



GREATER MEKONG
SUBREGION
CORE ENVIRONMENT
PROGRAM

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THE ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY CHALLENGE

The pattern of economic growth that has enabled the countries of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) to grow rapidly over the past 2 decades is no longer sustainable. That growth brought prosperity to many of the subregion's 340 million people, and lifted millions out of poverty. Yet, it was fueled by the unsustainable use of natural resources, creating widespread environmental degradation.

The GMS governments recognize that natural resources and ecosystem services are underpinning the subregion's economic development, and that the rate of depletion is unsustainable. All six countries have made a considerable effort to improve environmental governance and management—but much more needs to be done.

The Greater Mekong Subregion

-  Cambodia
-  People's Republic of China
 - Guangxi Zhuang Autonomous Region
 - Yunnan Province
-  Lao People's Democratic Republic
-  Myanmar
-  Thailand
-  Viet Nam



THE CORE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM: THE STORY SO FAR

The Core Environment Program (CEP) was launched in 2006 as an initiative of the GMS Economic Cooperation Program. The CEP's mandate is to support environmental cooperation within the subregion to contribute to a vision of an ecologically rich GMS that is free of poverty.

A main aim of the CEP's first phase, from 2006 to 2011, was to identify and protect biodiversity areas under threat from economic development. The flagship project for that effort was the Biodiversity Conservation Corridors Initiative. The CEP also worked on environmental governance, helping GMS governments to improve their environmental planning capacity. In its first phase, the CEP played a leading role in promoting the use of strategic environmental assessments and environmental monitoring by GMS countries.

In the second phase, from 2012 to 2017, the CEP expanded its operations and moved from pilot on-the-ground interventions in core biodiversity areas to broader

landscape and planning support, including for economic corridors. With climate change rising on the international agenda, the CEP became a leader in the subregion's efforts to reduce carbon dioxide emissions from transport through its Green Freight Initiative. In the second phase, the CEP explored solutions to help communities build resilience to climate change.

As well continuing to promote strategic environmental assessments and environmental monitoring, the CEP increased its portfolio with environmental impact assessments, land-use change modeling, and other tools.

A notable contributor to the CEP's effectiveness is its ability to quickly respond to emerging priorities and opportunities in the GMS Economic Cooperation Program and at the national level. As a nexus between the six governments, the Asian Development Bank, and other development partners, the CEP can leverage large environment investments, coordinate



collaborative work programs, and facilitate regional knowledge exchange and learning. The program has established itself as a leading knowledge hub on environmental management in the subregion.

The CEP's role in forging partnerships among different stakeholders is a major factor behind the program's success. The CEP works with rural communities, the private sector, nongovernment organizations, United Nations agencies, and universities and research institutes. Although the CEP's main partners are the environment agencies in the GMS countries, the program regularly collaborates with other ministries, and it has conducted large projects with transport, agriculture, and energy agencies. The CEP also works closely with ADB sector and country operational teams.

Over the 10 years covered by both phases, the CEP has strengthened its position as the GMS's leading environment cooperation initiative. The third phase

of the program, from 2018 to 2022, will play an important role in helping GMS countries to achieve many of their Sustainable Development Goals.

The Basics

Administered by the Asian Development Bank

Overseen by the GMS Working Group on Environment

Secretariat and technical services provided by the GMS Environment Operations Center

\$50 million in cofinancing since 2006 from:

- Asian Development Bank
- Government of the Netherlands
- Government of Finland
- Government of Sweden
- Global Environment Facility
- Nordic Development Fund

BY THE NUMBERS


\$540 million
of environment
investments being
prepared.

Poverty reduced for
30,000+
rural people.

1
national
environmental
safeguards
system built.


\$101 million
in additional funding raised,
including \$98 million on
biodiversity conservation.

3
regional learning and
exchange networks
established.



2.6 million
hectares of biodiversity corridors
created in 7 transboundary
landscapes.



12 laws, policies,
and plans
influenced in **6** countries




82
publications and
films produced.

10
strategic environmental
assessments conducted for
5 sectors



19,000+
stakeholders
involved in **500+** training and
knowledge events.

2 online
knowledge
portals
created.



