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# SEI Asia Strategy 2020-24

An aerial photograph of a river delta, likely the Ganges-Brahmaputra delta, showing a complex network of waterways and land. The image is overlaid with a semi-transparent teal shape that covers the top half of the page. In the bottom left corner, there is a white triangular shape containing text.

Bridging  
science, policy  
and practice

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## Foreword

Since its establishment in 2004, SEI's growing team in Asia has been vital to the research programme of SEI, positively contributing to our global efforts to achieve environmentally sustainable development.

As the countries in Asia pursue economic development, environmental challenges have grown in number and complexity. The region remains the most vulnerable to climate change, with countries in South and Southeast Asia among the hardest hit, placing millions of people at risk.

In this context, SEI's presence and work in Asia has become even more urgent. Our science and policy engagement efforts are critical to the ongoing efforts by governments, researchers, policymakers, civil society and media, as well as local communities, to become better equipped to face these challenges.

SEI's effort to bridge science, policy and practice, has helped ensure that the countries in Asia can cope effectively with the many growing social and environmental challenges.

Asia's cultures and societies are dynamic and resilient, with a vast storehouse of knowledge and capacity for innovation, which is why keeping pace with digital connectivity and technological innovations is crucial. We want to leverage our efforts on the connectedness of the region and explore new ways to further our scientific research and reach out to more vulnerable populations.

We are aware of the importance of strong partnerships and we are actively working to bridge our science and strengthen our collaborations with governments, research think tanks and knowledge institutions, civil society, private sector and the media.

I am proud to introduce this new strategy document that will guide the direction and work of SEI Asia for the next five years 2020-2024. Building on SEI's Global Strategy, the Asia Strategy sets specific goals for the areas of gender, water, climate and disaster risk reduction, and urban health and well-being, with a special programme work on the Mekong Region and Myanmar.

With its strong leadership, supported by a vibrant and multicultural team of experts, I am confident that SEI Asia will continue to advance equality and sustainable development towards ensuring shared prosperity for all.

**Måns Nilsson**

Executive Director | Stockholm Environment Institute



# Bridging science, policy and practice

In recent decades, the countries of the Asian region have made significant progress in addressing poverty and pioneering new ideas in technology, innovation and entrepreneurship.

However, Asia still continues to face many challenges in achieving sustainable development. The region is still lagging behind on almost all of the targets committed for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) even as it grapples with rising inequality and a range of environmental challenges further exacerbated by political and civil uncertainties in many countries.

Despite all this, I know how this resilient region has previously demonstrated an uncanny ability to seek societal solutions through science, policy and practice. In SEI, we have been, and will continue to be, a critical part in guiding and supporting these processes.

## Our people-centred and participatory approach

SEI's strategic presence in Asia allows our global institute to gain critical local and regional insights that will drive scientific research to help inform environment and sustainable development agendas. Over the coming years, SEI will extend beyond environment and development research and policy advice to support best practices in the field, further reinforcing our ranking as one of the top environment think tanks in the world for the past five years.

SEI Asia provides evidence-based science and understanding on development and makes links across social, economic and environmental issues from the national to the local levels.

SEI Asia's strategy aligns with our global strategy to focus on the many environmental dimensions of human health and well-being that integrates poverty, gender and social equity to emphasize a people-centred and participatory approach.

## Our way forward

Tackling poverty and inequalities is an enormous task. SEI Asia is fortunate to have built relationships with strategic local, regional and interregional partners and work together for a stronger and more resilient and sustainable Asia.

We are fortunate to have a strong host in Thailand, the prestigious Chulalongkorn University, with whose academic faculties and departments SEI has established strong research collaborations. Chulalongkorn University provides us with both the ideas and the space for our team to put down roots and carry out our mandate. We trust this valuable partnership will grow together in new research areas over the coming years.

With Bangkok as the regional hub for international development, SEI Asia has established partnerships with many UN agencies, multilateral and bilateral organizations, state agencies, academia, think tanks, the private sector, media and civil society, all of which play an important role in building robust, resilient and inclusive societies.

We believe that with the combined efforts and expertise of all our partners, and the communities we work with, we can strive for more powerful, realistic, and inclusive sustainable environment and development policies that can benefit the Asian region.

We pledge to remain an impartial and credible research institute – **Asia's "honest broker"** for achieving sustainability.

In this document, we present our Asia strategy that outlines SEI's priority areas for science, policy and practice over the next five years. Employing a transdisciplinary approach, SEI Asia will focus on these core areas: gender environment and development; climate change, disasters and development; water resources management; agriculture; urban development and policy.

Our media and communications team will continue to support the production of a range of both academic outputs like peer-reviewed articles and briefings as well as popular products like blogs, short films and photostories that extends our reach and influence to diverse audiences from the local to the national and regional levels.

SEI Asia works in a dynamic region. It is imperative that we continue to grow into fields of research such as climate finance, ecological economics, biodiversity and ecosystem services, and environment and human health, among others.

We are grateful for the continued support from Sida, USAID, FAO, IOM, ADPC, and other donors who enable us to conduct our programmes with the highest standards and best ethical practices.

It is a privilege for me to be leading SEI in Asia with its strong team and regional vision. We believe our Asia Strategy will further enhance our work in strengthening contextual and integrative knowledge that bridges science, policy and practice towards achieving environmental sustainability and inclusive development.

**Niall O'Connor**

Centre Director | SEI Asia



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# Spotlighting our work in the Mekong and Myanmar

SEI Asia has given special attention to development and environmental challenges in the Mekong Region, and more recently, on Myanmar.

## Mekong Region

SEI's largest programme of work in the Mekong Region is the Sustainable Mekong Research Network (SUMERNET). The programme was launched in 2005 and has since been supported by the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida).

The research network has grown from its initial 14 to now 70 organizations, comprising of academics, state agencies, independent research organizations, civil society, media and international organizations working on the issues in Mekong Region. SEI Asia hosts the Secretariat of SUMERNET.

The Mekong Region continues to face the challenges of environmental degradation, poverty and social inequality, including gender inequality. Since its founding, SUMERNET has actively responded to these environmental and developmental challenges through robust, policy-relevant scientific research, and diverse and innovative means of outreach.

From now until 2028, SUMERNET will focus on reducing water insecurities for all, in particular, the poor, marginalized and socially vulnerable groups of women and men in the Mekong Region. We will present evidence-based research on regionally relevant water issues while engaging with policy-makers, local communities and vulnerable groups across the region.

The programme supports research projects and actions addressing three themes related to water insecurity: 1) water access, rights and allocation in times of water scarcity; 2) governance and management of water-related disaster risks; and 3) transboundary interactions with water systems.

