

## SEI in Thailand



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### Project Brief September 2019

### Background

Over the last few decades, Thailand has climbed the development ladder to become an upper middle-income country with the second largest economy in Southeast Asia. Though agriculture still employs the majority of Thailand's population of 69 million people, the sector's economic clout has been dwindling in recent years, exacerbating inequality and rural poverty and jeopardizing livelihoods. The added threat from climate change presents a critical challenge for Thailand's predominately agrarian population. Further environmental problems, such as severe air pollution and waste generation, have risen along with economic growth and urbanization.

### Areas of Work

Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) partners with a wide range of stakeholders in Thailand and the surrounding Mekong region to generate knowledge and link science-based research with policymakers. SEI activities in Thailand address transboundary environmental and social challenges with transnational effects, such as climate change, air pollution, and the promotion of sustainable practices to reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emissions. SEI has projects in the country that focus on water management, gender and social equality, sustainable natural resource management, city health and wellbeing and building community resilience to address climate change and extreme climate change-related events.

### Projects

1. **Transboundary cooperation mechanism on adaptation to climate change and hydropower development projects:** SEI's regional policy platform in the Lancang-Mekong region, supported by the Lancang-Mekong Corporation, works to enhance communications and provide technical solutions for issues related to climate change uncertainties, water resource management, and hydropower development through adaptation and mitigation. SEI's collaborative partnership aims to reduce risks faced by communities due to water-level fluctuations and extreme weather exacerbated by climate change.
2. **SUMERNET:** SEI engages with a wide group of research and knowledge producers in the Mekong region as host of the Secretariat for the Sustainable Mekong Research Network. SUMERNET supports research and policy engagement on critical sustainability issues in the region. Thailand has been at the heart of the SUMERNET research agenda that has produced scientific knowledge on the country's efforts to mitigate climate change effects and to support local livelihoods and sustainable natural resource management.
3. **Young women, girls and climate change:** SEI collaborated with Plan International to better understand the different climate risks, vulnerabilities, resilience and climate challenges faced

Photo (above): © MARTA SALVAGO / SEI



Bhumibol bridge, Bangkok © MONGKOL CHUEWONG / GETTY

by young women and girls in northern Thailand. The project encourages decision makers, donors and development stakeholders to take action by adopting gender-sensitive and child-centred adaptation policies, programmes and financing.

**4. Just transitions to a low-carbon economy - Realizing a just and equitable transition away from fossil fuels:** SEI researched equity dimensions of policies that support "just transitions" to a low-carbon economy by minimizing disruption for workers and communities that are currently dependent on fossil fuel. The research focused on two countries, Thailand and the US, to highlight key considerations and opportunities for improving justice and equity outcomes in transition policy and planning.



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Our work spans climate, water, air, and land-use issues, and integrates evidence and perspectives on governance, the economy, gender and human health.

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- 5. Gender, social equality and sustainability certification in Thai smallholder rubberwood production:** This project addressed gender and social equality issues in rubberwood certification and production in rural southern Thailand. Smallholder farmers' practices were studied using a gender and social equality lens to investigate the barriers and gaps in implementation of Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification schemes in Thailand.
- 6. Gender support analysis:** Since 2015, SEI has been supporting its partners in Thailand by undertaking a gender analysis during project and programme implementation. SEI provides science-based guidance on designing programmes using a gender-sensitive approach and embedding gender-issue awareness in programme activities and management, in addition to building effective monitoring systems. SEI is currently conducting a gender analysis of Thailand's energy sector.
- 7. City Health and Wellbeing (ChEW) Initiative:** This initiative investigates how cities' rapid growth affects the wellbeing of residents and how these effects interact with the overall health of city systems. Novel methods of data generation and collection were employed across four interconnected activities in two case-study locations, Nakuru in Kenya and Udon Thani in Thailand. This new SEI-generated evidence provides the foundation for policy recommendations that can maximize the wellbeing of urban populations while minimizing resource consumption.
- 8. Closing the Loop:** The growing burden of plastic waste in the Asia-Pacific region generated a project partnership between SEI and the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) called Closing the Loop. Through this initiative, SEI aimed to foster development pathways promoting sustainable use of natural resources to address the damages of plastic waste production on the environment, natural resources, human health and the economy. Two cases studies were carried out: in Bangkok, Thailand, and Pune, India. The studies informed development of a regional policy guide for Asian cities.
- 9. Bioeconomy in Thailand:** The SEI Initiative on Governing Bioeconomy Pathways aims to better articulate the alternative pathways available for a bioeconomy that produces materials, foods and feeds, fuels and more from biological resources. In 2018, this initiative paid special attention to Thailand's current bioeconomy development scenario to serve as guidance for national planning and future research on the emergence of bioeconomies at a global level.
- 10. Reducing carbon emissions in Thailand:** Through engagement with the Climate and Clean Air Coalition, SEI is guiding a team at Thailand's Pollution Control Department to develop an action plan for reducing emissions of short-lived climate pollutants from transport and various other sectors. SEI has been providing guidance on modelling emissions and mitigation options, including workshops and recommendations.
- 11. Gender equality in fisheries and coastal resource management:** SEI collaborated with the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN) and Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) to explore drivers of inequality and the constraints imposed on different groups of women in various coastal contexts of South and Southeast Asia. The project examined national policy conditions in 12 countries, including Thailand, Myanmar, Cambodia and Vietnam that support gender equality in environment and natural resource management, as well as local realities and norms influencing men's and women's engagement in on-ground decision making regarding environment and natural resources management.