



CONCEPT PAPER

SOUTHEAST ASIA FIRE AND HAZE INFORMATION CENTRE

A. Background

Information resources on fire-and-haze management initiatives in Southeast Asia are currently scattered. At national level, fire-and-haze projects are often implemented by different national agencies or stakeholders, creating problems of coordination and counterpart support. For funding agencies, NGOs, and private sector, it is important to coordinate development assistance by matching specific needs to their assistance priorities and ensure that their supports do not overlap with other initiatives. However, it is difficult to make this kind of assessment as information resources are currently scattered and managed independently.

There are countless reports and publications on fire and haze issues in Southeast Asia produced by different agencies, organisations as well as individuals. Most implementing agencies and donor-assisted projects disseminate results of their projects to other agencies and individuals within the fire community or publish them in their websites. However, as these information resources are scattered and managed independently, it will take some time for the public in general and newcomers particularly to get complete overview and references of fire-and-haze issues in the region.

The World Conference and Exhibition on Land and Forest Fire Hazards held on 10-12 June 2002 in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia suggested that information sharing and exchange and international cooperation initiatives should be facilitated through the formation of a regional network that is linked to other regional networks to provide the flow of information and sharing of resources between the local, regional and global users. A venue for this regional network is currently housed at www.fire.uni-freiburg.de/GlobalNetworks/SouthEastAsia/ASEAN-FireNet.html, which was developed by the Global Fire Monitoring Centre in collaboration with the ASEAN Secretariat. However, mechanism for this regional networking and information exchange has yet to be developed.

B. Mission and Objectives

Following the above observations, the ASEAN Secretariat in collaboration with the USDA Forest Service and IUCN-WWF Project Firefight Southeast Asia initiated the development of ***“a one-stop information centre that is participated and jointly managed by people and institutions concerned of fire-and-haze issues in Southeast Asia”***. To accomplish the above mission statement, the information centre seeks to provide the following:

1. Comprehensive database of ongoing and future fire-and-haze management activities in Southeast Asia with assessments on overlaps and gaps and expert recommendations;
2. On-line references on fire and haze issues selected by a group of well-recognised fire experts; and
3. Interactive information sharing and discussion among fire experts, professionals and individuals concerned of fire-and-haze issues to promote regional networking and collaboration.

C. Structure

The proposed information centre will consist of the following database and functions:

1. **A database of fire-and-haze projects in the region** - The database will consist of ongoing and future projects in Southeast Asia relevant to fire and haze. The database will contain information about activities of the respective project, documents related to the respective project/ activity, organisations involved in respective project/ activity, data of contact persons, and other related information. The system will provide a search and query engine to access projects based on their implementing agencies, funding agencies, locations, nature of assistance (bilateral or multilateral), type of project (monitoring; prevention; mitigation; rehabilitation and impacts; research and assessment); and timeframe. The system will also provide a facility for users to search projects using common key words. The database will include some assessments on areas where gaps between available resources and requirements are identified as well as other expert recommendations.
2. **An online document centre** - The document centre will consist of the following:
 - i. documents and references of projects and activities updated periodically by the concerned implementing agencies;
 - ii. analyses and research papers providing technical and scientific assessments of fire-and-haze issues; and
 - iii. other important reports and publications related to fire and haze.

All documents and references will be selected and reviewed by an Editorial Board to ensure standard and quality of documents. A search and query engine will be made available to access documents in the system.
3. **An information sharing mechanism** - The information sharing mechanism will be provided through the following functions:
 - i. **Discussion Forum** - The Discussion Forum is an electronic forum that allows users to post their views and opinions on fire-and-haze related issues, and discuss them with other users. The Discussion Forum will allow real-time conversation where online users can contact other online users.