SUMERNET provides grants and capacity building support for researchers and practitioners from the Mekong Region to carry out policy-relevant research over 24 to 30 months, in the above research themes.

Apart from delivering credible knowledge through research and actions, SUMERNET also cooperates with different regional cooperation platforms and initiatives such as Mekong River Commission (MRC) and Strengthening Human Rights and Peace Research and Education in ASEAN/Southeast Asia Program (SHAPE-SEA) to create more positive impacts on new knowledge, research capacity and relevant policy in the region.

## Myanmar

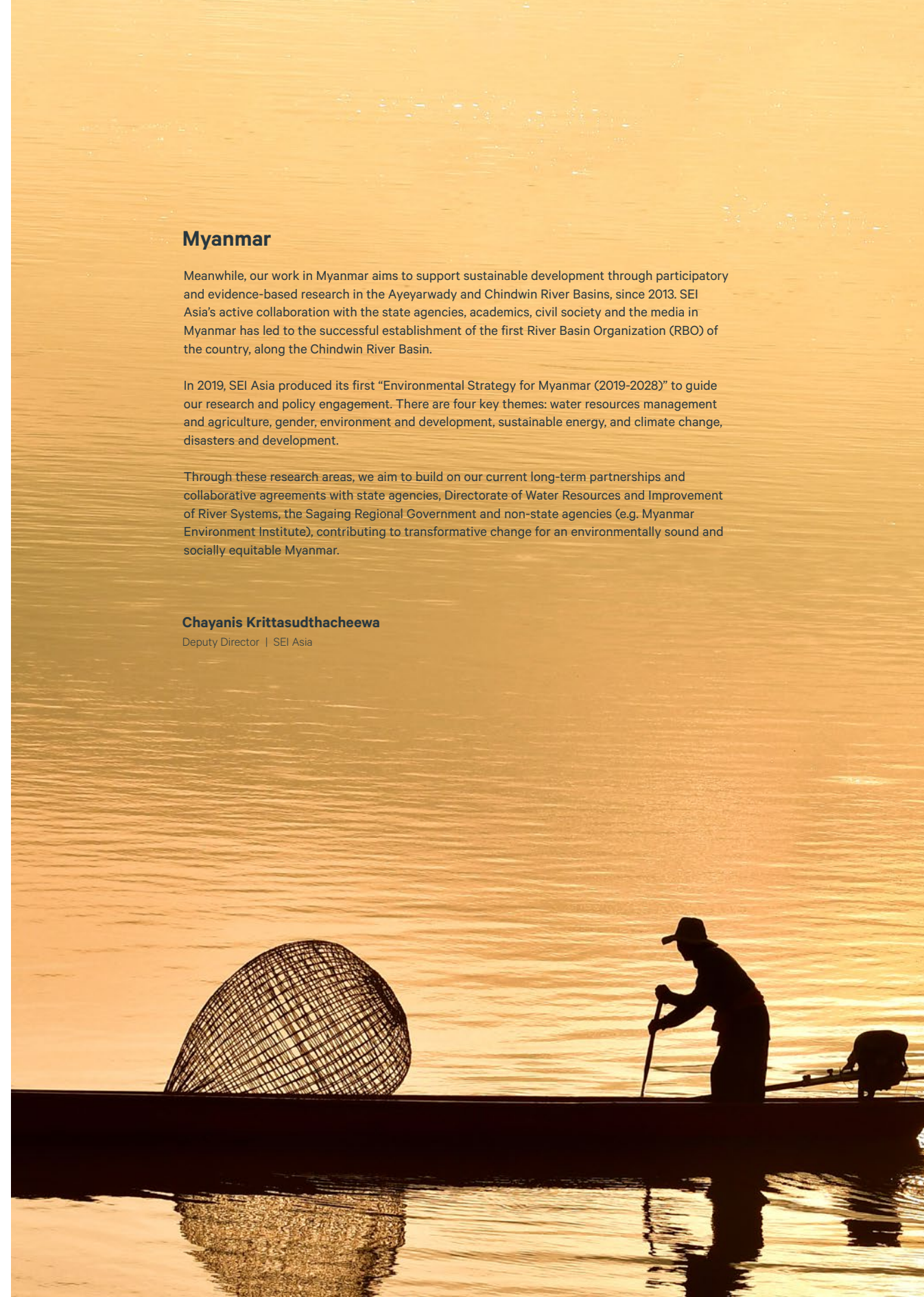
Meanwhile, our work in Myanmar aims to support sustainable development through participatory and evidence-based research in the Ayeyarwady and Chindwin River Basins, since 2013. SEI Asia's active collaboration with the state agencies, academics, civil society and the media in Myanmar has led to the successful establishment of the first River Basin Organization (RBO) of the country, along the Chindwin River Basin.

In 2019, SEI Asia produced its first "Environmental Strategy for Myanmar (2019-2028)" to guide our research and policy engagement. There are four key themes: water resources management and agriculture, gender, environment and development, sustainable energy, and climate change, disasters and development.

Through these research areas, we aim to build on our current long-term partnerships and collaborative agreements with state agencies, Directorate of Water Resources and Improvement of River Systems, the Sagaing Regional Government and non-state agencies (e.g. Myanmar Environment Institute), contributing to transformative change for an environmentally sound and socially equitable Myanmar.

## Chayanis Krittasudthacheewa

Deputy Director | SEI Asia



## Our impact areas



Over the coming years, we will focus on three areas of crucial importance:

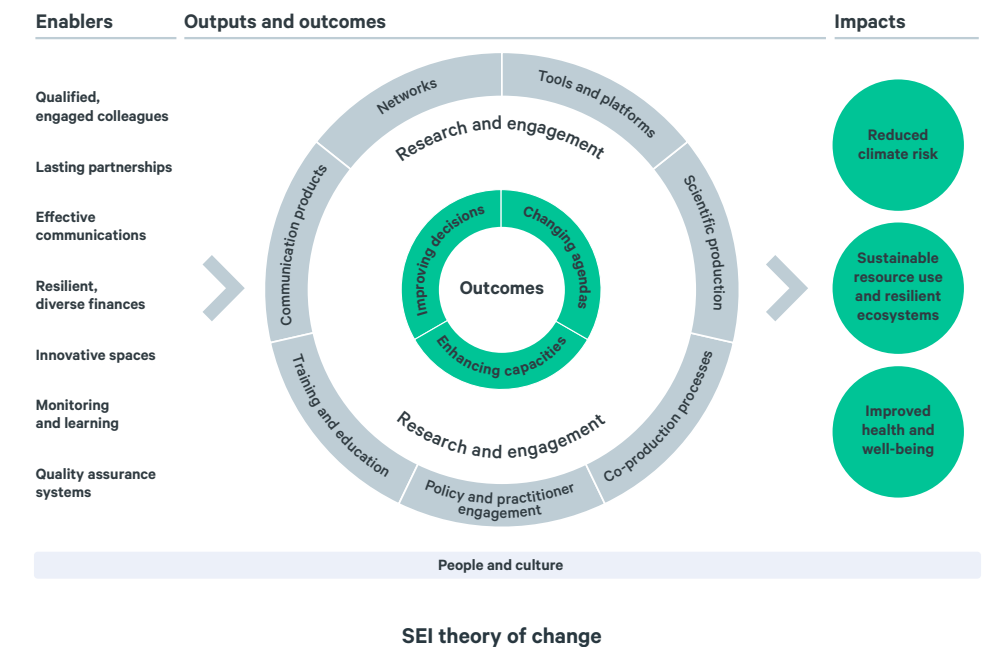
- **Reduced climate risk**
- **Sustainable resource use and resilient ecosystems**
- **Improved health and well-being**

