

IRBM PROJECT NEWSLETTER

EDITION 9 | OCT-DEC 2025



GEF/UNDP/ASEAN Project on Reducing Pollution and Preserving Environmental Flows in the East Asian Seas through the Implementation of Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) in ASEAN Countries

When Currents Converge

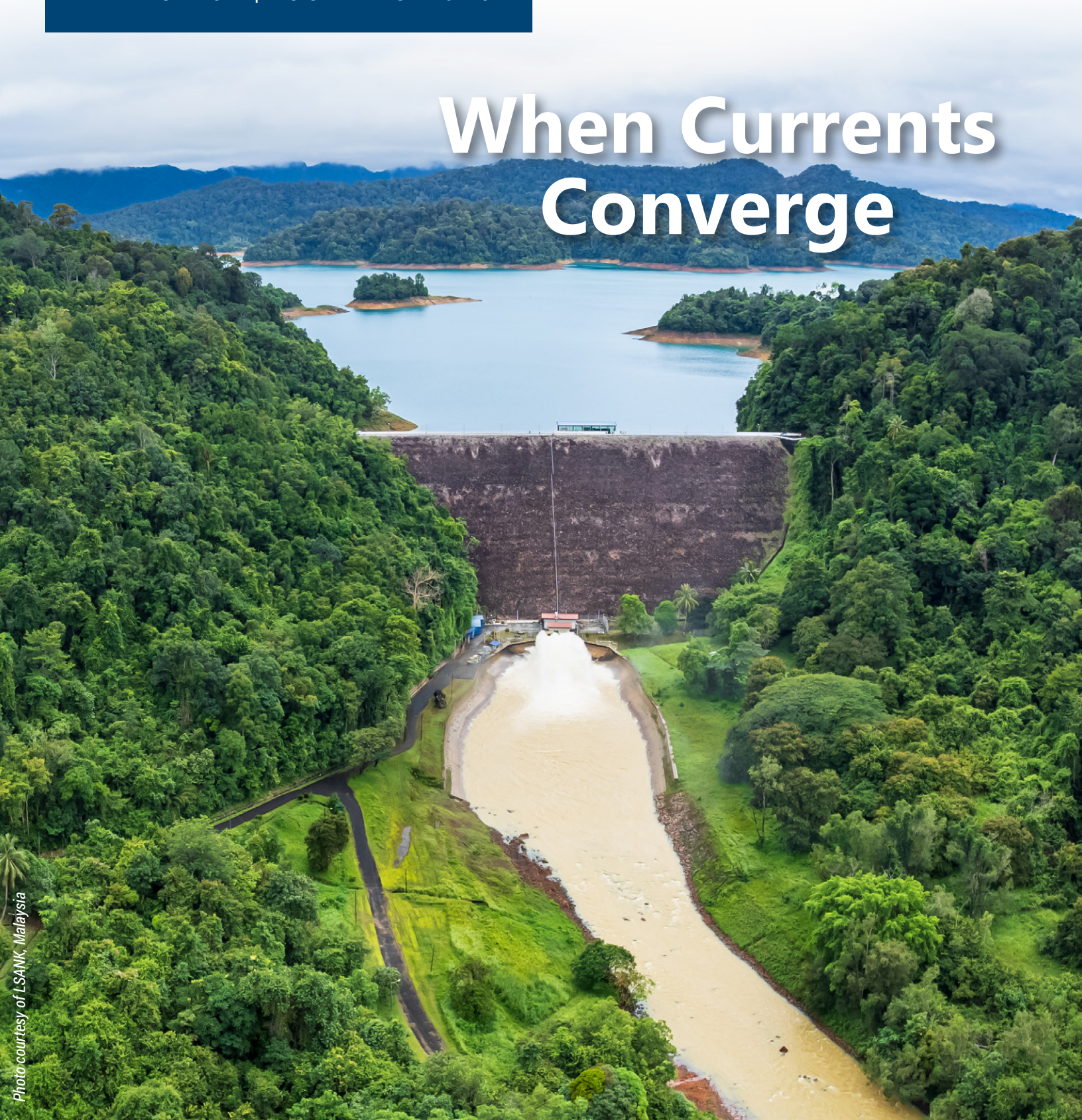


Photo courtesy of LSANK, Malaysia



The Pedu Dam draws its headwaters from the upstream rainforests of the Ulu Muda Forest Complex—an interconnected landscape of forest reserves that sustains flows into the Kedah River Basin. *(Photo courtesy of LSANK, Malaysia)*

The final quarter of 2025 marked a period of steady progress for the GEF/UNDP/ASEAN Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) Project, as participating countries continued moving from planning toward implementation. Across the region, this transition was shaped by strengthened governance arrangements, deeper stakeholder engagement, and sustained awareness-raising efforts that anchored the Project more firmly at national and local levels.

