

Editor's Note

Asia is becoming the focus of global environmental concern. Of the world's 15 most polluted cities, 13 are in Asia; a third of Asians have no access to safe drinking water; and half of Asians have no access to adequate sanitation facilities.¹ The rapid growth of two Asian giants, India and China, hints at a new world order coming, including a great increase in Asia's influence over international affairs and the future of the planet. Given these trends, I believe that the mission of IGES to illuminate environmental issues in the Asia-Pacific region is becoming more and more important. IGES will continue to deliver practical solutions to tackle the challenges facing the region, and the world.

This issue of the *International Review for Environmental Strategies (IRES)* presents expert views on a broad range of environmental concerns of direct relevance to Asia.

K. S. Kavi Kumar and S. Tholkappian present an integrated vulnerability index that is designed to help understand and predict the impacts of climate change, and prioritize adaptation, focusing on the threats to coastal regions of India from sea-level rise. In addition, the authors recommend that instead of post-disaster assistance, the Indian government should focus on developing the insurance market (including the international reinsurance market), and on micro-finance assistance, so that residents of vulnerable coastal regions are better prepared for disasters.

K. Murthy and others compare two types of forest-management system prevalent in India: community-initiated forest management and the newer state-initiated joint forest management. Despite population pressure and higher utilization of forest resources, community forest management offers a good level of protection and biodiversity preservation, strong compliance with rules, and effective complaints mechanisms. Highlighting the underlying strengths of community-forest management, the authors demonstrate that participatory decision making and decentralization are important elements in effective forest management and sustainable development.

In Asia, as in the rest of the world, an increasing number of nature tourism sites are promoting themselves with the label of ecotourism, yet their claims are often questionable. Ravinder N. Batta develops a set of indicators of ecotourism and then applies these to three neighboring nature tourism destinations in the Indian Himalayas. Using data from surveys with tourists, local residents, tourism operators and local authorities, the study assesses how well tourism in the area measures against the indicators of ecotourism, and recommends how to bridge the substantial gaps.

Lutz Wicke and Gerd Duerr-Pucher argue persuasively that the current Kyoto system of national commitments is fundamentally flawed. As an alternative, they introduce a flexible global cap-and-trade scheme, the Global Climate Certificate System, which would benefit both industrialized and developing nations while limiting global emissions to levels that could prevent dangerous climate change.

The credibility of the Kyoto Protocol and its effectiveness in mitigating climate change have been badly affected by the decision of the United States to opt out. Drawing on game theory, Claudia Kemfert

1. Institute for Global Environmental Strategies (IGES). 2005. *Sustainable Asia 2005 and Beyond: In the Pursuit of Innovative Policies*. Hayama, Japan: IGES.

assesses different options to draw non-cooperating nations back into the climate regime. In particular she looks at the implications of trade sanctions for both non-cooperating and cooperating nations and suggests that more positive incentives such as bringing in developing nations and cooperating on R & D could be much more appropriate.

Anna Korppoo and Kayo Ikeda highlight the huge unrealized potential for cooperation on energy and climate between the Russian Far East and Japan. The authors scrutinize past experiences and current obstacles to cooperation, and the prospects for joint implementation projects under the Kyoto Protocol that would exchange Japanese technological expertise for Russian energy.

Abel Afon's experiment with using a combination of Residents' Satisfaction Index and Actual Aspiration Index to identify the priorities for urban regeneration in a Nigerian city has much to offer the Asia-Pacific region. Upgrading city centers with scarce resources is a challenge that many Asian cities are tackling today. This study demonstrates how these tools can be easily applied to democratize the urban development process and to target resources efficiently where they are most needed.

China is estimated to have between 25 and 45 percent of the world's potential for clean development mechanism (CDM) implementation, as much as the rest of Asia combined, yet so far it has lagged behind other countries in putting the CDM into practice. Duan Maosheng and Erik Haites present the considerable progress China has made in preparing for CDM implementation, and suggest ways to overcome the remaining constraints.

Finally, Axel Michaelowa reviews the new book *Climate Trading: Development of Kyoto Protocol Markets* by Deborah Stowell, a solid introduction to the Kyoto Protocol.

I would like to take this opportunity to offer our sincere thanks to each of the *IREES* editorial board members who served until last year.

Dr Hoesung Lee, President of the Council on Energy and Environment Korea and a founding member of the *IREES* board, who has been a source of encouragement and support for his fellow board members with his gentle manner.

Dr Peter deJanosi, Senior Adviser of LEAD international, has given direction to both IGES and the *IREES* with his keen yet kind leadership. His contribution to establishing the foundations of publication procedures has become an indispensable part of *IREES*.

Dr Ryokichi Hirono, Professor Emeritus of Seikei University, has always been ready to proffer a generous helping hand. With his wide network of contacts and his kind support, he led many of the peer reviews.

As always, we look forward to further contributions from readers of *IREES*, to ensure that future issues remain fertile ground for ideas, debate, and solutions to the environmental problems we face in the Asia-Pacific region, today and tomorrow.



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