Our goals in these areas apply to all research and engagement at SEI. They will define and guide our research agenda, and act as yardsticks for monitoring our results and evaluation and learning.

## Our theory of change: a sustainable, prosperous future for all

SEI's new theory of change focuses on planning, implementing, and following up on three types of outcomes: changing agendas, enhancing capacities, improving decisions.

We also work with a clear and traceable pathway to impact that elaborates the type and extent of SEI's contribution. Our projects and initiatives are designed through the lens of this overall theory, setting out intended pathways and results.



To complement our three impact areas and priorities for change, we will ramp up policy support and engagement at the global level, being closer to and proactive in different governance processes and providing science-based knowledge support.

At the regional level, we will deepen our engagement with regional political and economic cooperation bodies. At national and local levels, we will continue to support capacity development and provide actionable insights for government departments and agencies, communities and city administrations.



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# SEI Asia's research and policy engagement

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- 01. Gender, Environment and Development
  - 02. Water
  - 03. Climate Change, Disasters and Development
  - 04. Urban
  - 05. Policy







## Strategic Aim

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Our aim is to understand the structural barriers that impede the realization of sustainable development and environmental and social well-being. Through our policy engagement, we seek to mobilize that knowledge in order to inform and influence decision-making processes in gender-responsive and socially inclusive ways.

## Priorities for Change

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### **Reduced climate risk**

*Through our work and our support to Climate Change, Disasters and Development and Policy clusters, we contribute to specific priorities for change:*

- Effective bioeconomy strategies in national and regional policy and planning.
- Transitions from fossil energy that address inequality, poverty and political economy.
- Resource rights given greater priority in government and private-sector decision-making.

### **Sustainable resource use and resilient ecosystems**

*Through our work and our support to Water and Policy clusters, we contribute to specific priorities for change:*

- Commodity sourcing strategies and standards that address deforestation and biodiversity.
- Resource rights given greater priority in government and private-sector decision-making.

### **Improved health and well-being**

*Through our work and our support to Urban and Policy clusters, we contribute to specific priorities for change:*

- City planning that improves well-being and environmental health.

### **Other priorities**

- Addressing underlying political causes of environmental change, gender and social inequities.

SEI Asia's research and policy engagement

# Gender, Environment and Development

The Gender Cluster aims to support transformative and socially inclusive sustainable development through strategic research that informs key environment and development policy agendas. Using an intersectional lens on gender equality, social equity, and poverty, we strive to employ participatory methodologies that reflect social and environmental justice.



*In pursuing this strategic aim, we intend to perform the following activities:*

## Research

Seek understanding on the drivers of inequality and the underlying causes of poverty. This is done by conducting social research that adopts an intersectional feminist framework to challenge normalized categories of people and their multiple and interlocking identities (gender, class, ethnicity, race, age, ability and sexuality), paying attention to the power relations and political economic dynamics that shape them.

## Integration

Incorporate gender, social equity and justice dimensions into the analytical centre stage of SEI-Asia's research projects by engaging jointly in research framing and design, dissemination, and policy engagement.

## Networks and partnerships

Create collective pathways for gender equality, social equity and sustainable poverty reduction in varied environment and development policy contexts by collaborating with development partners and policy makers, capitalizing on our knowledge production.

## Outcomes

*Resulting in the following outcomes:*

### Research partnerships

Enhanced research partnerships in publications and projects that meaningfully engage with the political causes of environmental change, and of gender and social inequities through the application of robust feminist political ecology frameworks.

### Greater inclusion

Greater inclusion of gender and social equality in internal initiatives as well as in external projects.

### Advanced understanding

Advanced understanding on gender and development theories and practices through the generation of new knowledge and methodologies.

### Strengthened networks

Strengthened networks of gender and social justice professionals and collaborative partners in Asia and beyond.

### Cross cluster cooperation

Sustained cross-cluster cooperation to meaningfully include gender and social justice perspectives in research projects conducted within SEI.

### Decision making

Strengthened decision making and action on gender, social equity and poverty reduction in critical environment and development contexts.

### Uptake of tools

Greater uptake of tools by government and non-governmental actors in the Mekong region for evidence-based decision-making.

## Impacts

*By achieving these outcomes, we are contributing to the long-term impacts:*

### Climate mitigation

Climate mitigation, adaptation, and disaster risk reduction policies that place gender and social equity concerns at the very heart of their objectives in order to achieve both environmental and social well-being.

### Labour and migration policies

Labour and migration policies that meaningfully consider the role of environmental destruction and of gender and social inequities as key factors that drive distress migration, displacement and human rights abuses in the context of climate change.

### Land and resource policies

Redistributive land and resource policies that uphold and secure access and control to natural resources for indigenous and marginalized communities.

### Protection against corporate interests

Empowerment of environmental defenders against corporate interests that undermine both local and global sustainability.

### Creating feminist networks

Supporting research that contributes to feminist networks that are charting alternatives to growth-led economies and unsustainable forms of production and consumption.

### Healthcare and environmental policies

Healthcare and environmental policies that consider the intersectionality between gender and disability in order to cater to the specific needs of vulnerable people.

### Research partnerships

Enhanced research partnerships, publications and projects that meaningfully engage with the political causes of environmental change, and of gender and social inequities through the application of robust feminist political ecology frameworks.

## Boundary Partners

*While engaging with:*

Gender and social justice professionals.

International, regional, and local academics, researchers and research institutes, including SEI Asia researchers.

UN agencies, NGOs and civil society actors.

Government bodies/policymakers.

National women's machineries.



SEI Asia's research and policy engagement

# Water

The Water Resources Management Cluster aims to promote transdisciplinary research to integrate natural, social and political science to coproduce knowledge.