- ii. **Mailing List** – Mailing List is a facility given for users that do not wish to visit the information centre frequently, but are interested in being kept informed of any updates posted in the system. These updates will be sent by the Web Master through e-mail.
- iii. **Information Board** – The Information Board is a virtual message board where users can post information related to fire-and-haze issues. To ensure standard and quality of information, the Editorial Board will screen all information posted by non-members.
- iv. **Calendar of Events** – Calendar of Events provides schedules, venues and contact persons of fire-and-haze related events including seminars, workshops, training classes, field exercises, and other activities.

The above information sharing mechanism is meant to be a virtual meeting point that will promote information sharing and regional networking among individuals and organisations concerned of fire-and-haze issues. Unlike other discussion forums that only serve specific groups with interest on specific topics, this forum will be open to the public in general and all relevant stakeholders that have interest on fire-and-haze issues. The discussion forum will cover wide-ranging topics related to fire and haze, and provides links to other discussion forums with sneak preview of hot topics being discussed in these forums. To ensure standard and quality of discussions, the Editorial Board will screen all messages posted by non-members.

The above information database and functions will be displayed and disseminated through internet and intranet functions. See **Annex 1** for complete structure of the system.

The prototype for the system can be viewed at the ASEAN Haze Action Online (<http://www.haze-online.or.id/temp/seadb/>). The website for the information centre is proposed to be housed separately from the ASEAN Haze Action Online website.

D. User Management

Users of this system will include various stakeholders, including:

- funding and implementing agencies,
- project agencies,
- non-governmental organisations,
- government agencies,
- international organisations,
- researchers/academics/students,
- private sector, and
- public.

In terms of access to the system, users can be categorised into the following groups:

1. **Public** – Public can view all information in the system and participate in the Discussion Forum. However, they cannot update information in the system, and all information/ messages posted by them will have to be filtered by the Editorial Board. Public can make request to the Web Master to elevate their status to Members. The request will be reviewed by the Editorial Board.

2. **Members** – Members have access to view all information in the system and can fully participate in information sharing and exchange without having their comments screened by the Editorial Board.
3. **Counterparts** – Counterparts are technical officers assigned by their respective member agencies to update information related to their projects/ activities, and suggest new documents/ references to the Editorial Board.
4. **Mailing List Subscribers** – Mailing List Subscribers are users that do not wish to visit the information centre frequently, but are interested in being kept informed of any update/ information posted in the system. Mailing List Subscribers will receive information sent through e-mail by the Web Master, such as new topics posted in the Discussion Forum; newly-added projects; upcoming activity/ event; and new information posted in the Information Board.

E. Content Management

An Editorial Board will be formed to (i) manage the information flow and monitor the discussions; (ii) screen and edit information supplied by non-members; (iii) review requests from people that wish to become members or mailing list subscribers; (iv) select documents and review their copyrights; and (v) provide assessments regarding overlaps and gaps and other technical and managerial elements of fire-and-haze initiatives in Southeast Asia. The above functions will be shared among the following:

1. Web Master, ASEAN Secretariat and some selected Counterparts to perform functions (i) to (iii).
2. Fire experts provided by member agencies to perform functions (iv) and (v). The experts can take turn in performing these functions.

Certain criteria and mechanisms will be developed to ensure that the screening and reviewing process is streamlined.

F. Work Plan

The information centre will be developed in four stages:

1. **Preliminary Stage** - At this stage, the prototype for the information centre will be developed and discussed with possible member agencies and interested parties. Based on comments received, a meeting will be held with these prospective member agencies to explore support for the development and maintenance of the information centre. A strategy will also be developed to ensure members' continuous support in providing/ updating information related to their projects/ activities.
2. **Development Stage** - At this stage, the prototype will be further developed into operation. The development stage will include data collection and editing; writing of the web content; designing of the web site and further development of the structure; and registering internet domain. Data collection and writing of the content may require one to two months to complete. Web site

development may require three months to complete but can be done simultaneously with data collection and writing of the content.

Considering that information at regional-scale is quite abundant and that funding resources may be limited, data collection will be limited to projects/activities in Indonesia and projects/activities that are regional in nature. The scope will be broadened later on depending on needs and interests.

