

# ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM)

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## DATE LAUNCHED

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July 2002



NWRB Exec. Director Seville David, Jr. (16th from left) leads participants at the 19th Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM) held in Panglao Island, Bohol, Philippines on 28–29 May 2019. [NWRB]

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ASEAN has long recognized the importance of environmental cooperation for sustainable development and regional integration. Since 1977 it has been promoting environmental cooperation among its member states. Water has always been a key sector of interest. To enhance the regional cooperation on freshwater management, the ASEAN leaders established the ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM) with the aim to:

1. Promote networking and engage in collaborative action towards the practical implementation of integrated water resources management (IWRM);
2. Promote and facilitate the exchange of relevant information, expertise, technology and know-how among water resource agencies of member countries; and
3. Provide or make arrangements for relevant training, education and awareness-raising campaigns on IWRM.

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## COMMITMENTS

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The Philippines, as a member country, takes part in the implementation of the ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action on Water Resources Management (AS-PA-WRM), which contains actions on four key issues, namely:

1. Supply, demand and allocation;
2. Water quality and sanitation;
3. Climate change and extreme events; and
4. Governance and capacity building.

These key issues are translated into ten project concepts:

- Project Concept 1– Demand Management Learning Forums;
- Project Concept 2– ASEAN Integrated Water Resources Management (IWRM) Country Strategy Guidelines;
- Project Concept 3– River Classification Systems;
- Project Concept 4– ASEAN Water Data Management and Reporting System Design;
- Project Concept 5– Risks and Impacts from Extreme Events in ASEAN Member Countries;
- Project Concept 6– Knowledge Sharing and Exchange;
- Project Concept 7– Exchanging Information and Creating Awareness in a Structured Basis between Peak Bodies;
- Project Concept 8– Integrated Land Use Planning;
- Project Concept 9– Increasing Long Term Awareness, Knowledge and Community Participation in Integrated Water Resources Management;
- Project Concept 10– Education on Sanitation and Pollution Management.

In the ASEAN Long Term Strategic Plan of Action for Water Resources Management (2005), the first challenge that ASEAN Member States committed themselves to is to reduce by 50% inadequate access to safe drinking water by 2015, and reduce by 50% inadequate access to sanitation by 2015.

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## UPDATES AND RELATED PROJECTS

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Improved drinking water sources were available to 92% of the population in 2015, just within the target goal of improvement from 84% in 1990. However, in terms of reducing inadequate access to sanitation by 2015, the Philippines did not meet its goal of 79% improved sanitation from 1990 to 2015, having only achieved 74% from a baseline of 57%.

Project Concept 7 is one of the 10 project concepts in the ASEAN Strategic Plan of Action (ASPA) on Water Resources Management initiated by the AWGWRM. It aims to create and maintain a forum for water resource and environmental government agencies and NGOs and peak industry bodies and associations with an interest in water management issues throughout ASEAN. Its objective is to create awareness of key water resource management problems and to exchange information about generic solutions. The project is spearheaded by the Philippines through the National Water Resources Board (NWRB) and supported by the ASEAN Plus Three (Japan, Korea and China). The NWRB is being assisted by international consultants from the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT).

An ASEAN-Republic of Korea Special Cooperation project on Building Resilience for Sustainable ASEAN from Water-related Disasters was conducted from June 2016 to February 2017. The project aimed to share experiences and know-how of participating countries in coping with water-related hazards and disasters; present a policy-related agenda for a resilient ASEAN; and build regional cooperation in tackling water and water-related disaster issues from a policymaking perspective. The executive summary report was published in April 2017. The section on the Philippines was written by the NWRB and a consultant. Proposals to strengthen regional capacity and promote cooperation are to: (1) establish an ASEAN Community of Practice (CoP) dedicated to water-related disasters to facilitate regular exchange of knowledge and experiences among member countries, (2) develop and implement a programmatic capacity building program for ASEAN countries to build country level institutional and individual expertise, and (3) develop a regional database to serve as a repository of water related disaster programs/projects/activities being implemented in ASEAN countries for better knowledge management.

