

# IRBM

## PROJECT NEWSLETTER

EDITION 3 | APR-JUN 2024



GEF/UNDP/ASEAN Project on Reducing Pollution and Preserving Environmental Flows in the East Asian Seas through the Implementation of Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) in ASEAN Countries

# Collaboration Beyond Boundaries





## State of River Basin Reporting to start in seven priority rivers in Southeast Asia

Quezon City, Philippines– As part of an evidence-based approach to improve water quality, protect and conserve water resources, and adapt to climate change vulnerabilities, a reporting mechanism is being established in the identified priority river basins in the six ASEAN Member States (AMS) including Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao People’s Democratic Republic (PDR), Malaysia, Philippines, and Vietnam starting in 2024.

The State of River Basin (SORB) Reporting is a key monitoring, evaluation, and reporting mechanism being established to support the implementation of Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) and Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) programs. The SORB summarizes the health (status and trends) of the river basin that affect human well-

*“The ASEAN region hosts some of the major transboundary river systems. Consolidating and analyzing available social, economic, and environmental data will guide us in improving our existing management programs or putting in place new management interventions to protect and sustain our water resources.”*

**Dr. Inthavy Akkharath**

Director-General,  
Department of Water Resources  
Lao People’s Democratic Republic  
Chair, ASEAN Working Group on  
Water Resources Management



being, the economy, and the environment. Its primary objective is to establish a baseline condition in a river basin prior to the IRBM/IWRM program start-up. This mechanism will help assess the progress, achievements, and challenges of ongoing efforts by determining changing conditions and the driving forces of change. The recommendations from the SORB will be used to continuously improve interventions and ensure more gender-inclusive participation and results.

During a two-day workshop held in Quezon City Philippines, the SORB framework, indicators, means of verification, and steps in developing the report were discussed. The workshop was attended by national and local government officials, university partners, and specialists from the six participating AMS. The regional workshop took place on 29-30 April 2024.

*“It is crucial to measure what we manage, especially in contiguous water bodies, where we cannot see what is happening below the surface. It is also important to determine whether our actions are making a difference in people’s lives and the coastal and marine habitats and ecosystems.”*

**Ms. Aimee Gonzales**  
Executive Director  
PEMSEA Resource Facility



The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), represented by Deputy Resident Representative to the Philippines Mr. Edwin Carrie, recognized the interconnectedness of major and smaller river systems, and their role in transporting pollutants to the open seas. He stressed the need for prompt and collective action to address the significant risks they pose to both freshwater and marine ecosystems.



Edwin Carrie, UNDP Deputy Resident Representative to the Philippines, delivering his opening remarks.



IRBM Regional Project Manager Ms. Nancy Bermas during the discussion on the core indicators for the SORB Reporting.



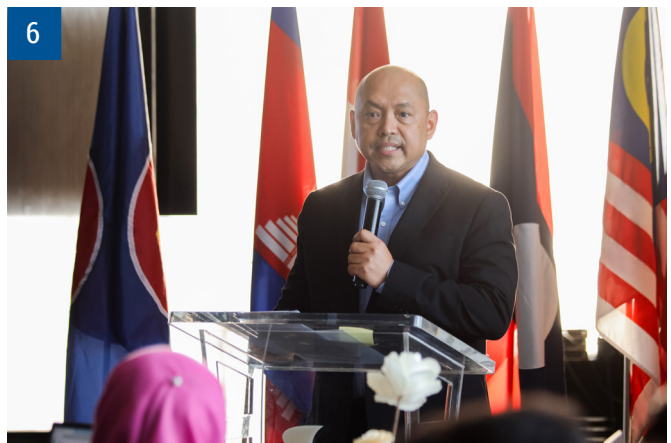
Dr. Pham Ngoc Bao of IGES facilitated the discussions on the SORB Reporting system and its indicators.



IRBM Project National Coordinator for the Philippines Mr. Ben Patrick Soliguin, provided inputs on the available data and information from Cavite and Pampanga for the SORB reporting.

The Regional Project Management Unit (RPMU) of PEMSEA Resource Facility will support the seven river basins in developing their respective SORB Reports

based on the SORB Guidebook. The Guidebook and the SORB reports will be launched during the IRBM Forum at the 2024 East Asian Seas Congress.



