from 15-17 May 2012 at the Singapore Environment Institute (SEI) (Activity 1.2.2).

- c. Peer Learning Programme on Best Management Practices on Peatlands for Community Groups** to enhance the technical knowledge for sustainable peatland management among communities living on peatlands was held in Phru Kuan Kreng and Thale Noi Peat Swamp Areas in Thailand from 16-18 May 2012 with 50 participants from five countries (Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Viet Nam and Thailand) (Annex 3) (Activity 1.2.2).

d. Pilot demonstration activities in Selangor, Malaysia

- i) The Community-based Rehabilitation Programme activities are ongoing and are conducted regularly on a monthly basis. From April to June, approximately 5 hectares of the degraded peatland area in Raja Musa Forest Reserve (RMFR) was planted with a total of 1975 seedlings through the support of 470 volunteers and corporate employees. Four companies were involved through their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programme, namely Timberland Lifestyle Brand (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd., Denso (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd., MGPA (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd. & Sony EMCS (Malaysia) Sdn. Bhd. (Annex 4) (Activity 1.2.2 & Activity 1.2.3).
- ii) Friends of Peatland Forest (FPF) facilitated a field visit by the Canadian Forest Conservation Master’s Program on 18 April 2012 to RMFR and Homestay Sungai Sireh. They also participated in two road shows organised by the Selangor Water Management Authority (SWMA) and Klang Municipal Council in conjunction with the Selangor State World Water Day 2012 Celebration on 28 April 2012 and the Environmental Green Carnival in conjunction with the World Environment Day 2012 Celebration on 17 June 2012 to promote the community efforts in managing peatlands (Activity 1.2.2).
- iii) “Friends of Peatland Forest” is currently undergoing the registration process with the Registrar of Societies of Malaysia (Activity 1.2.3).
- iv) Three community nurseries were established at RMFR, namely at Kg. Sungai Buluh, Kampung Bestari Jaya and Kampung Jaya Setia, under the livelihood activities identified and implemented in connection with the forest rehabilitation programme at RMFR. The programme facilitates the annual public tree planting events and introduces an innovative seedling procurement plan from community groups through a buy-back system (Annex 5) (Activity 1.2.3).
- v) A discussion was initiated on possible collaboration with the Sime Darby Plantation Division to protect and sustainably manage the NSPSF and the adjacent lands, including the oil palm plantations and other developments on peat.. A proposal was developed with special focus on fire prevention and rehabilitation of degraded forest areas, and promoting best management practices on peatland in Sime Darby plantation areas as well as on adjacent community land (Activity 1.2.1, 1.2.3, 2.1.2 and 2.3.2).

e. Pilot demonstration activities in Riau, Indonesia

- i) A comprehensive Participatory Mapping of 4,000 ha was prepared in Harapan Jaya Village from 15-30 April 2012 with the involvement of 15 communities from each Sub Village. The mapping includes locations of canals, total area of the village, the village boundaries, etc. and the data needs to be verified by the local government (Activity 1.2.2).
- ii) As a result of a series of social preparations (village meetings, surveys and trainings), a local social media (community radio) for Harapan Jaya Village has been set up to disseminate local information to the villages and a few villages in the surrounding areas. The community radio started operating since 21 June 2012 from 18.00 hrs until 23.00 hrs every day on the 107.7 fm waveband. A number of communities, especially women, have become volunteer broadcasters on this radio station. Programs to broadcast information about the best management practices of peatland is to be developed (Activity 1.2.2, 1.2.3 and 2.1.3).
- iii) Socialisation and consultation sessions are being conducted in Teluk Binjai Village, Pelalawan District on the implementation of demonstration plots of paddy fields without burning (Activity 1.2.3 and 2.1.3).

f. Pilot demonstration activities in Philippines

- i) A series of Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials have been initiated in collaboration with the academe researchers, artist group of Caraga and Protected Areas and Wildlife Bureau, to showcase the beauty and importance of the Caimpugan Peat Swamp Forest in Agusan del Sur. The IEC project has three main components, namely : (1) Nature Appreciation Walk, (2) Art Exhibit For a Cause and (3) Juan Meets the Least Famous Forest: The Comics Launching. The synergy of these events is aimed to stimulate the audience to take part in current peatland conservation efforts (Activity 1.2.3).
- ii) An Ecotourism plan for peatlands was completed and proposed tourism loops were identified through co-funding from the ASEAN Peatland Forests project Development of the business plan for the Peatland Ecosystem Awareness Tour (PEAT) has been identified as a priority activity (Activity 1.2.3).