The NWRB organized a workshop in March 2017 in Manila. This was attended by 18 core middle to senior level officials from the water sector from seven ASEAN countries. The objective of the workshop was to provide a platform for key actors in the water sector in the ASEAN member states to exchange knowledge and experiences in implementing IWRM in their respective countries. Opportunities for sharing information on key issues were discussed and a communication plan was developed during the workshop.

Relevant to the AWGWRM activities, the NWRB had submitted three concept notes under Work Plan III to the AWGWRM Committee and ASEAN Plus Three (AP3) Work Plan (2018–2022) for funding. The proposals are on: (1) IWRM and sustainable development, (2) Integrating climate change into water management planning, and (3) Best practices for inter-sectoral collaboration for integrated water resources management.

On 28–29 May 2019, the Philippines hosted the 19th AWGWRM Meeting in Panglao Island, Bohol. It was chaired by Ir. Hj. Abdullah bin Isnin, the Chairperson of AWGWRM and Deputy Director General, Department of Irrigation and Drainage, Malaysia while the NWRB Executive Director was elected as the Vice Chairperson. The Meeting noted the Philippines' presentation on the follow-ups/recommendations from the project wherein the NWRB will develop the concept notes into full proposals and submit them to AWGWRM through the ASEAN Secretariat for consideration and endorsement. During the meeting, an ASEAN–UNDP project awaiting approval from the GEF called Reducing Pollution and Preserving Environmental Flows in the East Asian Seas through the Implementation of Integrated River Basin Management in ASEAN Countries was presented. The approved priority river basins for the Philippines are the Imus–Ylang-Ylang and Pasac–Guagua Rivers (Manila Bay).

Some related projects being undertaken are the ASEAN-JAIF Project on “Policy Dialogue and Network Building of Multi-Stakeholders on Integrated Domestic Wastewater Management” in ASEAN countries. One of the identified potential good case studies is in the Philippines, specifically the Public-Private Partnership arrangement of Metro Manila for the enhancement of domestic wastewater management.

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## **NEXT STEPS**

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During the 19th meeting of the working group, the following agreements were made:

- The project concept notes submitted by the Philippines will be developed into full proposals and submitted to the AWGWRM through the ASEAN Secretariat for consideration and endorsement.
- ASEAN Member States (AMS) are encouraged to provide updates on their IWRM country data through the ASEAN IWRM website and the ASEAN Water Data Management Reporting System, preferably for the last three years, which Malaysia will synthesize to present a regional overview of the water data management status in ASEAN.

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## **FOCAL OFFICE**

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***National Water Resources Board, DENR***

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## MEETINGS ATTENDED

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- 19th Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM) 28–29 May 2019 Bohol, Philippines – Hosted by the NWRB, DENR.
- 18th Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Water Resource Management (AWGWRM), 29–30 March 2018; Nay Pyi Taw, Myanmar – Atty. Juan Y. Corpuz Jr. (NWRB)
- 17th ASEAN Working Group on Water Resources Management (AWGWRM) and International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) Seminar on “Building an Effective Framework for Regional Water Cooperation,” 17–19 April 2017; Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia – Dep. Exec. Director Jorge M. Estioko and Engr. Charito M. Menguito (NWRB)
- Workshop on Implementing IWRM in ASEAN: Opportunities for Sharing Information on Key Issues, 1–3 March 2017; Manila, Philippines – DENR officials and NWRB officials and staff
- Consultation Meeting on ASEAN–ROK Cooperation Project “Building Resilience for Sustainable ASEAN from Water Related Disasters,” 7–8 September 2016; Chuncheon, Gangwon-do, Korea – Engr. Isidra D. Peñaranda (NWRB)
- 16th Meeting of the ASEAN Working Group on Water Management (AWGWRM), 1–3 June 2016; Luang Prabang Province, Lao PDR – Dep. Exec. Director Jorge M. Estioko and Engr. Isidra D. Peñaranda (NWRB)

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## SOURCES/RELEVANT LINKS

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<https://aseaniwrm.water.gov.my/>

[https://environment.asean.org/?page\\_id=61](https://environment.asean.org/?page_id=61)

*World Water Day – March 22*

<https://www.un.org/en/events/waterday/>