

Chair Summary
Water Environment Partnership in Asia
1st International Workshop
Tokyo, Japan
Jan. 24-25, 2005

1. The 1st International Workshop of the Water Environment Partnership in Asia (WEPA), hosted by the Ministry of the Environment in Japan and the Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES), was held on 24-25 January 2005 at the Hotel Villa Fontaine Shiodome in Tokyo, Japan. The workshop was attended by 33 people, including representatives from 8 WEPA partner countries and Japanese water experts (members of the Japanese Steering Committee of WEPA).
2. The Water Environment Partnership in Asia (WEPA) is an initiative that was proposed by the Ministry of the Environment in Japan at the Third World Water Forum held in Kyoto in March 2003. WEPA aims to develop an information platform to strengthen governance and capacity building in addressing water environment issues, and to promote regional sustainable development based on partnerships with all parties concerned. It is registered in “the Portfolio of Water Actions (PWA)”, which is a collection of contributions by various countries and international bodies towards solving water problems, as a concrete action aimed at the prevention of water pollution.
3. WEPA was officially inaugurated in April 2004, following the Inception WEPA workshop held in Jakarta, Indonesia, in March 2004. The goal of the First WEPA International Workshop was to share information about the progress on the construction of water environment-related databases being built by WEPA and, through discussion of database formats and future plans, to further promote water environment improvement efforts by developing mutual understanding among WEPA partner countries and strengthening cooperation in the area of water environment conservation.
4. The workshop opened with a keynote address entitled “Role of WEPA Programme in Water Environment Management in Asia – Activities towards WWF4” from Dr. Motoyuki Suzuki (President of the Central Environment Council, Professor at the University of the Air, and Special Academic Advisor at United Nations University), who is also an advisor to the Japanese Steering Committee of WEPA.

Workshop Chair, Professor Mitsumasa Okada (Dean, Graduate School of Engineering, Hiroshima University) summarized the discussion as follows;

5. WEPA partner countries come to a consensus that the significance of the WEPA project is to promote appropriate governance and to improve capacity building for good water environments. Each partner country that attended the workshop also reconfirmed its proactive participation and continued future cooperation in the WEPA project through partnership.

6. Recognizing that the deterioration of water quality in the Asian region has led to concern about the provision of safe drinking water and its impact on human health and ecosystems, it was reconfirmed that the scope of “water environment” in WEPA will focus on water quality. Accordingly, the scope of the databases being built under WEPA will conform to this. However, it is desirable for the scope to be expanded into a comprehensive database on water environment conservation as work progresses. In addition, target water bodies were stipulated as including surface water, semi-enclosed water bodies, coastal areas and groundwater.

Regarding WEPA database construction

7. The WEPA database consists of four databases; a policy-related information database, a database on activities by NGOs and CBOs (community based organizations), a database on technologies for water environmental conservation and an information sources database. It is important that the four databases planned for construction under WEPA include information that is useful to policy planners in each country, who will be the principal users, in the conduct of water environment conservation activities. In addition, it was pointed out that there is a necessity to enhance linkages among these four databases in order to make the databases more user- friendly.
8. It was noted that in increasing the user friendliness of the databases, it is also necessary to look into creating opportunities in which the opinions of actual users can be gathered during the database construction process. Moreover, with regard to information collection, opinions were expressed that coordination between not only representatives of each country’s government, but also civil society groups and academic experts should be examined.
9. During the workshop, discussion was conducted about the contents and the collection of information for each database in the near future. The following points were raised as items to be considered in development of each database.

(Policy-related Information Database)

10. The Policy-related Information Database aims to provide useful information, when the policy makers in partner countries need to propose policies suitable to the intrinsic conditions each country possesses. The provision of information on the background and parameters that have led each government to promote certain measures and policies is particularly important to adopt appropriate policies with the socio-economic conditions of each country in mind. Participants had a common understanding of this point and agreed to work towards the further development of information in each country.
11. The range of information covered in the Policy-related Information Database depends upon the judgment of each country. Although the priority is basically

given to information concerned with the policy of central governments, information on local authorities can also be collected and organized in response to the situation in each county.

12. Although being aware of the importance of such problems as water-born diseases, the Policy-related Information Database will not actively cover these issues for the time being, while leaving the possibility of including this information later on.
13. It is confirmed by participants that local level activities by all stakeholders could be incorporated, and also agreed that not only current activities but also future plan will be included.
14. Recognizing the importance of the involvement of accurate and concrete information in the WEPA database and the necessity of data assurance among relevant ministries, the data should be confirmed in each country. To facilitate confirmation in each country before the information is published on the web, the Japanese government will make necessary arrangements as appropriate.
15. Regarding the Mekong River Commission, respective countries will cooperate with the Commission to effectively collect the data as necessary. Future cooperation with the Commission in the WEPA project will be considered.
16. Participants shared their understanding that coordination between partner countries and the WEPA secretariat should be further strengthened in order to promote the development of a Policy-related Information Database. It was also agreed that the development of the database should be promoted by exchanging opinions about what should be improved regarding data collection by using such occasions as regional meetings.