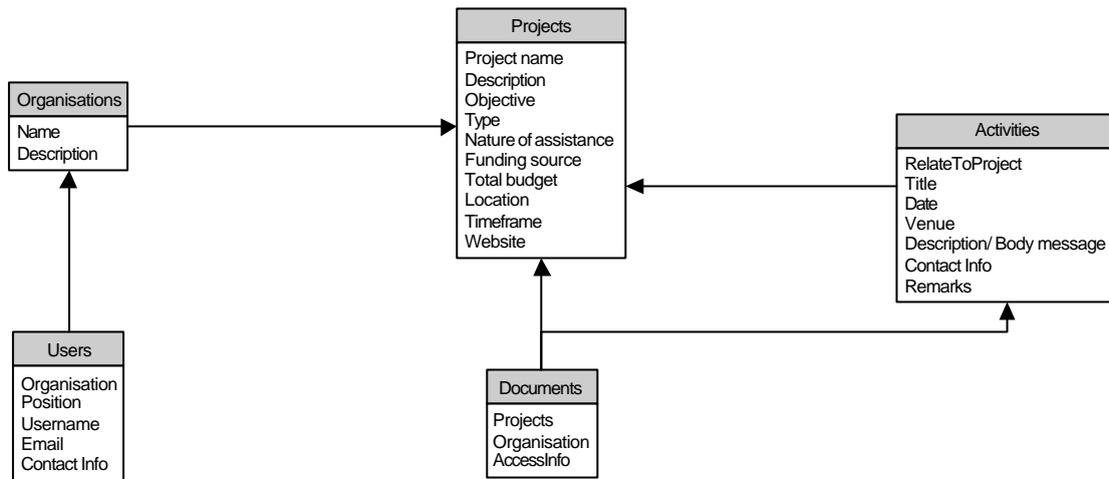
3. **Testing Stage** - There will be a testing period of two to three weeks to test and review the system before the official launching of the web site.
4. **Maintenance Stage** - Maintenance of the web site will be shared among the following:
 - (i) the Web Master for day-to-day operation and maintenance of the web site;
 - (ii) Counterparts for periodic monitoring and updating information related to their projects/ activities; and
 - (iii) Editorial Board for ensuring standard and quality of information and providing technical assessment and review of the initiatives.

G. Budget Estimate

Description	Amount
1. Development Cost	
i. Data collection, editing, writing of web content: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Salary of expert(s) and cost for data collection and travel as necessary ▪ Inputs from Counterparts and fire experts 	USD20,000 in-kind
ii. Web design and development	USD5,000
iii. Hardware: 1 unit of web server machine	USD1,800
iv. Software: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1 software package of Windows 2000 Prof ▪ 1 software package of Web Server software 	USD2,000 USD1,500
v. Registering Internet domain name	USD30
Sub total (1)*	USD30,330
2. Operational and Maintenance Cost (Annual)	
i. Content management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Technical officers provided by member agencies to serve as Counterparts ▪ Fire experts provided by member agencies to serve as members of the Editorial Board 	in-kind in-kind
ii. Annual fee for domain name	USD30
iii. Annual fee for web hosting for 500MB	USD300
iv. Web master, USD1,000/month x 12	USD12,000
Sub total (2)*	USD12,330

* not including in-kind contribution from member agencies

ANNEX 1. System of SEA Fire and Haze Information Centre



Notes:

- The system sees things as objects. It recognises four (4) objects, namely: Organisations, Projects, Documents, and Users. Each object interacts with each other.
- One organisation can have more than one project, while one project can be implemented by more than one organisation.
- One organisation can have many registered users, while one user can only be part of only one organisation.
- One of the registered users in the organisation will be assigned a responsibility to update and manage relevant information in the system.
- One project or activity can have more than one document. However, only one document belongs to one project or activity.

Each project can have many activities related to it.