A key milestone in November was the official launch of the IRBM Project in Indonesia, alongside the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement between the PEMSEA Resource Facility and the Ministry of Environment. This agreement has formalized the implementing arrangements and collaboration for

project implementation in Ciliwung River Basin in Indonesia.

Earlier in October, a series of consultations in Indonesia, Viet Nam, and Malaysia brought together representatives from national, state-level, and local government agencies to identify and confirm priority issues and pilot solutions for the Ciliwung, Vu Gia–Thu Bon, and Kedah river basins. While each basin reflected its own social and ecological context, the discussions revealed shared challenges—wastewater and solid waste management, flooding, sedimentation, competing water uses, and saltwater intrusion. These common concerns underscored the growing urgency of integrated governance and management approaches in the face of accelerating development and climate pressures.

In December, the Project extended its outreach in the Philippines through participation in the Cavite Coastal Summit and the Cavite Sustainable Development Strategy Workshop. These events provided opportunities to raise awareness on Integrated River Basin Management, share updates on Project implementation in Cavite Province, and introduce the Source-to-Sea approach to local government officials, academe, and stakeholders engaged in environmental planning and management. During the same month, the Project also convened an online inception meeting to initiate the development of the IRBM Training Manual and Training-of-Trainers (TOT) Program,

bringing together representatives from the six participating ASEAN Member States to discuss the approach, methodology and timeline in developing the training manual and TOT program that incorporates global practices but grounded in regional and local context and practical application.

Taken together, the activities of the past quarter reflect a year of converging efforts and collective momentum. This journey is captured in the 2025 photo gallery featured in this edition, offering a visual walkthrough of the engagements, partnerships, and milestones that have marked the Project's steady progression throughout the year.



Boats anchored along the edge of Pedu Dam, one of the main reservoirs supplying water to the Kedah River Basin in Alor Setar, Malaysia. Surrounded by forested catchments, the dam plays a critical role in water storage, flood regulation, and downstream irrigation. *(Photo by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA)*

IRBM Project Launches in Indonesia to Strengthen Management and Governance of Ciliwung River Basin



(L–R) The IRBM Regional Project Management Unit joined Sayid Muhadar, Director of Coastal and Marine Pollution and Environmental Degradation Control at the Ministry of Environment; Ms. Aimee Gonzales, Executive Director of the PEMSEA Resource Facility; Mr. Rasio Ridho Sani, Deputy Minister for Environmental Pollution and Degradation Control of the Ministry of Environment; and Mr. Erik Teguh Primiantoro, GEF Operational Focal Point for Indonesia, during the signing of the Memorandum of Agreement in Jakarta, Indonesia, on 10 November 2025. *(Photo by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA)*

MOE Indonesia and PRF Formalize Partnership through MOA Signing

Depok and Jakarta, Indonesia — The Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) Project was officially launched on 10 November 2025, following the signing of a Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) between the Ministry of Environment of Indonesia (MOE) and PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) in Jakarta. The signing was led by Mr. Rasio Ridho Sani, Deputy Minister for Environmental Pollution and Degradation Control of MOE, and Ms. Aimee Gonzales, Executive Director of PRF.

After the MOA signing in Jakarta, the Regional Project Management Unit met with Mr. Erik Teguh Primiantoro, GEF Operational Focal Point for Indonesia, to discuss Indonesia’s involvement in the project’s activities at the regional, national, and river basin levels and next steps for full project implementation. He emphasized that the pilot project should focus on pressing issues confronting local communities such as the proper management of solid waste and wastewater discharges in the Ciliwung River Basin.