The cluster also aims to make significant impact on more sustainable water resources management and poverty reduction in the Asian region through reducing water demands, water pollution, water-related disaster risks while increasing water efficiency, resilient ecosystems and cities, and water cooperation at local, national and transboundary scales.

This will contribute to the achievement of SDG6 to ensure availability and sustainable management of water for all and other relevant SDGs including Goals 11, 13, 15 and 17.

The SEI Asia Water Resources team offers a range of expertise including river basin planning, development of decision support and monitoring systems using modelling and remote-sensing tools, climate change, land-use change and hydrologic analysis, water resources engineering and design, ecosystem management, water economics and governance, multi-stakeholder engagement and capacity building.

We will work with three target groups including knowledge producers (scientists and local experts), policy stakeholders (governments and NGOs) and practitioners (civil society and private sector) to produce knowledge and solutions to tackle water resource management and development challenges in the region, through promotion of evidence-based science for informed decision making, multi interest- multi participatory approaches ensuring social and gender inclusiveness.

## Strategic Aim

Our aim is to develop knowledge, processes, innovative tools and solutions to improve decision making and best practices in water resources management.

## Priorities for Change

### Reduced climate risk

*With specific priorities for change:*

- Strengthened decision making on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.

### Improved health and well-being

*With specific priorities for change:*

- Sanitation solutions that are sustainable, healthy and productive are widely scaled up.

### Sustainable resource use and resilient ecosystems

*With specific priorities for change:*

- Water resource management that is ecosystem-based and holistic.
- More productive, resilient and sustainable practices in the agricultural sector.
- Resource rights given greater priority in government and private-sector decision-making.



*In pursuing this strategic aim, we intend to perform the following activities:*

## Policy recommendations

Evidence-based research towards providing policy recommendations to induce change in water resources management agendas that are ecosystem-based, holistic and gender inclusive.

## Knowledge tools

Development of scenarios, knowledge and tools that provide better understanding in water-related issues to make more informative decisions.

## Enhance capacities

Enhancement of capacities for water management authorities and civil society actors on Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM), water quantity and quality monitoring, applications of modelling, GIS, remote sensing and big data, and using transdisciplinary research for managing water resources, ecosystems and water-related disaster risks better.

## Strengthen planning

Engagement in the planning and decision-making processes at all levels to strengthen multi-scale multi-stakeholder participation and to increase understanding policy-power dynamics of stakeholder engagement in the planning and decision-making process.

## Outcomes

*Resulting in the following outcomes:*

## Policy agendas and strategy

Improved policy agendas, strategies and plans on water resource management by policy stakeholders in water sector.

## Increasing knowledge

Increased knowledge and awareness among stakeholders on water-related issues and challenges.

## Strengthen capacities

Strengthened capacities of water management authorities and civil society actors on integrated water resource management and other innovative water management solutions.

## Cooperation and collaboration

Improved cooperation and collaboration across local, national and regional decision makers on water-related policies and guidelines.

## Impacts

*By achieving these outcomes, we are contributing to the long-term impacts:*

## Impact assessment

Improved climate change adaptation through innovative decision support system and modelling tools.

## Reduce disaster risk

Reduced water-related disaster risks, particularly flood, drought and extreme weather events, through ecosystem-based adaptation, natural-based solutions and improvement of monitoring and forecasting systems.

## Reduce water demands

Reduced water demands and water pollution and increased water efficiency in agriculture, energy and urban water uses, through best practices and SMART systems.

## Resilient ecosystems

Resilient ecosystems through integrated water and landscape management approaches.

## Improve water governance

Improved water governance and resources planning at local and national levels, through enhancing cooperation and dialogue mechanism, participation process and capacity building.

## Transboundary water resources cooperation

More effective transboundary water resources management, through inclusive decision making, water diplomacy and multi-stakeholder engagement.

## Improve water security

Improved water security, particularly for marginalized groups, to ensure inclusion and decreased poverty, through sustainable research network.

## Boundary Partners

*While engaging with:*

Policy stakeholders in water sector.

Government and civil society stakeholders in water sector.

Research and academic institutes in water sector.



SEI Asia's research and policy engagement

# Climate Change, Disasters and Development

The SEI Asia Climate Change, Disasters and Development cluster supports decision-makers and marginalized and at-risk communities to act on climate change, enhance disaster resilience, and work towards development that is ecologically, environmentally, and economically sustainable. We collaborate with research institutions, governments, civil society organizations, businesses, grassroots communities, and donors in Asia and the Pacific to produce credible and relevant knowledge for decision-making across all levels.

We aim to engage in relevant policy processes, build

the capacities of key stakeholders, and facilitate the empowerment of those marginalized and at-risk, to enable meaningful and inclusive action on climate change and disaster risk, in line with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the Paris Agreement, and the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR). In so doing, we contribute to the improvement of the health and well-being of those communities that are socially, economically, politically, environmentally, and geographically marginalized, and are at-risk to the impacts of climate change, disasters and unsustainable development.

## Strategic Aim

Our aim is to influence decision-making of relevant boundary and strategic partners and facilitate the empowerment of the marginalized and at-risk communities by harnessing and co-producing knowledge that bridges science, policy, and practice in climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster resilience and sustainable development.

## Priorities for Change

### Reduced climate risk

*With specific priorities for change:*

- Government plans for low-carbon pathways with multiple benefits.
- Strengthened decision making on climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction.
- Transitions from fossil energy that address inequality, poverty and political economy.
- More effective international cooperation on climate change.

### Sustainable resource use and resilient ecosystems

*With specific priorities for change:*

- More productive, resilient and sustainable practices in the agricultural sector.
- More effective governance of the ocean.
- Resource rights given greater priority in government and private-sector decision-making.

### Improved health and well-being

*With specific priorities for change:*

- City planning that improves well-being and environmental health.
- Health and well-being integrated into planning for disasters, migration and displacement.



*In pursuing this strategic aim, we intend to perform the following activities:*

## Production of usable knowledge

To generate relevant, usable and credible knowledge on climate change adaptation and mitigation, disaster resilience and sustainable development that contributes to greater empowerment of marginalized and at-risk communities.

## Empowerment of marginalized communities

To co-generate evidence that accounts for the specific needs of marginalized and at-risk communities, and also contributes to the promotion, protection and fulfillment of their human rights through capacity building and policy engagement.

## Policy engagement

To enhance the uptake of knowledge generated by our work on climate action, disaster resilience and sustainable development in policy processes across all levels – with DRR-related policy engagement driven by the International Centre of Excellence on Transforming Development and Disaster Risk (ICoE-TDDR), and climate change engagement through various networks and consortia.

