

ASEAN PEATLAND NEWS JUNE 2014

30th June marks the end of the ASEAN Peatland Forests Project. Let's take a look at what has been achieved so far.

THE NEXT PHASE FOR ASEAN PEATLAND CONSERVATION

On the 24th of April 2014, a Workshop on design of the ASEAN Programme on Sustainable Management of Peatland Ecosystems (2014-2020) was held to discuss the design of the new programme for sustainable management of peatlands in ASEAN.

Joined by representatives 57 participants, included representatives of nine ASEAN Member



States, GEF Country Focal Points, government officials and representatives of seventeen potential partner agencies; it garnered a lot of positive feedback and possible funding for the next stage of our quest to pro-

tect ASEAN peatlands for our future generations.

Six targets were identified namely: i) All peatland areas identified and inventorised; ii) Zero-burning practiced; iii) Fire prone sites rehabilitated; iv) Peat-

lands sustainably managed; v) Peatlands conserved to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and increase peatland biodiversity in the region; and vi) APMS and NAPs implemented; national and regional capacity enhanced.

The report is available on [www.aseanpeat.net/Activities/2014 Activities](http://www.aseanpeat.net/Activities/2014%20Activities).



NEW PEATLAND ECOSYSTEMS DOCUMENTED IN MYANMAR



5 March 2014: A joint Myanmar-international team of peatland specialists have found rare peatland ecosystems near Inle Lake in North-east Myanmar.

Surveys were undertaken between 15-27 February 2014 of the area in and around Inle

Lake in Shan State with sampling and peat depth assessments in more than 70 locations.

A total of 9,021 hectares of peatland was identified comprising three separate types:

- Lake-margin peatlands up to three meters thick

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NEW PEATLAND ECOSYSTEMS DOCUMENTED IN MYANMAR (...Continued)

along the shores of Inle Lake

- Floating peatlands between 50cm to 1.5m thick on the surface of the lake. These are subdivided into two—natural floating peatlands and modified floating peatlands used for the cultivation of tomatoes and other vegetables.
- Calcareous spring mound peatlands were found in Taung Bo Gyi Village in the northwest corner of Inle Lake area. This peatland has been formed over thousands of years around an active spring fed by calcium rich groundwater. The mound of peat is about 6.5 m thick and covers about three hectares. Mound spring peatlands are very rare and this is one of the first to be described in Asia.

The peatlands of Inle Lake play a key role in stabilizing water levels and improving water quality in the lake. The floating peatlands are



Traditional Intha fisherman on Inle Lake

also integral to the culture and economy of the local Intha Community who have cultivated floating gardens for hundreds of years.

Although the floating vegetation around Inle Lake has been known for years it was not recognized that these were part of a much larger peatland system along the margins of the lake. The 9,021 hectares (ha) of peatlands represents the largest single area identified during 18 months of surveys in different parts of Myanmar. In addition, 1,599 ha of peatlands were found in the nearby Heho Basin where peatlands are all cultivated and covered with soil eroded from nearby hills.

“The identification of the peatlands of Inle Lake is an important component of a national inventory of peatlands under the Min-

istry of Environment Conservation and Forestry (MOECAF) led by the Forest Resource Environment Development and Conservation Association (FREDA) with support from the Global Environment Centre (GEC)” stated U Sann Lwin, Secretary (Finance) of FREDA.

Inle Lake is internationally known for its beautiful environment, clear waters and unique customs of the Intha people who row their fishing boats with their legs and balance on one foot as they catch fish. Inle Lake has been designated as an ASEAN Heritage Park.

The peatlands at Inle are home to a range of rare and threatened species including the Eastern Sarus Crane, Ferruginous Duck and a number of endemic fish species. During the survey freshwater crabs were observed breeding in burrows on the calcareous mound spring at Taung Bo Gyi.

The mound spring in Taung Bo Gyi Village has been protected by the local community who do not allow any cultivation on it – to maintain its function to provide drinking water supply to part of the village and nearby monastery.

“Peatlands in the Inle Lake basin are facing a

number of threats including conversion for agriculture, clearance and burning of the vegetation and pollution by domestic waste and agrochemicals,” – said U Sann Lwin of FREDA. “We hope to work closely with the local communities and government agencies in the future to enhance the protection of key sites.”



Shallow well on the spring mound peatland providing drinking water to neighbouring Taung Bo Gyi Village.



Rare freshwater crab breeding in burrows in the spring mound peatland

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OVERALL

FINAL PMM FOR APFP

The Tenth Project Management Meeting for APFP was held at Pullman Hotel Bangsar, Kuala Lumpur Malaysia on 22nd April 2014. Attended by all APFP country components, it was also joined by SEApeat project partners as well as representatives from Brunei and Singapore. IFAD was represented by Ms Kim Sunae, Portfolio Support Officer for Envi-

ronment & Climate Change.

The meeting was a final check point to ensure all activities were on track and could be completed by 30th June. There was much progress made by the countries and we can see that the project will end with success.