Representatives from the Ministry of Environment, Depok City government, Environmental Protection Agency of West Java Province, CCMRS/Institut Pertanian Bogor University, and Komunitas Peduli Sungai Ciliwung attended the project launch in Depok, Indonesia on 10 November 2025.

(Photo by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA)

IRBM Project Officially Launched in the Ciliwung River Basin

In the afternoon, the project launch in Depok City gathered representatives from MOE, local authorities from the Depok City government, representatives from the Environmental Agency of West Java Province, Center for Coastal and Marine Resources Studies (CCMRS)/Institut Pertanian Bogor University, and Komunitas Peduli Sungai Ciliwung, a civil society group working to restore the health of the Ciliwung River Basin.

Participants reviewed the scope of project activities, identified and confirmed the priority issues to be addressed by the project, the implementation arrangements, and opportunities for collaboration to ensure effective delivery through 2027. Some

key issues identified included domestic waste such as food waste, wastewater from small-scale tofu industries, solid waste, and flooding. The IRBM Project will develop integrated solutions to address these challenges through pilot project development and implementation in coordination with the MOE and the Depok City government. The need for strengthening coordination and engaging stakeholders including the private sector in implementing on-the-ground solutions were also discussed.

In her welcome remarks, Ms. Aimee Gonzales, Executive Director of PEMSEA Resource Facility mentioned that the IRBM Project aims to develop and implement pilot demonstration projects that provide practical, on-the-ground integrated river basin management solutions to the issues facing the Ciliwung River Basin.

“The seven river basins covered by the project, including Ciliwung River, will serve as learning sites to improve governance and management that could potentially be scaled up and replicated. The on-the-ground activities will be complemented by hands-on training, experience sharing, and participatory planning among our six participating countries”, she added.

Mr. Eduward Hutapea, Head of the Regional Office for the Environmental Protection Agency of West Java Province under MOE, highlighted Indonesia’s priority to secure water resources for future generations, mentioning the country’s commitment to sustainable development.

“Water is the source of life; therefore, maintaining its sustainability and quality is a shared responsibility,” he stated.

“The President of the Republic of Indonesia, Mr. Prabowo Subianto, has emphasized the importance of food sovereignty, water security, and a sustainable environment as part of national development. This commitment aligns with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of clean water and sanitation for all.”

The project launch in Indonesia represents an important milestone in contributing to regional collaboration for sustainable river basin management across ASEAN Member States, demonstrating how local and national governance contribute to regional environmental objectives.



Ms. Aimee Gonzales, Executive Director of PEMSEA Resource Facility delivering the welcome remarks.



Mr. Eduward Hutapea, Head of the Regional Office for the Environmental Protection Agency of West Java Province, Ministry of Environment, delivering a message on behalf of the Indonesian government.

Photos by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA

RPMU Conducts Basin-Level Consultations in Indonesia, Viet Nam, and Malaysia

The IRBM Regional Project Management Unit (RPMU), in coordination with national and local government partners, conducted a series of consultation meetings and field visits to the priority river basins in Indonesia, Viet Nam, and Malaysia to confirm priority river basin issues and gather perspectives from national, state-level, and local stakeholders on potential solutions for pilot project development and implementation.



IRBM RPMU with representatives from the Ministry of Environment and the Depok City Environment Agency in Jakarta, Indonesia on 15 October 2025. (Photo by IRBM RPMU)

In Jakarta, consultations held on 14–15 October 2025 with the Directorate of Water Quality Protection and Management of the Ministry of Environment and the Depok City Environment Agency focused on emerging issues affecting the Ciliwung River Basin. Priority concerns identified included wastewater discharges from small-scale tofu production and persistent challenges in solid waste management in one of Indonesia's most densely populated river systems.



Some of the key emerging concerns in the Ciliwung River Basin include wastewater discharge from households and small-scale tofu industries, as well as solid and food waste. (Photo by Daisy Padayao/PEMSEA)

Similar consultations were held on 17–18 October 2025 in Hanoi and Da Nang, for the Vu Gia–Thu Bon River Basin, coordinated with the Viet Nam Environment Agency under the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment in collaboration with the Da Nang Department of Agriculture and Environment. Key priority issues identified included wastewater discharges and solid waste management challenges associated with wet markets and fishing ports, competing water uses and allocation, and increasing saltwater intrusion.