## Implementation of global frameworks

To support decision-making that contributes to regional, national, and sub-national level implementation of the Paris Agreement, the SDGs and the Sendai Framework.

## Understanding new priorities

To conduct cutting-edge research on emerging regional priorities, such as systemic and cascading risks, slow onset emergencies, ocean acidification, microplastics, transboundary climate risk, sea level rise, energy transition, climate finance, nature-based solutions, loss and damage, multi-dimensional poverty, and cultural and natural heritage management.

## Outcomes

*Resulting in the following outcomes:*

## Effective policy implementation

Policy, academic and research stakeholders focused on the needs of marginalised and at-risk communities in their work so that meaningful and inclusive action on climate change and disaster risk are enabled.

## Empowering at-risk people

Enhanced capacities of marginalised and at-risk communities in using the knowledge we co-produced with them and other partners for an effective engagement with relevant climate change, disasters and development policy processes at all levels.

## Greater uptake of knowledge

Greater uptake of knowledge generated by our work on climate action, disaster resilience and sustainable development in policy processes across all levels, including through ICoE-TDDR supporting transformations towards more equitable, resilient and sustainable societies, leading to more effective implementation of the Sendai Framework for DRR, the Paris Agreement, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Asia.

## Impacts

*By achieving these outcomes, we are contributing to these long-term impacts:*

## Reduce suffering

Reduced suffering of marginalized and at-risk people in the region through timely responses to critical social and environmental policies.

## Strengthen decision-making

Strengthened decision-making and cooperation on climate change adaptation and DRR at regional, national and sub-national levels that considers how equality and human rights can be better incorporated into policymaking and programming.

## International cooperation

More effective international cooperation on CCA and DRR.

## Productive practices

More productive, resilient and sustainable practices in major Asian deltas.

## Health integration

Health and well-being integrated into planning for climate change adaptation, mitigation, disasters, mobility, and displacement.

## Boundary Partners

*While engaging with:*

Regional, national and subnational universities, research institutes, NGOs, policy stakeholders and marginalized and at-risk communities.





SEI Asia's research and policy engagement

# Urban

As more than half of the Asian population is now living in urban areas, we must take the opportunity to act to address the challenges arising from rapid, inequitable and unmanaged development and unsustainable levels of consumption.

SEI Asia's urban research seeks to find solutions to help cities and towns achieve an equitable, inclusive and sustainable development pathway, with respect to the Sustainable Development Goal 11 (as well as SDG 3 and 12) and international commitments including the Paris Agreement and Sendai Framework.

Supporting cities and towns to become equitable, resilient, healthy and livable, requires integrated, cross-sectoral action from all stakeholders – from knowledge sharing and capacity building to co-developing solutions and implementing them together on the ground. Our collaborative research aims to bring in innovative ideas that can inform policy makers, private sector and civil society on sustainable urban development practices.

## Strategic Aim

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Our aim is to support urban stakeholders, from national and municipal decision makers to community-based organizations, in addressing challenges in urban resilience and disaster risk, air pollution, solid waste management, and sustainable livelihoods by providing actionable knowledge and active engagements.

## Priorities for Change

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### ***Sustainable resource use and resilient ecosystems***

*With specific priorities for change:*

- Commodity sourcing strategies and standards that address deforestation and biodiversity.

### ***Other priorities***

- More inclusive planning for urban climate resilience that recognises the role of nature-based solutions.

### ***Improved health and well-being***

*With specific priorities for change:*

- City planning that improves well-being and environmental health.
- Safer, more effective waste management and circular systems.
- Health and well-being integrated into planning for disasters, migration and displacement.



*In pursuing this strategic aim, we intend to perform the following activities:*

## Research methods

Interdisciplinary research to generate better understanding of complex urban development, urban resilience, and governance processes.

## Building capacities

Capacity building for urban populations, especially the most vulnerable, to co-develop solutions and adapt to the impacts of climate change and of rapid, unchecked development, including pollution and exclusion.

## Capture knowledge

Engagement with academia, government and civil society actors to capture knowledge that will inform decision-making through research findings, tools, and platforms, to design and implement inclusive and sustainable urban development trajectories.

## Social equality

Gender and social equity mainstreaming in the context of rapid urban development and environmental degradation, in line with the SEI Initiative on Gender Equality, Social Equity and Poverty (GESEP).

## Outcomes

*Resulting in the following outcomes:*

## Uncover interlinkages

Policy stakeholders will develop more inclusive and sustainable urban development agendas through understanding of the interlinkages between urban form, policies and governance mechanisms, and industrial and other growth trends in cities with the drivers of risk, resilience, health and wellbeing of residents.

## Increase awareness

The most vulnerable and marginal urban populations will have heightened awareness and capacity for action on climate and other environmental risks.

## Using new knowledge

Different levels of stakeholders, ranging from local communities and civil society, to municipal authorities and national government, will be capacitated to apply partnerships for socially equitable and gender-responsive urban governance.

## Partnerships

Urban stakeholders will use new knowledge and capacity to drive changes in policy and practical implementation on the ground to achieve the objectives of SDG11 and other relevant SDGs related to sustainable consumption and production, health and wellbeing, and international commitments on DRR and climate change.

## Impacts

*By achieving these outcomes, we are contributing to the long-term impacts:*

## Improve engagement

More resilient urban communities as the result of better stakeholder coordination to address the drivers of risk and vulnerability.

## Identify pathways

More sustainable consumption and production in urban areas, minimising the exposure of vulnerable urban residents to pollutants (air, water, solid waste and others).

## Increase awareness on health

Improved health and wellbeing and realised co-benefits of ensuring accessible and inclusive urban green spaces and reduced pollution.

## Boundary Partners

*While engaging with:*

Urban civil society including community organizations and local residents.

Local government actors in urban municipalities.

Researchers and practitioners engaged in urban action.

Business representatives.



SEI Asia's research and policy engagement

## Policy

SEI Asia's Policy Team supports regional, national and local policy processes through strategic engagements based on SEI's scientific research, with respect to global policy agendas. Our goal is to equip policy actors with knowledge from our research and empower them to make informed, evidence-based and inclusive decisions for environmental sustainability and inclusive development.

### Strategic Aim

Our aim is to enhance sustainable governance and policy making in Asia, that is built on evidence-based research, multisectoral, multilevel and participatory engagement.

### Priorities for Change

#### Reduced climate risk

*Through our work and collaboration with SEI researchers, staff and partners, we contribute to specific priorities for change:*

- Government plans for low-carbon pathways with multiple benefits.
- Innovation and upscaled investment for economic transitions to circular economy.
- Transitions from fossil energy that address inequality, poverty and political economy.
- More effective international cooperation on climate change.
- Transforming global food systems to become more inclusive, resilient and just.

