



Environment and climate change

Regional environmental cooperation

The challenge

Many problems in the field of environmental protection and natural resource management can only be solved if the decision-makers and those affected agree on rules and strategies that apply across national and sectoral boundaries. In order to better meet shared or transboundary challenges, there is therefore a growing trend for national actors to seek regional cooperation, whether in intergovernmental organisations or in loose cross-border initiatives.

It is here that our advisory services come in. German development cooperation in general and GIZ in particular are increasingly involved in the major current processes of regional cooperation and networks relevant to environmental and resource issues. We are therefore well placed to promote cooperation in this field.

Our approach

We support cooperation in the field of environmental protection and natural resource management in two areas. Firstly, we participate in regional initiatives aimed at conservation and sustainable use of natural resources such as forests and water. Here we strive to reconcile the interests of different stakeholders and encourage them to work together on sectoral strategies.

Secondly, we promote the mainstreaming of environmental issues and priorities in regional political and economic integration processes. We emphasise the importance of exchanging experience on a regional level, and work to strengthen the capacities of national environment ministries to address environmental protection on a trans-sectoral basis. Commitments under international environmental conventions and new financing instruments are particularly important aspects of this work.

Our services

GIZ's services encompass:

- **Organisational advice**
We advise our partners on founding, consolidating and developing regional initiatives and organisations. We mediate between countries and stakeholders applying the necessary sensitivity and help establish a basis of trust.
- **Policy and strategy advice**
We assist with the development, implementation and evaluation of joint regional policies and strategies. This includes clarifying and communicating the region's position in international negotiations, for example in relation to environmental conventions.
- **Networking and dialogue**
We create and facilitate platforms that promote communication between different stakeholders. We help our partners bring the private sector and civil society on board also with a view to obtaining an impetus for change and reform processes.
- **Policy harmonisation**
We advise on adapting national environmental directives to comply with international agreements and on the harmonisation of legislation and standards.
- **Specialist advice**
We advise our partners on the introduction of policy instruments such as eco-labelling or strategic environmental assessment, drawing on examples of best practice from the relevant member countries. We advise inter-ministerial working groups on topical environmental issues such as climate change, resource efficiency and the conservation of biodiversity.



- **Development of knowledge management and environmental information systems**

We help set up organisational units, train staff in data preparation and analysis and help introduce relevant technologies for this purpose.

The benefits

Promoting regional environmental cooperation strengthens transboundary mechanisms for sustainable natural resource management. Successful examples include the management of water resources (Nile, Congo, Lake Chad), the conservation of tropical rainforests (Congo Basin, Amazonia) and the establishment of bio-corridors. With regard to environmental protection, conditions conducive to socially acceptable and clean production can be put in place when free trade zones are set up or economic integration takes place (MERCOSUR, EU's Union for the Mediterranean). In the process, clients benefit from GIZ's experience and its role as a mediator in multi-stakeholder negotiations, which is widely appreciated by our partners.

An example from the field

In large parts of South-East Asia continued deforestation has a dramatic impact on the climate, water levels and species diversity. It endangers the immediate livelihoods of people who are dependent on the forests, but also affects the entire population of the region and individual national economies. Effective international action is urgently needed.

The ten countries that make up the Association of South-east Asian Nations (ASEAN) have acknowledged the scale of the problem. The association now faces the task of creating a regional forest policy and establishing the necessary basis of trust for coordinated transboundary action. Operating on behalf of the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), GIZ is advising the technical coordination body and the network of ASEAN Senior Officials on Forestry. GIZ is further supporting the ASEAN secretariat in its coordination function and in knowledge management. Signs of progress in intergovernmental cooperation are already evident.

The ministries responsible for forests have agreed on regional criteria and indicators for sustainable forest management and a mandatory report format for monitoring implementation. The peer review mechanism – a sort of sectoral “neighbourhood advice scheme” – provided Brunei and the Philippines with specific recommendations for their forestry policy reforms. The participatory approach and the openness of the countries involved helped create trust and promote political dialogue. This trust is essential if highly sensitive issues such as the transboundary trade in illegally logged timber are to be addressed. In this connection a joint working plan on Forest Law Enforcement and Governance has been adopted. The regional knowledge networks and learning platforms that have been set up were an important factor in these successes.

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