From left to right, top to bottom: 1-5: Participants from the six AMS discussed the SORB indicators and reporting process with IGES and RPMU facilitating the discussions. 6: Dr. Al Orolfo, Director, Foreign Assisted and Special Projects Service, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Philippines, delivering his closing remarks.



Participants of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Regional Steering Committee Meeting and 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM) that were held in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

## ASEAN member states, partners convene to discuss efforts on integrated river basin management in the region

Representatives from nine ASEAN Member States (AMS), UNDP, and the ASEAN Secretariat convened for the 2nd Regional Steering Committee (RSC) Meeting of the Integrated River Basin Management Project, held on 2 July 2024 in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

The meeting discussed the progress made at the regional level and at the national and river basin levels in the six participating AMS, namely Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, Philippines, and Vietnam, the challenges encountered and proposed measures to address the challenges.

The RSC approved the 2024 reprofiled budget and the proposed 2025 workplan and budget. The meeting also revisited the project risks and measures to mitigate them, as well as the process in preparing the 2024 Project Implementation Report as part of the monitoring and reporting requirements of the Global Environment Facility.

*“We will listen to the six participating ASEAN Member States present the progress made in project implementation, including the challenges encountered and strategies to address them. I would like to sincerely thank the GEF, UNDP, ASEAN, and PEMSEA for their continuing support to the countries in the implementation of IRBM and integrated water resources management (projects) in the ASEAN region.”*

**Mr. Oudomsack Philavong**  
 Director General  
 Department of Water Resources,  
 Lao PDR; Chair ASEAN Working  
 Group on Water Resources  
 Management



The meeting was held back-to-back with the 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM) on 2-3 July 2024, where Ms. Nancy Bermas, IRBM Regional Project Manager, presented the progress of the Project. Currently chaired by Lao PDR, the AWGWRM is considered as the knowledge sharing platform for IRBM Project to share good practices and key findings among ASEAN member states.

Read the full articles on the RSC meeting here: <https://bit.ly/4f2weWi>



Representatives from RPMU [1]; Lao PDR and Malaysia [2]; Thailand and Vietnam [3] during the 2<sup>nd</sup> RSC meeting session.



A courtesy meeting with Kampot's provincial and district authorities led by H.E. Mr. Ney Kong and H.E. Mr. Gna Tharith, Deputy Governors of Kampot Province was held during the learning visit in Kampong Bay River Basin.

## UNDP, RPMU, and MOE held a learning visit in Kampong Bay River Basin

Representatives from UNDP, Ministry of Environment (MOE), Cambodia, and the RPMU organized a field and learning visit in Kampong Bay River Basin on 5 July 2024, in coordination with the Provincial Government of Kampot Province.

A courtesy meeting was held with Kampot's provincial and district authorities led by H.E. Mr. Ney Kong and H.E. Mr. Gna Tharith, Deputy Governors of Kampot Province, and was joined by relevant provincial departments and district officials. The meeting discussed the priorities and ongoing programs of the province and districts in environmental and river basin management and how the IRBM project can complement and contribute to the ongoing initiatives of the local government that are in line with the objectives of the project.

The team visited a facility under the Asian Development Bank Livable Cities Investment Project (LCIP) where Kampot City is one of the priority sites of the LCIP project in Cambodia.

They also held discussions with officers of the Kampong Samaki Fishery Community along Kampong Bay on the livelihood programs (e.g., salt farming, homestay and other ecotourism activities), issues and concerns related to the environment (e.g., solid and wastewater management) and how the project can build on the existing programs and partnerships established, particularly with the Children and Women Development Center in Cambodia, which provided significant support to the community.

In Phnom Penh, UNDP, RPMU, and MOE also met with Dr. Hin Lyhour of Royal University of Agriculture to discuss the progress made in the preparation of the State of River Basin Report for Kampong Bay River Basin.



Representatives from UNDP, RPMU, MOE, and Kampot Province visited and interacted with officers of Kampong Samaki Fishery Community [1]; Meeting with Dr. Hin Lyhour in Phnom Penh to discuss the preparation of SORB Basin Report for Kampong Bay River Basin [2].