#### Sustainable resource use and resilient ecosystems

*Through our work and collaboration with SEI researchers, staff and partners, we contribute to specific priorities for change:*

- Effective bioeconomy strategies in national and regional policy and planning.
- Water resource management that is ecosystem-based and holistic.
- More productive, resilient and sustainable practices in the agricultural sector.
- More effective governance of the ocean.
- Resource rights given greater priority in government and private-sector decision-making.

#### Improved health and well-being

*Through our work and collaboration with SEI researchers, staff and partners, we contribute to specific priorities for change:*

- Health and well-being integrated into planning for food systems, sustainable production and consumption, and the circular economy.
- Sustainable, healthy, productive, and scalable water management policy.
- Develop opportunities and policy measures for impoverished, marginalised and discriminated communities that support sustainable and decent livelihoods without destroying natural resources.



*In pursuing this strategic aim, we intend to perform the following activities:*

## Knowledge co-production

The Policy Team will provide policy analysis - reviewing and sharing subnational, national and regional policies and analyzing their interdependencies, ramifications, coherence and outcomes to achieve systematic policy evaluation for the benefit of stakeholders and target populations. We also work on institutional analysis to understand (formal and informal) social institutions as they inform and guide decisions around, determine perceptions of, provide information on and management of natural resources.

## Partnerships and stakeholder engagement

We will build relationships and partnerships with a wide range of stakeholders through strategic engagement approaches. We also engage policy-relevant stakeholders in discourses around just, sustainable, and equitable policies, which is evidence-based and reflects the basic and cultural needs of the targeted population.

## Applied learning

We will share and establish good practice, enable cross-learning, and identify options for scaling of sustainable governance arrangements (policies, measures, institutions, systems).

## Outcomes

*Resulting in the following outcomes:*

### Changed agendas

Policy agendas, strategies and action plans are based on co-produced knowledge and evidence from research, taking into account policy actors' strategic objectives with a view to combat poverty, social equity, and benefit sharing of natural resource use.

### Enhanced capacities

Improved capacities of policy stakeholders, including public sector, researchers (including SEI researchers), private and civil society actors based on robust policy research, institutional analysis, applied learning and cross-sector dialogue.

### Improved decisions

Improved decision process and outcomes through strategic engagement, convening dialogues, policy communication, tailored analysis, and providing tools that aid decisions around sustainability targets.

## Impacts

*By achieving these outcomes, we are contributing to the long-term impacts:*

### Synergised climate action

Synergised climate action across countries and communities in the region through policy decisions informed by communications and research.

### Reduced climate risk

Reduced climate-related impacts and vulnerabilities on communities and economic sectors in the region.

### Accelerate SDG implementation

Accelerating SDG implementation through evidence-based policy decisions that enhance environmental governance and conservation policies.

### Improved human well-being

Improved human well-being through sustainable rural and peri-urban livelihoods and resilient food systems by integrating poverty reduction, social equality, gender equality and rights-based approaches into policy decisions.

### Effective transitioning

Effective transitioning to circularity by integrating actions and policy initiatives collaborating with various stakeholders ensuring transformative and just development pathways.

## Boundary Partners

*While engaging with:*

Regional bodies:  
UNESCAP, ASEAN, CAEC.

National Governments:  
ASEAN Member States,  
China.

Subnational policy entities  
and administrative levels  
(e.g. Sagaing Region  
Government, Myanmar).

Civil society groups and  
representative bodies.

Private sector  
representatives and  
MSMEs.



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# Evolving areas of work

SEI will focus over the above strategic areas over the next five years to generate new knowledge that will deliver reduced climate risk, sustainable resource use of resilient ecosystems and improved health and well-being. However, there are new emerging, and yet existing critical areas of research we must further look into to ensure we can provide a robust response to the environment and development challenges we face. This will include the following areas of interest.

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01. Reframing ecological economics
  02. Exploring a Centre for Financing Sustainability
  03. Highlighting intersections with health
  04. Ensuring biodiversity and ecosystem services
  05. Transforming agriculture and rural development





Evolving areas of work

## Reframing ecological economics

SEI Asia already supports cross-thematic implementation, with specific value-adding skills in gender inequality and social equity, poverty and policy. These value-adding skills ensure that knowledge creation for policy and practice delivers on the multiple needs of sustainability. Now, SEI Asia aims to go even further by including economics to its cross-thematic, value-adding skills.

We believe that to change behaviours of governmental bodies on sustainable policy and practice, we must engage with them in familiar decision-making 'vernacular' (e.g. language, problem framing, data, metrics).

Typically, most governmental bodies base their public policies on economics, factoring in monetary, financial and fiscal implications before they can implement any policy on environmental sustainability. We see this as an opportunity to use an economic framework to help policymakers identify priorities, clarify transaction costs, determine effective regulation, and understand workable incentives to deliver long-term behaviour change.

To achieve this, SEI Asia will value add economics into some of its program portfolio through three actions:



### 1. Collecting value data

to understand the metric and convey value of policy and practice outcomes, data on the value, costs and benefits of actions is fundamental to changing perceptions and behaviours. This will answer the governments' questions on what is the value of an action, what are the costs and who benefits for new policies?



### 2. Framing problems inclusively

by unpacking value that goes beyond financial spreadsheets to one that factors in inclusion and 'leaving no one behind' will be prioritized. We will present estimated values of in-market, near-market and non-market goods and services to support difficult trade-offs and decisions, including identification of potential 'payouts' or benefits and 'losses' or losers.



### 3. Promoting effective prioritization of actions

is a key step in helping governments understand the value of inclusive participatory decision-making. We understand competing issues can delay or derail environmental policies, and for that reason, we will present credible and transparent knowledge show the importance of immediate action.



Evolving areas of work

## Exploring a Centre for Financing Sustainability

Building on the existing climate and sustainable development policy frameworks, the aim of the Centre for Financing Sustainability (CFS) is to provide a platform for leading regional private sector financial institutions to collaborate and align the financial sector to achieve the Paris Agreement.

We recognize that the challenge is not just about mobilizing more money, but it is fundamentally about good governance – how the public and private sectors can interact with each other to create a sustainable financial system.

With this in mind, SEI Asia will use our scientific expertise and strong relationships with our stakeholders to facilitate the establishment of CFS. We will gather and share knowledge on measuring green impact and propose a set of criteria for sustainable investment, support pathways to sustainability, develop metrics on how to monitor and evaluate sustainability performances and work with policy and key decision makers to streamline green investment taxonomy and performance.

