



Environmental Cooperation-Asia (ECO-Asia) ECO-Asia Water and Sanitation

JULY 2009



Photo: Robert James Elliot

Asia, the fastest-growing region in the world, faces unprecedented environmental challenges with disproportionate impact on women and the urban poor.

BACKGROUND

Widespread migration to urban centers in Asia is placing tremendous stress on urban water supplies and sanitation services delivery, with a disproportionate impact on the poor and women. Many water services providers in Asian cities suffer from weak governance, inefficient operations, inadequate skills development, aging infrastructure, and limited investments, resulting in poor services delivery and low access to safe water supply and basic sanitation for the poor. These problems have led to high rates of child mortality from preventable waterborne illnesses and lost economic productivity. Improving access to clean water and adequate sanitation remains one of the highest priorities for governments in Asia, who are committed to achieving the UN Millennium Development Goals (MDG) by halving by 2015 the proportion of people without sustainable access to safe water supply and basic sanitation.

Environmental Cooperation-Asia (ECO-Asia), a regional program of the US Agency for International Development (USAID), works to support the achievement of the MDG by facilitating exchange of innovative policies and practices for expanding and sustaining access to water services, especially to the urban poor, through partnerships. In 2008, ECO-Asia, in partnership with the Asian Development Bank and the International Water Association, established WaterLinks, a regional network for supporting and developing Water Operator Partnerships (WOPs) between water and wastewater service providers in Asia, to promote improved access to safe water and basic sanitation. WaterLinks' mission is to strengthen service provider capabilities and capacity through WOPs, regional capacity building and knowledge management.

Through WaterLinks, ECO-Asia supports WOPs to promote increased access to water supply and sanitation by:

- Enabling water services delivery to the urban poor.
- Demonstrating sustainable sanitation solutions.
- Improving performance of water services utilities.

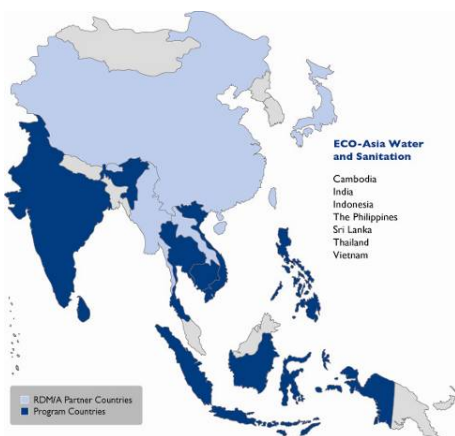




Photo: Jay Tecson

Through WaterLinks, ECO-Asia partners water and wastewater operators in Asia's cities to effectively transfer best practices and improve service provision.

APPROACH

ECO-Asia's principal program activities through WaterLinks include:

- Establishing and facilitating water services operator “twinning” partnerships to enable the sharing and application of best practices and improved policies. Twinning activities include exchange of expertise and knowledge, on-the-job training, peer review and technology demonstrations.
- Building capacity of water services operators through regional training and toolkit preparation in cooperation with international development partners, networks and organizations. Training and toolkit development integrate applied research and practitioner-based, field-tested methodologies to improve service delivery.
- Sharing and replicating experiences from water services operator partnerships with regional networks and institutions through networking events, publications and website.
- Cooperating with USAID country missions and international development partners to leverage resources and regional experience.

ECO-Asia activities draw on a range of partner resources and capabilities to achieve tangible results in terms of expanded or improved access to safe water supply and basic sanitation and increased capacity to deliver services. To implement its activities, ECO-Asia provides targeted technical advice, coordination support, small grants and communications support.

PARTNERS

Implementing Partner. AECOM International Development.

Cooperating Partners. Asian Development Bank, International Water Association, ASEAN Environmentally Sustainable Cities Initiative, Southeast Asian Water Utilities Network (SEAWUN), South Asia Water Utilities Network (SAWUN), water services providers.

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