*“The strong collaboration of the Ministry of Environment with Kampot Province and academia in the preparation of the SORB report for the Kampong Bay river basin in Cambodia is commendable. The project activity implemented by the PEMSEA Resource Facility is on track to produce a draft by the end of the year. The insights gained from developing the SORB in Cambodia can be valuable for implementation in the other five countries of the IRBM project.”*

**Mr. Ugyen Dorji**  
Programme Management and Oversight Specialist  
UNDP Asia and Pacific





Participants of the 1<sup>st</sup> Semester 2024 Meeting of the Subcommittee on Environment under the Sectoral Committee on Economic Development, Regional Development Council III in the Philippines.

## Delineation of the Pasac Watershed discussed at the meeting of the Subcommittee on Environment of the Regional Development Council III in the Philippines

The RPMU participated in the 1st Semester 2024 Meeting of the Subcommittee on Environment under the Sectoral Committee on Economic Development of Regional Development Council Region 3 in the Philippines on June 21, 2024.

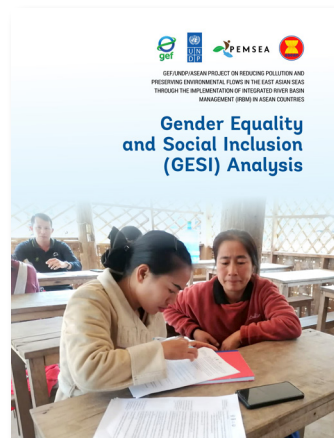
IRBM Regional Project Manager Ms. Nancy Bermas presented the recommendations from the consultation meeting held between the RPMU, DENR Region 3 and the Provincial Government of Pampanga in determining the geographic boundaries of the Pasac-Guagua River Basin. The boundary delineation is necessary to determine the scope and coverage of the project activities in the river basin. It was agreed that the IRBM Project will adopt the Pasac Watershed boundaries comprising eight municipalities based on the Area-based Management Plan of Pasac Watershed. Further, Ms. Bermas confirmed the project’s support in the formulation of a feasibility

study for the establishment of an Integrated Waste Management Facility for Central Luzon, a priority project of the Regional Development Council Region III.

The meeting was co-chaired by Hon. Daniel Fernando, Governor of the Province of Bulacan and Engr. Ralph Pablo, *CESO III*, Regional Executive Director of Department of Environment and Natural Resources Region 3.

## NEW PUBLICATION: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion Analysis Report in Selected Priority River Basins in Southeast Asia

The RPMU published the Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Analysis Report on selected river basins in the ASEAN Region. The report will guide the IRBM Project Teams in mainstreaming GESI into project activities and in the development of river-basin level Gender Action Plans. The analysis also provides information and perspectives on the GESI context in the participating river basins, including the gendered impact of development challenges such as water scarcity and pollution, waste management, disasters, climate change, etc. as experienced by women, men and vulnerable populations living in and around the project sites.



**DOWNLOAD**



## IRBM Project is one with the ASEAN community in celebrating World Ocean Day

During the 2024 World Ocean Day, we celebrated the interconnectedness of our river systems to our seas and ocean.

The Sasmuan Bangkung Malapad Critical Habitat and Ecotourism Area is found downstream of Pasac-Guagua River Basin, which drains into Manila Bay. Recognized as a Ramsar site, the critical habitat hosts zones of mangrove species and serves as breeding and nursery ground for migratory waterbirds and

other marine and estuarine species, and supports coastal communities by providing food, livelihood, and protection during storm surge.

Guided by the principle of source-to-sea system, the IRBM Project aims to establish functional IRBM mechanisms in priority river basins in six Southeast Asian countries including the Pasac-Guagua River, to reduce pollution, sustain freshwater environmental flows, and adapt to climate change vulnerabilities.



## 2024 KEY EVENTS



### Regional Workshop on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion and Stakeholder Engagement

6-7 August 2024 | Bogor, Indonesia

By invitation only



### East Asian Seas Congress 2024

6-8 November 2024 | Xiamen, China

Connect with thought leaders and networks on sustainable marine and coastal management and learn about the latest on ocean science conservation, policy, practice, and financing. Register [here](#).



### About the Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) Project

Supported by the [Global Environment Facility](#), the IRBM Project aims to set-up a functional management mechanisms in priority riverbasins of six ASEAN countries to reduce pollution and sustain freshwater environmental flows as well as adapt to climate change vulnerabilities. The Project is being implemented by [UNDP](#) and executed by [PEMSEA](#) in collaboration with [ASEAN](#).

[www.pemsea.org](http://www.pemsea.org)

Follow us