With the Thai financial sector as pilot, the CFS aims to support Thailand in meeting its sustainability targets by using research to facilitate better policy and approach to green and sustainable finance. CFS will raise awareness and build capacity of key stakeholders to scale up sustainable finance initiatives, enabling Thailand to become a green financial hub in the region.



# Highlighting intersections with health

Over the last 50 years, there have been significant measureable gains in health and development – people live longer; child mortality rates are lower; and fewer people live in extreme poverty.

Yet, this progress is likely to be reversed by global environmental changes including deforestation, water scarcity, ocean acidification, climate change and loss of biodiversity.

These human-driven environmental changes can affect health and well-being through direct and indirect pathways, including heat-related illnesses because of global warming, respiratory diseases due to air pollution, increased risk of vector-borne diseases related to land use change, and loss of livelihoods from disaster events.

Environmental threats can widen social and health inequities, but the adverse effects can be reduced or even prevented if causes and outcomes are considered in policy planning and action.

As such, SEI Asia aims to strengthen the link between environment and health through strategic research and policy engagement on identifying interventions targeting drivers that can greatly influence health outcomes. We plan to develop science-based tools and resources at the intersection of environment and health and demonstrate their application to inform and improve environment, social and economic policies in the Asian region.

A more proactive approach to environment and health decision-making underscores that doing good for the environment can also bring benefits for health, and more broadly, make a positive long-term impact on sustainable development.

## Outcomes

The collection of environment and health data is not sufficient – it is their **integration into useful policy tools** which is necessary to help overcome the key barriers for action at the environment-health nexus.

Given the strong interconnections between the environment and health, across the SDGs, there are practical, evidence-based policy opportunities for environmental and health actors to work together with other sectors to achieve mutually beneficial gains. For example, integrated action tackling climate change and air pollution can provide significant benefits in reducing health risks, increasing climate resilience, and increasing energy savings, thereby allowing countries to advance the SDGs by taking a multisectoral, policy coherent approach.

Understanding the health impacts of human activity-driven environmental changes can reveal important trade-offs and unintended consequences of policy choices at multiple scales (local, national, regional).

At the least, an understanding of critical environment and health relationships in the policy process can help plan early for reducing any adverse **health and environmental** impacts including disproportionate effects on vulnerable groups.

There is a need to build on existing efforts and enhance guidance which reflects understanding of environment and health relationships so as to support low- and middle-income countries to develop cost-effective and sustainable systems to promote both healthy natural systems and human health which are integrated into national budgets and planning processes. Innovative, applied methods of assessment of co-benefits through cost-effectiveness analysis and economic valuation of health and environmental impacts, undertaken in consultation with stakeholders, can inform policies which must be developed and implemented. Such co-benefits-based assessments at country level can incentivize and help strengthen capacity across ministerial departments and across sectors to address environment and health in an integrated manner.





Evolving areas of work

## Ensuring biodiversity and ecosystem services

SEI has gathered a great deal of experience on how to work with governments and related stakeholders to put greater emphasis on the value of biodiversity and related ecosystem services for our societies. In particular, multi-functional biodiverse landscapes providing critical ecosystem services are threatened by high levels of resource extraction, such as mining, e.g., in the Chindwin River Basin, NW Myanmar.

Current policies and economic structures favour extraction over conservation. This, however, natural habitats and livelihoods alike, particularly those relying on critical ecosystem services, such as clean water, wild foods, and fertile soils. Even if resource extraction ostensibly shows economic growth, livelihoods are threatened. The situation in the Chindwin River Basin is not unlike many other biodiversity hotspots across Asia; at SEI Asia we feel that our contribution in engagement and research for policy development is needed to preserve the functions of these areas and develop nature-based solutions to development.

Evolving areas of work

## Transforming agriculture and rural development

Rural areas currently show the highest levels of resource extraction in terms of food, materials, biomass and energy. With cities as a pull magnet for jobs, rural areas are losing labour, as well as social cohesion and cultural knowledge. The pandemic situation has shown just how brittle food systems are and how coping policies are focused on urban hubs. What is the future of sustainable food production? How can rural life and rural livelihoods be sustained in a post-carbon, urbanised world? How can we ensure food systems are safe, sufficient, transparent and fair? Based on SEI's extensive work on poverty, rural development, agricultural systems, social equity, and agricultural policy, we continue to work in this field to achieve SDGs in rural areas and communities.





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# Enabling delivery

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- 01. Communications
  - 02. Operations and finance
  - 03. Monitoring and learning







Aim

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Embed communications planning  
and outputs in our research  
and achieve effective policy  
engagement and influence.

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Enabling delivery

## Communications

Communications is the interface between science and policy.

### Key audiences

Our research and policy work will be based on credibility, building relationships, engaging in dialogue and focused on our audiences of:



Researchers, think tanks and institutes,  
and UN agencies like UN-ESCAP



Media outlets and reporters in Asia  
including building non-English media  
connections especially Thai and  
regional language media



Policymakers including sub-national  
and national ministries / departments /  
offices, and regional actors including  
ASEAN



SEI Asia researchers for building  
internal capacity on communications

Scientific research

To communicate our scientific research to influence key audiences: policy and decision makers, researchers and the media.

Increase visibility

To increase the visibility of SEI in Asia and position it as the top-of-mind organization in the field of scientific research and policy.

Publications and media

To produce high-quality publications and media materials to effectively communicate scientific knowledge on key environmental issues in Asia, with focus on the Mekong Region.

Promote Asia Centre

To promote Asia Centre employees as leaders in regional environment topics and scientific research, policy, environmental tools, and project management.

Strategic partnerships

To build strategic partnerships among various groups to raise awareness and bring influence to bear on environmental debates and policies.

Strategic communications

To support internal capacity for more strategic and effective communications.

Credibility

Strategic dissemination of peer-reviewed output to further underscore the credibility of SEI Asia research.

Target oriented content

More targeted content and formats developed to match the specific communication needs of target audiences.

Media outreach

Enhanced media outreach especially among regional Asia and Mekong media.

Communication tools

Improved communication skills of staff through various tools (i.e. graphic design, photostories, film, podcasts) and platforms (websites, social media).

Knowledge channels

Ensuring consistent and high-quality communications across all SEI Asia knowledge products and channels.

Multimedia tools

Enhancing the use of multimedia tools, including infographics, animated videos and podcasts, to capture and share scientific research knowledge to development partners in Asia, specifically the Mekong Region.

Expanding tools

Exploring and expanding new tools and methods for communicating research especially from the field (i.e. photovoice for communities to tell their own stories; participatory mapping in urban research).

