Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI)

Supporting the implementation of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam

01 Introduction

The Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI) was jointly developed by the Ramsar National Focal Points (NFPs) Cambodia, Lao People's Democratic Republic (PDR), Myanmar, Thailand and Viet Nam, and IUCN's Asia Regional Office. It was endorsed by the 52nd meeting of the Ramsar Convention Standing Committee in June 2016. IBRRI aims to support the coordinated implementation of the objectives of the Strategic Plan of the Ramsar Convention. IUCN acts as the Secretariat for the Initiative under the leadership of the Steering Committee, which includes representatives from the five governments and the Ramsar Convention Secretariat as an observer.

IBRRI at a Glance

5 countries
16 partner organisations
38 Ramsar sites
904,676 hectares

02 The Indo-Burma Hotspot

The Indo-Burma Hotspot is one of the top ten global Biodiversity Hotspots for irreplaceability and also ranked in the top five for threat. The region has an estimated wetland area of over 38,300,000 hectares, providing habitat for a rich diversity of life, including reptiles, mammals, fish, birds and corals. Inland wetlands support at least 2,843 wetland-dependent species, many of which are endemic to the region, with new species still being discovered.

More people live in the IBRRI region than in any other Biodiversity Hotspot, and the region's wetlands underpin human well-being and the prosperity of almost 250 million people. The wetlands provide a range of products, including fish and rice, which sustain the growing human population and underwrite regional food security. Thailand and Viet Nam are the second and third largest exporters of rice in the world. The fishery in the Mekong River Basin alone provides an important protein source for more than 60 million people.

Despite their importance, IBRRI's wetlands are under extreme pressure from anthropogenic impacts. Coastal wetlands, including tidal flats and mangroves have been undergoing long-term area losses. The Indo-Burma Wetland Outlook highlights that the loss of coastal wetlands across Indo-Burma countries accounts for one fifth of the total global loss of coastal wetlands. In many areas, natural wetlands have been converted to rice paddy and then to aquaculture ponds. In urban areas, natural wetlands have been reclaimed for infrastructure development as urban sprawl continues, impacting floodplains. Wetlands are further impacted by hydropower and irrigation infrastructure development, changes in precipitation due to climate change, and overharvesting of wetland resources.

03 IBRRI Objectives

IBRRI's second Strategic Plan (2025-2030) was developed through extensive consultations with IBRRI Ramsar authorities and representatives from national and international NGOs and academia. Its aim is to support the effective implementation of the Ramsar Convention in the Indo-Burma Region, focusing on five objectives for sustainable regional wetlands, with climate change as a crosscutting issue. Broadly, these objectives are to conserve and restore wetlands and their ecosystem services, mainstream wetlands in policy, promote communication and awareness, leverage sustainable financing and ensure that the Regional Initiative is sound and sustainable. The plan will guide the work of countries and partners for six years.

To ensure oversight and transparency in the management of the IBRRI, the initiative has established a governance structure with representatives from both government and non-governmental organisations:

- The **Steering Committee** includes representatives from Ramsar Administrative Authorities from the five countries.
- The **IBRRI Secretariat** is hosted by the IUCN Asia Regional Office in Bangkok.
- The **IBRRI Stakeholder Committee** provides technical and strategic guidance as a platform for inclusive, transparent and multi-stakeholder engagement in IBBRI activities.

04 Key Achievements

- Awarded 398,674 Euros in small grants to civil society organisations
- Hosted a 10-day training for 136 wetlands site managers
- Developed a guide on Identifying and Prioritising Wetlands for Ramsar Site Designation in the Indo-Burma Region
- Developed and piloted a Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment Tool for wetlands in ten Ramsar sites in the region
- Held a regional wetlands policy dialogue and developed a wetlands policy brief
- Trained wetland communities in citizen journalism with reports aired on national television

> *IBRRI strengthens implementation of the Ramsar Convention by supporting policy, technical knowledge and stakeholder engagement on wetlands. It serves as a collaborative platform to promote the conservation and sustainable management of wetlands to ensure they can continue to deliver benefits to people and the environment in the region.*
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