IRBM RPMU with Viet Nam Environment Agency in Hanoi, Viet Nam on 18 October 2025. (Photo by IRBM RPMU)



A woman washes freshly harvested clams in a clam processing village along the Vu Gia–Thu Bon River Basin in Da Nang, Viet Nam. (Photo by Daisy Padayao/PEMSEA)

In Malaysia, a consultation meeting was held on 21 October 2025, organized by the Department of Irrigation and Drainage under the Ministry of Energy Transition and Water Transformation (PETRA). The meeting brought together representatives from the Kedah State Economic and Planning Division, the Kedah State Water Resources Board (LSANK), the Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA), and the District and Land Office (Pejabat Daerah dan Tanah). Participants confirmed emerging issues affecting the Kedah River Basin, including seasonal flooding during the monsoon period and excessive sedimentation.



IRBM RPMU with representatives from the Department of Irrigation and Drainage of the Ministry of Energy Transition and Water Transformation (PETRA), Kedah State Economic and Planning Division, Kedah State Water Resources Board (LSANK), Muda Agricultural Development Authority (MADA), and the District and Land Office (Pejabat Daerah dan Tanah) in Alor Setar, Malaysia on 21 October 2025. (Photo by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA)



During the site visit, the IRBM PMU toured the Pedu Dam exhibit area managed by MADA in Alor Setar, Malaysia. (Photo by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA)

The priority issues identified through these consultations will inform the design of pilot project solutions, tailored to the ecological and socio-economic context of each river basin.

IRBM Project Participation in the Cavite Coastal Summit 2025 Highlights Source-to-Sea Management



The IRBM Regional Project Management Unit took part in the Pledge of Commitment at the Cavite Coastal Summit 2025 on 1 December 2025.

Cavite, Philippines — The IRBM Project participated in the Cavite Coastal Summit 2025 held on 1 December 2025 in Cavite Province under the theme “Futures Thinking for Coastal Sustainability and Resiliency in Cavite.” Organized by Cavite State University – Research and the College of Agriculture, Food, Environment, and Natural Resources, the summit brought together representatives from local government agencies, youth groups, non-government organizations, researchers, students, and academic and development partners.

Ms. Nancy Bermas, Regional Project Manager of the IRBM Project, represented the PEMSEA Resource Facility as one of the resource speakers. In her presentation, she highlighted the importance of

linking Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) and IRBM as essential components of a Source-to-Sea management approach for conserving both coastal and riverine ecosystems.



Ms. Nancy Bermas delivered a presentation on Source-to-Sea Management as a pathway to sustainability for Cavite Province.