Presentations and the meeting minutes are available on www.aseanpeat.net/

APFP.

Following was a Project Coordination meeting for SEApeat. This also showcased very good results achieved by project partners across SEA. Materials are also available on the website.

On the 24th, a workshop was held to discuss the design of the new programme for sustainable management

of peatlands in ASEAN.



Activity in Indonesia—mapping of priority sites in Kalimantan.

While APFP will wind up by December 2014, SEApeat will continue into the following year.

EARLY ONSET OF HAZE IN 2014

The haze arrived early this year in Riau, Indonesia and Peninsular Malaysia. No thanks to a very dry season, the peat was like tinder when set alight by rogue landowners.

In an unprecedented incident, Malaysia generated its own haze in Selangor and Pahang states from uncontrolled blazes in the two states.

The fires were finally doused by heavy rain, the result of cloud seeding efforts in April 2014.

Unfortunately, the fires had caused a setback to rehabilitation efforts in Raja Musa Forest

Reserve. A portion of the APFP and SEApeat pilot site was in the path of the fast-spreading fire and could not be saved.

Fires in Sumatra caused widespread misery in the Indonesian island. It did not affect other ASEAN countries as much this time due to the wind which blew due west.

However, there is much concern for further fires later in 2014 with the onset of an expected El Nino period beginning in June. The dry spell is expected to last until

October and cause among others, a water shortage which would seriously hamper firefighting efforts in peatland areas across several Southeast Asian nations.



MYANMAR

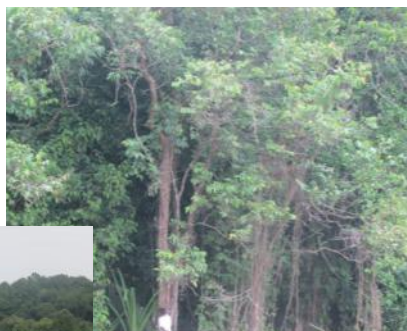
PEATLAND FORESTS FOUND IN MYANMAR

Up to now, most of the peatlands confirmed in Myanmar was floating and mound spring peat found at the Inle Lake region.

In March, a team from FREDA went to Kau Ye Gyi Island; Palaw and Bokpyin Townships in Thanintharyi Region to survey the area for peatlands. Surveys and soil tests confirmed the three

areas as peatlands.

Furthermore, it was forested peatlands, the first to be found in Myanmar.



Bacaurea sapida (kant zaw) forest growing in Palaw township.



Peat forest found on Kau Ye Island



The forest floor at Aye Nyein Thar Yar Village, Bok Pyin Township

VIETNAM

MOVING FORWARD IN U MINH REGION

Following the green contract for local communities living in the fringes of U Minh Thong and U Minh Ha National Parks, the project recently held a course on biodiversity management in the parks.



The sustainable community livelihood project is hoped to decrease pressures on globally significant biodiversity in peatland national park.

In addition, an ecotourism planning and development course was also held to help expand the offering for visitors to the two parks.

To carry out an assessment of enhancement of carbon pools, storage and carbon stocks, a

working group of UM-HNP was established for surveys to collect data required for valuation of carbon storage/concentration in peatland *Melaleuca* forests. Field training and surveys were done to evaluate the carbon storage and characteristics of peatlands in UMHNP.

A land-use plan for UM-HNP has been completed and submitted to Ca Mau authorities for ap-

proval.

More importantly, work in U Minh Ha is helping it catch up to its better known



neighbor, U Minh Thuong. This will help ensure protection for both major peatland areas in Vietnam.

PHILIPPINES

ACHIEVEMENT OF THE PHILIPPINES

Among the four APFP countries, Philippines is the one that gained the most new peatlands with the assistance of APFP experts and funding. From a small known peatland area before the project started in 2010, large expanses have now been found in Agusan Marsh in Mindanao; and Leyte Sab-a in the Visayas.

With the finding of new peat areas, the Philippines have lost no time in protecting them under various laws, especially zoning and land use plans.

To further understand their unique peatlands, research was carried out and one out-

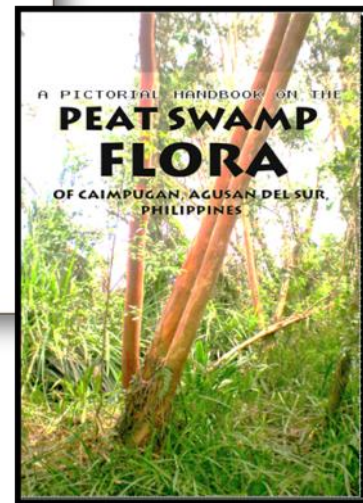
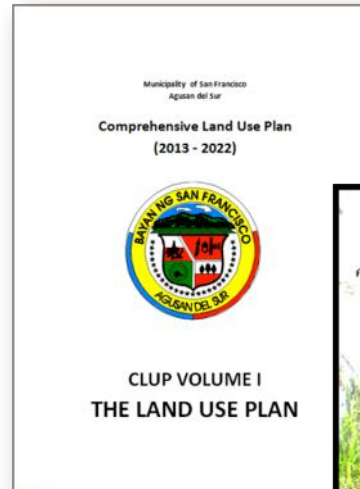
put was the handbook on peatswamp flora of the Caimpugan. A comic flyer was distributed to introduce peatlands to the public.