THE CORE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND ACTION PLAN, 2018–2022

The CEP aims to plug a shortfall in environment sector investments in the GMS over the 2018–2022 term of its Strategic Framework and Action Plan. To do this, a new project preparation facility will become an integral part of the Environment Operations Center. So far, \$540 million of projects have been identified, some of which will scale up the CEP’s pilot work on green freight, climate risk financing, and land use planning.

To ensure a strong enabling environment for these

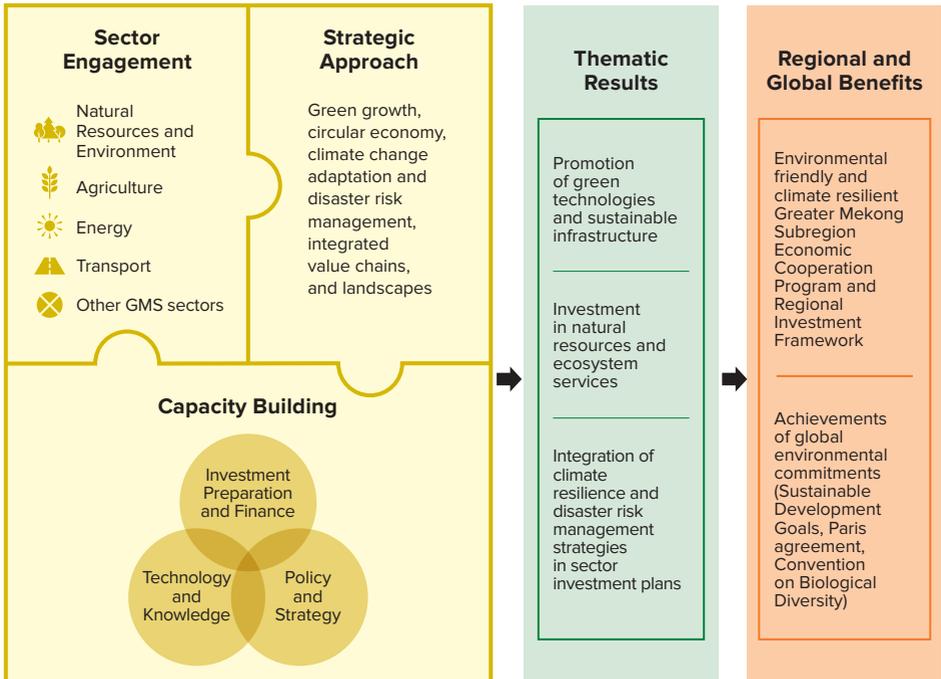
investments, the CEP will continue to provide GMS countries and the GMS Economic Cooperation Program with policy and planning support. This will build on the CEP’s competencies in environmental assessments, spatial planning, and modelling, and will be provided by a policy ‘help desk’.

To support environmentally sustainable economic investment projects, the Environment Operation’s Center role as a knowledge hub will be further enhanced.

Its information, data, and tools services will be expanded and new knowledge platforms are planned, including one to promote the uptake of green technologies.



CORE ENVIRONMENT PROGRAM STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK ARCHITECTURE





The following are the key elements of the Strategic Framework and Action Plan, 2018–2022:



IMPACT

Improved environmental quality and climate resilience across the GMS.



OUTCOME

An environmentally friendly and climate resilient GMS Economic Cooperation Program.



AREAS OF SUPPORT

- Policy and strategic planning
- Investment preparation and financing
- Knowledge management and technology uptake



THEMES AND OUTPUTS

- Wider adoption of green technologies and sustainable infrastructure
- Increased investment in the conservation of natural resources and maintenance of ecosystem services
- Climate resilience and disaster risk management incorporated into investment plans



GEOGRAPHIC FOCUS

- Transboundary landscapes with high ecosystem service values
- GMS economic corridors



SECTOR LINKAGES

- Agriculture
- Energy
- Transport



INVESTMENT PROJECTS TO PREPARE

- Rural environmental management, pollution control, and waste management
- Integrated land management for sustainable development
- Climate proofing rural infrastructure
- Green road freight financing
- Electronic waste management
- Capacity building to strengthen environmental management



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