Photos by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA

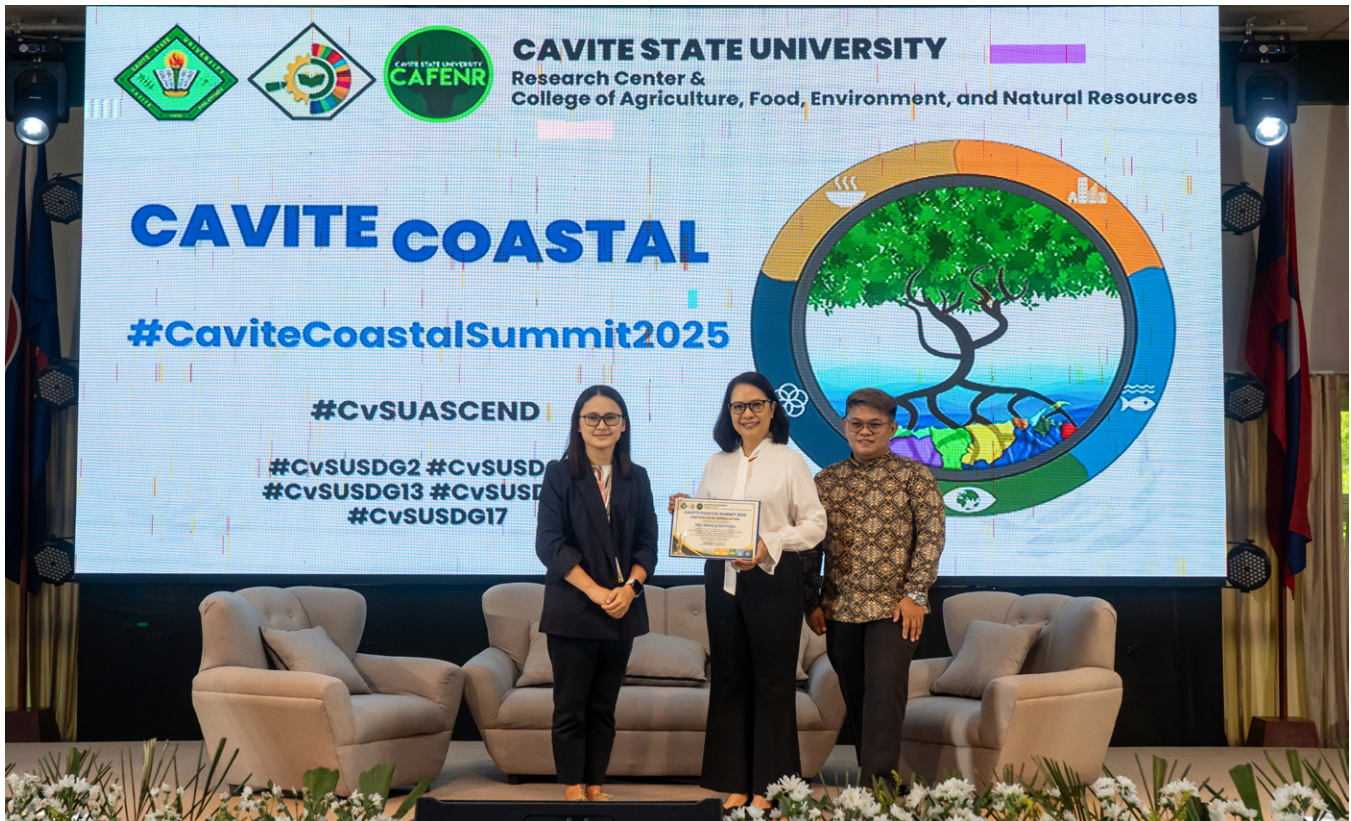
Ms. Bermas also introduced the ongoing IRBM Project initiatives in the Philippines, particularly efforts to restore the Imus–Ylang–Ylang–Rio Grande Rivers (IYRR), one of the Project’s sites, implemented with guidance from the IYRR Water Quality Management Area Governing Board (WQMA) and in close coordination with the Office of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer of Cavite (OPENRO) and the Department of Environment and Natural Resources – Environmental Management Bureau (DENR-EMB) Region IVA. Among the key activities of this initiative include the development and implementation of pilot projects to improve water supply and sanitation, including septage management.

She also emphasized the importance of local actions in advancing regional and global sustainability



Active participation during the open forum session.

objectives and highlighted Cavite’s potential to demonstrate leadership in sustainable development through integrated coastal and river basin management programs – positioning the province as a potential Source-to-Sea management model for the Philippines and the wider Southeast Asian region.



Ms. Nancy Bermas, Regional Project Manager of the IRBM Project, with representatives from the Cavite State University Research Center and the College of Agriculture, Food, Environment, and Natural Resources.

Photos by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA

IRBM Project Contributes to Updating Cavite's Sustainable Development Strategy through Source-to-Sea Planning



Ms. Nancy Bermas underscored the importance of expanding strategic planning to link ICM and IRBM to cover upstream and downstream activities under a Source-to-Sea framework during the CSDS Workshop. (Photo by Orange Omengan/PEMSEA)

Cavite, Philippines — The Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) Project participated in the Cavite Sustainable Development Strategy (CSDS) Workshop held on 2 December 2025 in Cavite Province. Organized by the Office of the Provincial Environment and Natural Resources Officer (OPENRO) Cavite, the workshop aimed to update the CSDS, originally completed in 2017, by identifying emerging threats and opportunities affecting the province's coastal areas, as well as reviewing

existing measures and proposed interventions that address pressures affecting both inland waters and downstream coastal and marine areas.

The workshop convened representatives from local and national government agencies, the private sector, and development partners to support a more integrated and forward-looking planning framework for the province.



