Outcome Brief of the 2024 Training Workshop Module 1

Introduction to National Wetland Inventories

Overview

This brief provides a synthesis of the outcomes and findings from Training Workshop Module 1: Introduction to National Wetland Inventories, held from 8- 13 September 2024 in Seocheon, Republic of Korea to support the implementation of SDG 6, in collaboration with the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands. This first module focused on introducing National Wetland Inventories to the UN Member States and Contracting Parties to the Convention.

Background

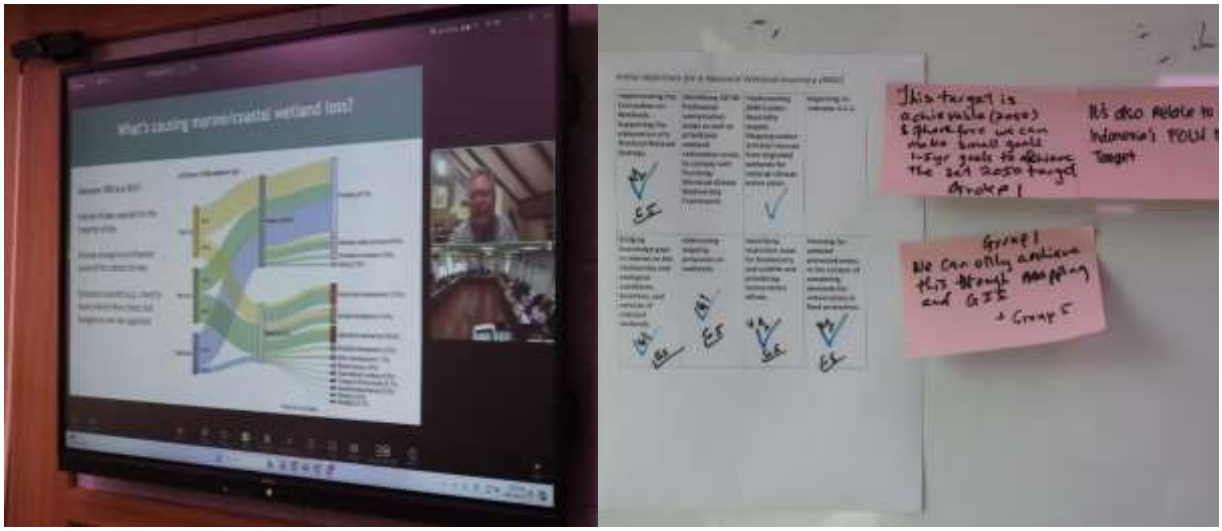
The world's wetlands are disappearing at an alarming rate, with a 35% loss since 1970[1], making them the most threatened ecosystems on Earth. These ecosystems provide essential benefits, including water, food, biodiversity, and protection against extreme weather, while also playing a critical role in climate resilience and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Despite their importance, wetlands are vanishing faster than forests, highlighting the urgent need for their conservation and sustainable management.

National Wetland Inventories (NWIs) are vital for assessing, monitoring, and planning wetland conservation. Recognized under the Convention on Wetlands and reflected as a priority in Strategic Plan 2016–2024, NWIs provide essential data for informed decision-making. To support UN Member States in this effort, the Secretariat of the Convention on Wetlands and the United Nations Office for Sustainable Development (UNOSD) have partnered on a multi-year training programme. This initiative builds capacity for NWI development, contributing to SDG Indicator 6.6.1 tracking, sustainable wetland management, and the achievement of SDG 6.

[1] Global Wetland Outlook, 2021

The workshop was delivered over five days, combining classroom sessions, practical activities, participatory learning and field trips to engage participants in the development of scientifically robust National Wetland Inventories (NWIs). Participants were introduced to the concepts, processes, and tools required to create and manage NWIs, with a focus on integrating policy, scientific, and technical frameworks. The training aimed to strengthen participants' skills in identifying, assessing, and applying strategies for wetland inventory development, and emphasized data management practices for inland, coastal, marine, and human-made wetlands.

Throughout the course, participants engaged in hands-on fieldwork and workshops that allowed them to directly apply their learning in real-world contexts. Group exercises were complemented by expert presentations on existing guidance materials, including best practices for data collection, management, and reporting. Interactive discussions fostered collaboration, enabling participants to share experiences and insights related to wetland inventory development.



Outputs

Participants developed a foundational understanding of creating National Wetland Inventories (NWIs), with discussions emphasizing the importance of integrating scientific, technical, and policy frameworks. Outputs included group work on identifying barriers to inventory processes, collaborative mapping exercises, and insights into applying Earth Observation (EO) technologies. The training culminated in an assignment to prepare a presentation detailing each country's progress, including data collection, institution mapping, stakeholder engagement, and communication strategies for future online meetings.

Key Insights and Next Steps

The following insights and next steps summarize the outcomes of discussions during the training on National Wetland Inventories (NWIs) and feedback received from participating Member States.

- **Standardization and Collaboration:** The need for standardized approaches to wetland inventory processes was a recurring theme. Participants emphasized the importance of harmonized methodologies for accurate data collection and consistency across agencies. Collaboration between government bodies, academia, NGOs, and local communities was identified as a cornerstone for effective wetland management.
- **Data Accuracy and Resource Allocation:** Challenges in data accuracy and resource allocation were highlighted, with participants advocating for cost-effective and scalable solutions, such as the use of drones and free Earth Observation tools. Capacity-building initiatives were also underlined as essential for addressing technical gaps and enhancing local expertise.
- **Integration of Social Perspectives:** Participants underscored the significance of integrating social, cultural, and political dimensions into wetland management practices, particularly in hydrological analyses and policy recommendations. This integration ensures more inclusive and actionable outcomes.
- **Technological Advancements:** The training showcased how advancements in Earth Observation technology can enhance the mapping of small and complex wetlands. However, the importance of balancing spatial resolution with computational capacity was noted, along with the need for customized tools tailored to specific regional requirements.

Next Steps: The next step following the training will be presentations delivered during two online meetings. Each country team will summarize their progress on data collection, institution and stakeholder mapping, and communication strategies for their National Wetland Inventory. These sessions will facilitate cross-country learning and feedback. Additional follow up sessions are schedule to happen, leading up to the second and third modules of the training that will be delivered thanks to this fruitful tri-partite collaboration. **Contact**

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