

Activity Title: Enhancing stakeholder awareness and participation

Lead Organisations: YSLME Project

The YSLME project is taking a variety of approaches to address environmental problems in the Yellow Sea. One important method is through the involvement of stakeholders on many different levels from parliamentary members, to government officers, scientists, NGOs, universities and research institutions all the way to school children.

Parliamentary conferences

Major management decisions, e.g. harmonisation of legislation, institution reform, increase in financial allocation, are the responsibilities of the parliament. To raise awareness of marine issues among parliamentary members in both China and R. Korea, the YSLME project held two parliamentary conferences (Fig. 1). The conference highlighted the threats and pressures on the ecosystem, and the role of parliamentarians in ensuring sustainable use of marine resources. The conferences received considerable attention from the international community because of the innovative approach as the first meeting of GEF projects, where the parliamentarians addressed transboundary environmental issues.



Fig. 1: Conference organised with parliamentarians from China and R. Korea

Involvement of local government officers

Key local government officials involved in coastal planning in China and R. Korea were targeted for workshops designed to improve environmental management. The first workshop focused on Multi-Attribute Decision Analysis (an approach to incorporate various issues into the decision-making process), while the second workshop concentrated on marine spatial planning. These activities improved both the awareness of marine environmental issues and enhanced involvement of the local government in the project, in particular the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) demonstration management projects.

Scientific research with national institutions

Government and scientific institutions formed an important part of the project. Initially, they were responsible for gathering information for the country reports on the environmental status and trends of the Yellow Sea that were integrated in the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis. This process largely assisted in designing the SAP, a science-driven and ecosystem based management plan. The new scientific findings improved the knowledge and understanding of the Yellow Sea ecosystem.

Youth environmental programme

The next generation's awareness of the problems faced by the marine environment was ensured by the involvement of universities through the visiting internship programme and the hosting of UN model debates (Fig. 2), and by the participation of

high schools through the Youth Programme. Three 2-day camps were organised for groups of high school and college students from China and R. Korea with a mixture of lectures and practical hands-on experience out on the sea shore to raise their environmental awareness.



Fig. 2: College students discussing at the Model United Nations.

Yellow Sea Partnership

The project also encourages co-operation on environmental issues with a variety of stakeholders from international organisations such as NOWPAP, WWF, and PEMSEA to local NGOs such as the Birds Korea and the Global Village of Beijing through the creation of the Yellow Sea Partnership (YSP) (Fig. 3). A website (<http://partnership.iwlearn.org/>) is maintained for members to update each other on events and successes, and an annual YSP workshop is held with rotating organisers to discuss problems, solutions, successes, and future events.



Yellow Sea Partnership

Fig. 3: A logo of the Yellow Sea Partnership

Co-operation with NGO

NGOs are a highly effective way of encouraging grass-roots activism that reaches out into local populations in a way that international organisations often find difficult, given the language and cultural barriers. The YSLME project utilises this resource through a targeted small grants programme, awarding grants to activities selected through a

competitive selection process. The programme has enhanced the awareness among local stakeholders and their participation in marine conservation by promoting environmental education, offering community-based capacity-building assistance, and assisting the development and adoption of management schemes to improve protection of the marine environment and sustainable resource use in the Yellow Sea (Fig. 4).



Fig. 4: Children showing certificates to prove the completion of the educational programme (left); school teachers preparing education materials (right)

Stakeholder participation for better ecosystem management

The public awareness campaigns conducted by the project has raised environmental consciousness successfully at all different levels of society, including politicians, government officers, scientists, and students. Strong networks with relevant environmental organisations such as NGOs and international organisations were built through the YSP and the joint conservation efforts. The small grant activities enabled the project to strengthen co-operation with partner organisations and reach out to local communities.

All those initiatives greatly contributed to improving the effectiveness and efficiency of project activities. Local stakeholders were empowered, and possible duplications with similar activities in the region were avoided. Furthermore, the enhanced awareness among and participation from all the stakeholders generated strong support and momentum for conservation actions taken by not only the YSLME project, but also relevant organisations in the region.