Ms. Nancy Bermas, Regional Project Manager of the IRBM Project with Ms. Anabelle Cayabyab, Head of OPENRO Cavite at the CSDS workshop on 2 December 2025. (Photo by Orangae Omengan/PEMSEA)

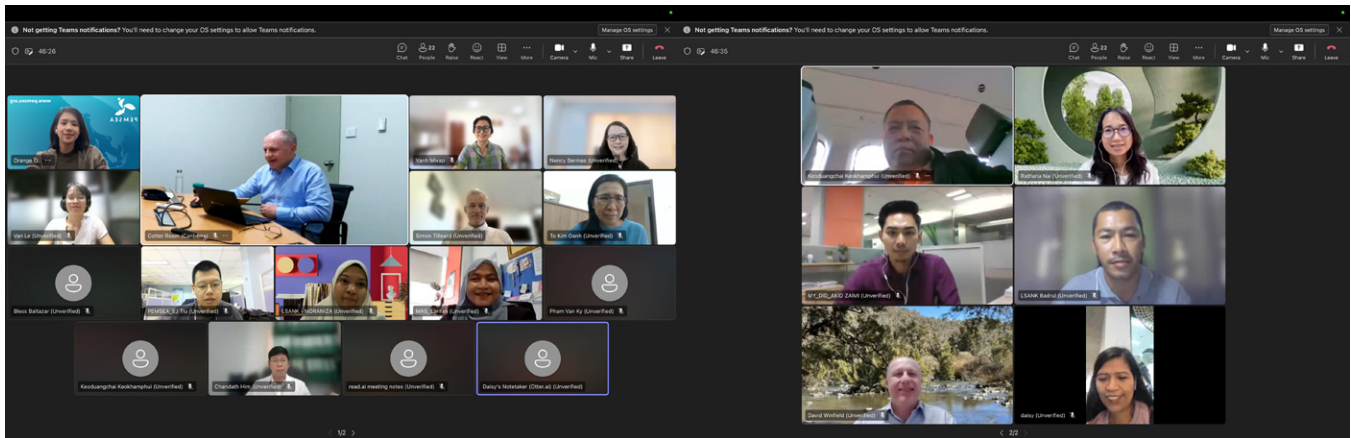
Ms. Nancy Bermas, Regional Project Manager of the IRBM Project, served as one of the resource speakers and presented on Strategic Planning for Integrated Coastal and River Basin Management in Cavite. She emphasized the importance of expanding the scope of the CSDS by linking Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) and IRBM, essentially covering upstream and downstream activities in line with Source-to-Sea management to effectively protect the integrity of coastal and marine ecosystems.

Ms. Bermas also shared updates on IRBM Project initiatives in the Philippines, particularly efforts to restore the Imus–Ylang–Ylang–Rio Grande Rivers (IYRR). These efforts include the development of the

State of River Basin Report and the implementation of IRBM pilot interventions focused on supporting the local government’s objectives to improving water supply and sanitation, including septage management.

She further highlighted that the IRBM Project provides an important opportunity to demonstrate the effectiveness of implementing both ICM and IRBM approaches in a complementary manner. Ms. Bermas underscored the value of documenting Cavite’s two decades of experience in ICM implementation and showcasing how local actions contribute to national, regional, and global environmental targets.

Inception Meeting Launches Development of IRBM Training Manual and Training-of-Trainers Program



Participants from the six ASEAN Member States and Alluvium International at the online inception meeting on 4 December 2025.

The IRBM Regional Project Management Unit (RPMU) conducted an inception meeting on 4 December 2025 via online to initiate the development of the IRBM Training Manual and Training-of-Trainers (TOT) Program. The meeting brought together national coordinators and government representatives from the six ASEAN Member States participating in the Project.

The development of the IRBM Training Manual is part of the Project's objective to build core capacities and skills in IRBM implementation. The Regional TOT planned for the second quarter of 2026 will engage representatives from the national and local governments, academic partners and water resource planners and technical experts in the ASEAN region.