Social media, film and podcast

Exploring the use of communication tools such as social media, films and podcasts in integrated research methods to help conduct quantitative (and at times qualitative) research and provide audience analysis (for example in network mapping).





Enabling delivery

## Operations and finance

The strategy sets the direction for the Operations Team in SEI Asia, establishing overarching goals and identifying a range of strategies needed to achieve these goals. This strategic plan is a general guide for the management of the department, according to the priorities and needs of

the Asia Centre as a whole. While the strategic plan does not stipulate the day-to-day tasks and activities involved in running the department, this presents information from which detailed annual 'operational plans' can be developed.

### Outcomes

Finance

People agenda

Information

Admin/Logistics

Aim

A confident and innovative department, delivering on-time, high quality information while managing efficient and transparent systems and procedures for all employees and partners.



### Financial modeling

Improved, cost-efficient and creative financial models for future budget development at project and core levels, supporting long-term office forecasting.

### Proactive involvement

More proactive involvement in projects by providing Project Managers accurate and timely financial information (monthly/HQ reports, burn rates etc), incorporating the C2G process for all projects.

### Financial tools

Enhanced financial tools for subgrantees to help build capacity and ability of partners on financial reporting.

### Logistic processes

Improved logistical processes and communication on all aspects of human resource administration.

### HR delivery and communications

Enhanced delivery and communication of human resource processes and procedures, aligned with local laws and SEI global policies.

### Improving managers

Improve capacity of managers and employees to grow in their roles and raise their capabilities.

### Enhancing dialogue

Enhanced cooperation and dialogue with global human resources team to ensure the timely delivery of Human Resources guidelines and consistent promotion of SEI core values and code of conduct.

### Structured feedback

Improved support on professional growth of staff, through structured feedback and regular performance reviews.

### Information and communications technology

#### Office ICT support

Support all office ICT needs, including Office 365, to maintain professional services and secure data, cost-efficient and high-quality/speed IT environment, utilizing Office 365 to create more efficient work.

#### IT Training

Provide regular training on updated capacity of IT, new programmes, or tools to use and supporting how the office can become greener through IT, e.g. video links, online meetings/webinars, reduced paper through digital forms, in order to reduce carbon emissions.

### Admin support

Professional, timely, responsive admin support to all projects and employees.

### Green procurement practices

Develop and introduce green procurement practices. (hotels, stationeries, cleaning supplies/utilities, furniture etc).

### Green offices

Ensure green office set up and space/functional requirements are appropriate for employee needs.





Enabling delivery

## Monitoring and learning

The Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) in SEI Asia is guided by SEI's Results and Learning Framework which describes how we measure progress on the goals set out in the SEI Strategy 2020-2024: Knowledge for Action.

The MEL procedure was developed to operationalize the existing framework into institutional processes and activities. It aims to monitor, evaluate and learn about where, why and how research and engagement activities contribute to change outside SEI. This way, operational adjustments can be implemented, on a case-to-case basis, to ensure more effective and impactful outputs and outcomes.

The MEL procedure will highlight evidence of and learnings from research and engagement activities at SEI. This includes outputs produced, how outputs are received and used outside SEI (uptake), and what societal changes they contribute to (outcomes).

It is organized around four MEL questions which guide the planning, implementation and follow-up of MEL activities in projects, programmes and initiatives. The questions correspond with the four levels in SEI's results and learning framework:

It is organized around four MEL questions which guide the planning, implementation and follow-up of MEL activities in projects, programmes and initiatives. The questions correspond with the four levels in SEI's results and learning framework:

1. **Strategic Direction:** are we delivering on SEI Strategy and project goals?
2. **Activities and Outputs:** are we following our plans?
3. **Uptake and Dissemination:** are people accessing, disseminating and using our work?
4. **Outcomes:** what changes our work contributed to?

At SEI Asia, the MEL procedure will be rolled out in all projects to learn on how the MEL procedure can be effectively integrated into the project cycle (stages of proposal, execution and closure). The following are proposed activities and tools that the projects can embed into their activities to ensure effective achievement of outputs and outcomes while performing continuous improvements.



## Results framework

Within each project monitors indicators which provide evidences for the achievement of project outputs and outcomes.

## MSC Reports

Most Significant Change (MSC) stories will provide qualitative evidence of the outcomes and in some extent impact of the project.

## Activity monitoring

Regular project meeting monitors the progress of activities and achievement of outputs.

## Financial monitoring

Regular centre operations meeting monitors centre and project's financial performance.

## Internal evaluation

- Project annual surveys.
- Part of the MSC stories collection and analysis.
- Periodical invitation of partners and stakeholders to reflect on the centre's contribution towards relevant intended impacts.
- End-of-project evaluation.

## External evaluation

- Project midterm review.
- Periodical SEI-wide review.

## Activity debriefings

(Documented) End of activity debriefing meeting: for all key activities, it will be strongly suggested to have debriefing meeting with documented minutes.

## End-of-project evaluation

(Documented) End-of-project evaluation meeting: for all projects, it will be strongly suggested to have debriefing meeting with documented minutes.

## End-of-project reflection

End-of-project reflection survey by Centre's MEL focal point: at the end of the project, the centre will send out survey link to be completed by project manager and/or staff responsible for project M&E.

## Learning seminars

Topical or operational learning seminars: learnings from activities, projects, and centre operations can be shared through lunch seminars or on specific sessions.

## MEL workshops

Periodical MEL workshops: serve as refresher for newcomers and as well avenue to share about important information about SEI-wide and centre MEL.

## Centre's change stories

Periodical centre's change stories: invitation for partners and stakeholders to share stories of change, possibly related to periodical evaluation of centre's contribution to impacts.

## Knowledge sharing

Knowledge-sharing through SEI online platform: selected information and change stories can be shared through SEI online knowledge platform.





## About

SEI Asia, based in Bangkok, has a diverse team of multinational experts that integrates scientific research with participatory approaches to co-develop and share knowledge, build partnerships, and inform policy for resilient development. It focuses on gender equality and social equity, climate adaptation, reducing disaster risk, water insecurity and integrated water resources management, transitional agriculture, renewable energy and urbanisation.

SEI Asia is an affiliate of Chulalongkorn University (CU), Thailand. SEI and CU have inked a long-term agreement until 2023 to foster innovative scientific research combined with effective policy engagement on development and environmental challenges in Asia. The key areas of collaboration are: intellectual engagement for joint research applications and fund mobilization; lecturing and seminars for CU's students; post-graduate supervision and examination; and, CU-SEI employee linkages.



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## Contact us



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The Stockholm Environment Institute is an international non-profit research and policy organization that tackles environment and development challenges.

**We connect science and decision-making to develop solutions for a sustainable future for all.**

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