(Activities by NGOs and CBOs Database)

17. The Database aims to provide information on activities of NGOs and CBOs (community based organizations) and awareness raising programs by governments in user-friendly and precise manner. Thus, policy makers can use it in order to promote participation of stakeholders and cooperation of NGOs and governments.
18. Partner countries generally agreed on the secretariat's plan for collecting information and also promised to collect successful cases of activities by NGOs and CBOs. The criteria for selection of cases will depend on the judgment of each country.
19. It was agreed that in the Activities by NGOs and CBOs Database, the content needs to be such that the backgrounds of each country's activities are understandable, and it is necessary to consider the possibility of providing the Database in local languages to promote the activities of civil society for environmental conservation in respective countries.

(Technologies for Water Environmental Conservation Database)

20. The objective of the Database on Technologies for Water Environmental Conservation is to understand and deepen the recognition of the important points that help policy makers and practitioners from partner countries adopt and adapt appropriate technologies, including soft technologies such as cleaner technologies, and facilitate constructions and operations with regional sustainability in mind, in planning and introducing technologies and systems of wastewater treatment. The important points mentioned above include, but are not limited to adaptability to regional conditions unique to Asian monsoon regions, operation management such as cost recovery, treatment performance, understanding and cooperation of regional citizens, and mid and long term perspectives such as financial planning.
21. In developing the Database on Technologies for Water Environmental Conservation, it is necessary to list up good examples that hold sufficient past operating records and sustainable operations in accordance with local conditions.
22. It was agreed upon that a common awareness should be fostered among partner countries with regard to the necessity of promoting the application of appropriate technologies that take into account characteristics unique to Asian monsoon regions. The partner countries also came to an agreement that they should work together to study information to be collected associated with relevant technologies.
23. Agreement was reached with regard to the selection of people, through the focal point of WEPA partner countries, who are responsible for examining the above information in order to develop the data of technologies for water environmental conservation and promote the application of appropriate technologies.
24. WEPA aims to hold a technologies working group, which will be attended by those in charge of developing the Database on Technologies for Water Environmental Conservation, from the partner countries in May 2005, in order to discuss concrete items needed to develop the database.

Future Activities of WEPA

25. It is confirmed that the secretariat will provide necessary support to the partner countries in order to provide useful information. In this regard, partner countries should raise their requirements (for data/information collection) directly to the secretariat. The required capacity building related to water quality management, including the wastewater treatment technology, should be sent to the secretariat before the end of August this year.
26. The issue of capacity building to strengthen water environment governance will be considered by the secretariat in the future in cooperation with partner countries.

27. It is recommended that each partner country use the WEPA database as a platform of information on water environmental administration and also update it. It is important to seek the sustainable management of the WEPA database.
28. The WEPA database prototypes will be officially introduced at the Fourth World Water Forum (WWF4) to be held in Mexico in March 2006. It was agreed that collaboration between the various countries will be promoted in addition to the promotion of information collection and organization in each country according to the secretariat's proposed schedule.
29. Through the various preparatory meetings for the 13th Commission on Sustainable Development (CSD13) to be held in April, 2005 and for WWF4, it is important to introduce WEPA activities as concrete activity examples of water environment conservation in Asia and expand the effectiveness of the WEPA databases. Further efforts among partner countries and cooperation with other international bodies will be essential in order to increase the WEPA international presence.
30. As part of the preparations for the release of the prototypes at WWF4, the Second WEPA International Workshop will be held tentatively in January 2006. The host country for the next workshop will be decided in due course.
31. Participants recognized that there are common issues with regard to water environment administration among partner countries. All agreed that WEPA will be a platform to promote cooperation as they work on those issues, keeping in mind a respect for each country's identity. Their intention to make further efforts towards the progress of this project was confirmed.
32. Participants recommended the establishment of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Ministry of the Environment of Japan and partner countries / Designated National Authority (DNA), in order to provide a framework to meet the WEPA objectives and to enhance the capacity building of partner countries and synergy among related programs and activities.

Mitsumasa Okada
Chair
The First International Workshop for
Water Environment Partnership in Asia
Professor, Hiroshima University