For those living on peatlands, several efforts were made to improve their livelihood, helped by knowledge learned from other countries such as Indonesia and Thailand. Changes were made to the choice of crops and planting systems. Two that have yielded positive results were raised bed planting and sorjan farming using floating platforms.

Rehabilitation of damaged areas are ongoing and plans are now in place to promote

ecotourism in the peatlands.

We wish them all success for their endeavors.



BOUNCING BACK

In November 2013, Typhoon Yolanda took its toll over Philippines' effort to rehabilitate its peatlands and utilize it for farming. But the spirited Filipinos do not give up without a fight.

The damaged site office has been cleaned up and refurbished, project sites and sorjan farming systems in Alangalang have been rebuilt.

Rehabilitation efforts continue in Agusan Marsh despite being affected by Typhoon Agaton in January 2014.



From top left: A man holding a surviving plant in Agusan Marsh; Top right: rehabilitation site in Langit, Alangalang; Bottom left: a surviving lumbia plant after Yolanda.

INDONESIA

EXPANSION OF ACTIVITIES IN INDONESIA

Following a successful demonstration plot for



burn-free planting of pineapples in Riau, the activity has been expanded.

Planting started from 19th March 2014 in Dumai (Pelintung, Guntung), Bengkalis (Sepahat), dan Rokan Hilir (Bentayan).

10,000 pineapple suckers were planted per hectare. A total of 7 hectares were planted—2 hectares in Pelintung, 3 in Sepahat and 2 in Bentayan villages respectively.

Other than expanding various demonstration

areas and pilot sites all over Indonesia, the country has also made good progress with FDRS predictions and updating peat maps in Sumatra and Kalimantan.

EXPANDING DEMONSTRATION PLOTS IN KALIMANTAN

In the small village of Jabiren in Pulang Pisau, Central Kalimantan, a demonstration plot was expanded from 10-15 February 2014. Planting was done by a farmer's group, planting 1000 seedlings each of Gaharu (*Aquilaria microcarpa*) and Jelutung



A participant at work.

(*Dyera costulata*) on 2 hectares of land.

This enhances 4 hectares planted in 2013 with 2000 seedlings from the same species.

Another area in Central Kalimantan is preparing for intercropped farming



trees with seasonal crops such as vegetables.

SOCIALISING PEATLANDS MANAGEMENT IN SUMATRA

An event was held in Nagroe Aceh Darusalam to share the National Socialisation Strategy for Sustainable Management of Peatlands on 6th March 2014. The workshop was attended by 50 participants from nine government departments including the Departments of Agriculture, Forestry and Environ-

ment. At the end of the day, Mr Arief Yuwono, Deputy III from the Ministry of Environment (KLH) provided the Aceh Department a peat auger to help them inventory the depth of peatlands in the northern Sumatran province.

A similar event was held in South Sumatra on 11-13 March to boost capacity for sustainable assess-

ment and management of peatlands.

Mr Hermono Sigit represented KLH in giving the Head of KLH South Sumatra a peat auger to assist in peatland inventory.



Mr Arief Yuwono handing over a peat auger to the Head of Environment Department for Aceh.

MALAYSIA

UPDATED IMP FOR MALAYSIA'S PILOT SITE

The first IMP for the North Selangor PSF was produced through DANIDA funding in 2000, almost 15 years ago. So much has changed since then; so the Malaysia component appointed GEC to review the existing document

and update it accordingly. After going through various documents, maps and several stakeholder meetings, an updated document was presented on the 24th of June for discussion and review. Among the changes are a larger area size, a moratorium on logging and changes in authorities. The document has been finalized and submitted to the Forestry Department.

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TRAINING COURSES AND REVIEWING OF GUIDELINES

A course on rehabilitating degraded peat swamp forests was held on 5-7 February 2014. The scope covered everything from the preparation of seedlings to field planting techniques, care and maintenance.

The first part of the course was held at the Forest Research Institute of Malaysia (FRIM), followed by practical work at the APFP pilot site, Raja

Musa Forest Reserve. On 10 & 11 February 2014, a special session was held by the Drainage & Irrigation and Forestry Departments to review the *Guidelines For Design and Construction of Check Dam for Prevention and Control of Peatland Fire* which was produced in 2011.

The objective was to review and refine the design and construction of check dams, an essential tool in maintaining

hydrological integrity. 30 representatives from relevant agencies attended the meeting which was held in Cameron Highlands, Pahang Darulmakmur.

This was followed by the review of *Manual/Guidelines on Development of Peat For Food Crops on February 12 & 13.*



Participants debating a point on check dam construction.



Part of the training at one of the nurseries that supply seedlings for rehabilitation.

APFP is a project of



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