



IMPROVING THE MANAGEMENT OF WATER SCARCITY IN THE ASIA–PACIFIC REGION

The Asia–Pacific region faces growing water scarcity due to population growth, industrialization, urbanization, and climate change. This scarcity affects agriculture, economic development, and water security, with challenges varying from absolute shortages in arid zones to seasonal scarcity in monsoonal areas.

In Indonesia, water scarcity is driven by uneven resource distribution, groundwater overextraction, pollution, and deforestation, with severe impacts on agriculture and urban areas. In Thailand, droughts, climate change, and competing demands intensify water scarcity, affecting agriculture, livelihoods, and the economy. In Viet Nam, overexploitation, pollution, and climate change threaten agriculture and the environment, hindered by fragmented policies. Cambodia faces water scarcity due to seasonal variability, inadequate infrastructure, and poor water quality, despite relatively abundant resources.

The Asia–Pacific Water Scarcity Programme (WSP) aims to address these challenges by engaging stakeholders, especially governments, to improve water management. The programme focuses on overcoming policy conflicts, regulatory inefficiencies, and underdeveloped management tools, using a four-pillar approach that integrates technical, policy and governance solutions.

FAO launched the Asia–Pacific WSP in 2019. This initiative, developed with support from the Australian Water Partnership (AWP), aimed to enhance resilience and improved water resource management through technical, managerial, and policy interventions designed around four key pillars: (i) understanding water use and demand by developing practical capacities in water accounting; (ii) developing water allocation frameworks and processes based on the best available data; (iii) working at the farm and scheme level to optimize productivity with the amount of water sustainably available; and (iv) establishing a regional cooperative platform (RCP) to allow countries to learn from each other. Key activities included in-depth policy analyses, water scarcity mapping, stakeholder consultations, and capacity-building exercises, to assist countries in implementing fair, equitable, and transparent water accounting and allocation frameworks at the national level.



WHAT DID THE PROJECT DO?

The WSP engaged over 200 stakeholders from various sectors in Cambodia, Indonesia, Thailand and Viet Nam to address regional water scarcity. The project involved consultations, water tenure assessments, capacity building, and the creation of water accounting roadmaps (WARM) with national teams.

In Cambodia, the project initially focused on water tenure assessment and the water scarcity action plan (WSAP) but pivoted in response to feedback from the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MOWRAM). While still including the water tenure assessment, a tailored WSP approach was designed for the country, involving in-depth research on water scarcity and alignment with the World Bank's Water Security Improvement Project (WSIP).

In Indonesia, the focus was on improving water accounting practices in collaboration with the Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS).

In Thailand, the project conducted a national water tenure assessment and worked with the Office of National Water Resources (ONWR) to improve water accounting.

In Viet Nam, the main goal was to improve water accounting practices specific to the economic valuation of water resources in collaboration with the Department of Water Resources Management (DWRM) within the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE).

At the regional level the project established a Regional Cooperative Platform (RCP) for cooperation on water accounting practice and water scarcity management, holding the inaugural event at the conclusion of the project in March 2024.

KEY FACTS

Latest Approved Budget
USD 285 844

Duration
July 2023-March 2024

Resource Partners
Government of Australia, represented by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and eWater Limited (EWL)

Beneficiaries
Members of academia, non-governmental organizations, policymakers, high-level government officials, national governments, technical experts, and civil society in water-using sectors

IMPACT

The programme enhanced cooperation between the target countries, FAO, the AWP and other key stakeholders, ultimately contributing to improved and more sustainable water scarcity management in participating countries.



ACTIVITIES

- Water tenure assessments were developed in Cambodia and Thailand to inform policy decisions and help promote equitable and sustainable water management practices by providing a clear picture of water rights and governance.
- A water scarcity scoping study was carried out in Cambodia to identify key areas for intervention to support water management.
- WARMs were developed through learning-by-doing workshops in Indonesia, Thailand, and Viet Nam, producing pilot water accounts and draft roadmaps to support best practice water management.
- The inaugural event of the RCP was held in Bangkok in March 2024, bringing together over 60 participants from across Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Thailand, and Viet Nam.



Partners

Cambodia: Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MOWRAM).

Indonesia: Ministry of National Development Planning (BAPPENAS).

Thailand: Office of the National Water Resources (ONWR).

Viet Nam: Department of Water Resource Management (DWRM) and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE).

Project Title

Technical Support to the Asia Pacific Water Scarcity Program

Project Code

FAO: MTF/RAS/400/EWL

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Australian Government

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