The inception meeting discussed the scope, methodology and timeline for this undertaking, as well as agreed on next steps and coordination arrangements. It also discussed the establishment of a Core Group comprising of country representatives with experience in developing and delivering IRBM training modules. This Core Group will actively support the development of the Training Manual by providing technical inputs to ensure that regional practices, lessons learned, and implementation experiences across ASEAN are accurately reflected in the final output.

A Year of Convergence Across Basins and Borders

Snapshots from the IRBM Project in 2025

IRBM Project mid-term review with field missions in the Philippines, Cambodia, and Lao PDR, February–May 2025



IRBM Project mission supporting pilot project development in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and the Philippines, May 2025



WEFE workshops conducted across seven IRBM Project river basin sites, July–September 2025



IRBM Project launch for the Vu Gia–Thu Bon River Basin, Da Nang, Viet Nam, 18 April 2025



Regional WEFE Workshop with national and local government representatives from Indonesia and the Philippines, Bali, Indonesia, 3 June 2025

Third Regional Steering Committee Meeting of the IRBM Project, Bali, Indonesia, 4 June 2025



Signing of the Memorandum of Agreement for IRBM Project implementation in the Philippines, 17 July 2025



PNLC Executive Committee Meeting endorsing the designation of IRBM Learning Centers, Bogor, Indonesia, 15 September 2025



IRBM Project MOA signing and project launch with national and local partners, Depok, Indonesia, 10 November 2025



IRBM Project shares lessons at the GEF Operational Focal Points Training for East Asia, September 2025

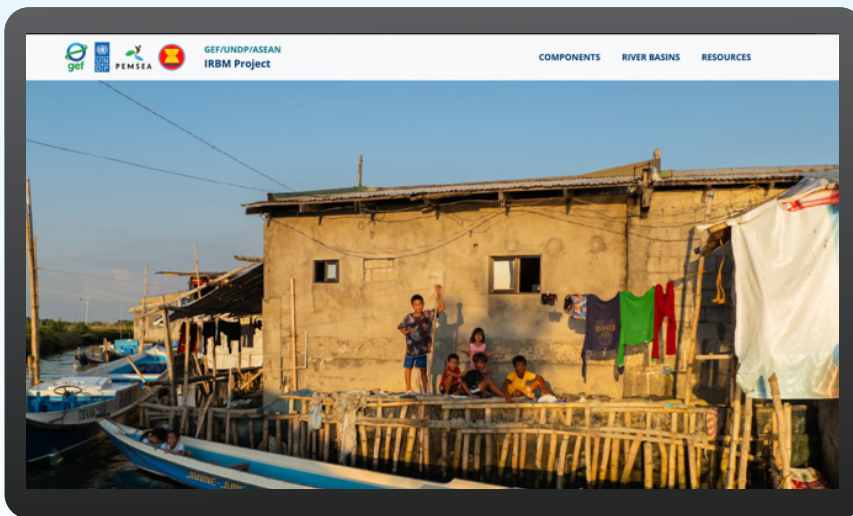


RPMU conducts basin-level consultations in Indonesia, Viet Nam, and Malaysia to support pilot project development, October 2025



Get the latest updates from the IRBM Project e-Portal at PEMSEA's SeaKnowledge Bank!

The IRBM e-portal on PEMSEA's SeaKnowledge Bank offers a dedicated space for sharing key resources, updates, and stories from our work across the region's river basins.



Website Features

- ✓ About the project
- ✓ News updates
- ✓ Featured stories
- ✓ River basin profiles
- ✓ Publications

irbm.seaknowledgebank.net 



Front Cover:

Pedu Dam, a major rock-fill embankment in northern Kedah, creates the expansive Pedu Lake that supplies vital water for Malaysia's Rice Bowl. The reservoir supports irrigation, strengthens regional water security, and anchors the forested landscapes linked to the Ulu Muda watershed. *(Photo courtesy of LSANK, Malaysia)*




About the Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) Project

Supported by the [Global Environment Facility](#), the Integrated River Basin Management (IRBM) Project is working to set-up functional management mechanisms in priority river basins of six ASEAN countries to reduce pollution and sustain freshwater environmental flows as well as adapt to climate change vulnerabilities. The regional Project is being implemented by the [United Nations Development Programme Bangkok Regional Hub](#), and executed by [Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia](#), in collaboration with [ASEAN](#).

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Learn more about
the IRBM Project