Output 2.1

- a. The Department of Wetlands and Coastal Zones, Ministry of Environment of Cambodia has communicated with the Malaysian Meteorological Department (MMD) to prepare an intervention letter to the meteorological office in Cambodia (Activity 2.1.2).
- b. MMD and relevant government authorities have conducted a series of internal meetings to improve the integrated system of the Fire Danger Rating System (FDRS). An Automated Weather Station (AWS) was supported by the Department of Environment and installed by MMD at Ladang Tennamaram, Sime Darby Plantations in May 2012 (Activity 2.1.2).
- c. A prototype of a Water Table Monitoring System was developed through student projects from the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM). The Prototype was installed at Raja Musa Forest Reserve on 25 May 2012 with three built-in sensors (33cm, 51cm and 67cm below the ground surface) for initial testing and improvement. The system will send alert messages if any of the sensors are triggered due to low water table (Activity 2.1.2. and 2.1.3).
- d. Progress of the development of FDRS and SEApeat project was reported to the 8th Meeting of the Technical Working group (TWG) on Transboundary Haze Pollution and the Ministerial Steering Committee Meeting (MSC) for the Mekong Sub-region in Hanoi on 28th Feb 2012 and the 13th TWG on Transboundary Haze Pollution and MSC for Southern ASEAN region in Brunei Darussalam on 7-8 May 2012 (Activity 2.1.4). The MSC meeting on 8th May agreed to elevate the discussions on the FDRS to the level of the Heads of Government of the ASEAN region through discussion at the ASEAN Summit (Annex 6).

Output 2.2

- a. In early April 2012, the project was invited to the FAO in Rome to present a paper on “Regional collaboration in Southeast Asia to promote sustainable peatland management in relation to climate change”. The project actively contributed to the Expert workshop which agreed to establish a programme in the FAO related to enhancing the sustainability of agriculture in peatland areas at a global level. The project was invited by IPCC to assist with the development of Supplementary Guidelines for assessment of greenhouse gas emissions from peatlands. The Project team continues to follow-up with countries and potential partners on development of possible carbon projects (Activity 2.2.1).
- b. Concerned stakeholders from Agusan Marsh pilot sites participated in the Philippine Road-show on REDD-PLUS and the Philippine National REDD-PLUS Strategy “PANGANGALAGA NG KAGUBATAN NANG MAY PANANAGUTAN” in Butuan City on 13-14 April 2012. The Philippine Component has forged a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) with Code REDD, the organizer of the road show, for the development of a proposal for funding for identified peatlands in Agusan Marsh (Activity 2.2.1).
- c. The project presented a proposal related to a carbon financing project for the North Selangor Peat Swamp Forest to Y.B Elizabeth Wong (EXCO of Tourism, Consumer Affairs and Environment, Selangor State Government) on 12 April 2012. The proposal was drafted in collaboration with Permian Global who will be the carbon financier of the project (Annex 7) (Activity 2.2.1).

Output 2.3

- a. GEC continues to provide support to RSPO-PLWG deliberations and meetings planned for this year (Activity 2.3.2). Four technical documents focusing on oil palm plantations on peat have been finalised by the RSPO-PLWG. Two of these are currently being finalised and are expected to be published soon.
- b. **Workshop on Enhancing Sustainability for Forestry Practices on Peatlands** in Bogor, Indonesia, from 27-28 June 2012, with about 100 participants. The workshop was very successful with active participation from the private sector and agreed to the development of guidelines for existing forest plantations on peatlands (Annex 8) (Activity 2.3.2).
- *Explain any divergences between planned and actual activities.*

Although the Department of National Parks, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, Thailand has agreed to collaborate in the project, the activities in Thailand are still pending due to the lengthy process at the Legal Authority of Government of Thailand.

The activity in Philippines was brought forward as the opportunity was available earlier than planned. This was made possible by the keen interest shown by the relevant institutions and corporate stakeholders on peatland conservation and their wanting to make a difference through public awareness.

Describe the actual resources used compared to planned.

Due to the delay in the submission of the audit report, the project fund for year 2 is yet to be received by GEC. To date, most of the regional activities under this project is restricted to expended expenses and were mainly co-funded by the ASEAN Peatland Forest Project (APFP) to avoid interruption of regional activities. At the same time, the site level activities, such as rehabilitation of the RMFR, are co-funded by corporate bodies through the CSR programme. Hence, total expenditure of the project from January to June 2012 is about Euro 130,000 out of the total expenditure of Euro 289,630 (with co-funding).

III. Partnership

Project associates and local activity partners continue their support to the implementation of the project. Cooperation with associated partners have enabled the establishment of a formal platform to engage stakeholders in peatland management and promote BMP principles on peatland.

Strength: Strong support from government agencies and ASEAN continues through strong linkage with the ASEAN secretariat and the ASEAN Peatland Forest Project (APFP), as well as support from corporate partners in organising awareness activities among local communities.

Weaknesses: Although some of the associates are the main focal points for international collaboration and wetland management in their respective countries, cross sectoral collaboration and integration remains a challenge due to differing priorities under separate ministries in each respective country.

IV Methodology

No major changes to current management approach and methodology.

V Other Issues

Project associates consist of the government agencies in the ASEAN countries, thus the implementation of the SEApeat activities in each respective country have to follow the governmental procedures, which are usually time consuming. In addition, project associates are usually under staffed and lack the capacity, which further hinders the implementation of the project activities. Efforts to work according to governmental procedures are continuing.

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