

Asia Protected Planet Report 2014

Tracking progress towards targets for protected areas in Asia



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Executive Summary

BACKGROUND

Asia is the most populous region in the world, with a rich cultural and natural heritage. It includes several megadiverse countries and is home to a number of global biodiversity “hotspots”. For centuries, protected areas have been an integral part of Asian landscapes and seascapes and have played a vital role in conserving biodiversity and the ecosystem services on which many communities depend. However, rapid economic development, population growth and an erosion of traditional practices are resulting in habitat loss and degradation. This is putting protected areas in Asia at risk and leading to serious decline in the biodiversity they harbour.

In 2010, governments from around the world, including all countries in Asia, committed to the Convention on Biological Diversity’s Strategic Plan for Biodiversity which sets 20 targets to be met by 2020 to conserve biodiversity and ensure its sustainable and equitable use. These are known as the Aichi Biodiversity Targets. Aichi Target 11 focuses on protected areas, calling for the expansion of protected areas to encompass 17% of terrestrial ecosystems and 10% of marine ecosystems to cover areas of importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services. It also calls for the effective and equitable management of ecologically representative and well-connected networks of protected areas, which are integrated into the wider landscape. These targets and the principles they represent are critical to ensuring that protected areas will continue to deliver on the objectives for which they were established.

SCOPE

This report assesses progress towards the achievement of elements of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 in 24 selected countries in East Asia, South Asia and South-east Asia. These are referred to as the “Asia Region” throughout this report and are: Afghanistan, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, China, Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, India, Indonesia, Japan, Lao People’s Democratic Republic, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, the Republic of Korea, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam.

KEY RESULTS

Although the extent of protected areas increased between 1990 and 2012, this trend has slowed since. The Asia Region currently faces numerous challenges in meeting all elements of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11 (Chapter 9). Some key results and messages are:

Threats to protected areas (Chapter 2): The rich natural heritage found within the Asia Region’s protected areas is under threat. Major threats to protected areas are habitat loss and degradation, exploitation of biodiversity due to high population densities (1.5 times the global average) and increasing demands from a globalised market. As a result, pollution, invasive species, illegal wildlife trade and deforestation are serious threats that urgently need to be addressed. Innovative ways to support conservation, better-enforced legislation, and new political commitments to effectively manage and restore protected areas are needed.

Protected area coverage (Chapter 3): There are 10,900 protected areas in the Asia Region that cover 13.9% of the terrestrial environment and 1.8% of the marine and coastal areas within national jurisdiction. The protected area coverage beyond 12 nautical miles is critically low: only 0.04% of the marine and coastal areas between 12 and 200 nautical miles of the Region is under protected area management. Very few countries have at least 17% of their terrestrial areas and inland waters protected and no countries have at least 10% of their marine and coastal areas in protected areas.

Protection of biodiversity and ecosystem services (Chapter 4): Protected areas in Asia do not adequately cover areas of importance for biodiversity and are not fully ecologically representative. In 2013, 16% (326) of Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas (IBAs) and Alliance for Zero Extinction sites (AZE) were completely covered by protected areas. Ecoregion coverage is very low in both terrestrial and marine environments. Only 35% of ecoregions and 15.4% of marine ecoregions in the Asia Region are adequately protected.

Protected area management (Chapter 5): 77% of marine and terrestrial protected areas in the Asia Region are mainly classified as IUCN Management Category IV (Habitat/Species Management), V (Protected Landscape/Seascape) and VI (Protected areas with sustainable use of natural resources). More progress is needed to assess management effectiveness in the Asia Region. In 2013, only eight of the 24 countries included in this report (Bhutan, Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Lao PDR, Mongolia, Nepal, Singapore, and Republic of Korea) had assessed management effectiveness of 60% of the total areas of their protected areas, while 13 had only assessed 30%. Adequate funding is critical to achieve these goals and ensure protected areas in the Asia Region can conserve their values (Chapter 5).

Protected area governance (Chapter 6): Protected area systems in Asia have primarily been established by national governments. All four main governance types are represented in the World Database on Protected Areas. However, 60% of protected areas in the region are under sub-national and national governance. The Asia Region has a long history of traditional conservation practices. Sacred groves and landscapes are found through the region and some are significant repositories of biodiversity. The Asia Region has unique governance systems including the Satoyama Satoumi in Japan, Aranyas forests in Nepal and the Orans in India. Widening governance types to more shared types and recognizing the role of local communities in protected areas governance is needed.

Connectivity (Chapter 7): The Asia Region hosts a number of large-scale conservation projects which promote connectivity of protected areas. These include: the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI), Heart of Borneo Initiative (HoB), Greater Mekong Sub-region Core Environment Program (GMS CFP-BCI), the East Asian-Australasian Flyway Partnership (EAAFP) and the Terai Arc programme. However, there have been relatively few studies on how effective protected area networks are at delivering conservation outcomes in Asia compared to other regions of the world.

Protected areas and disaster risk reduction in Asia (Chapter 8): Protected areas can play an important role in disaster risk reduction (DDR) and climate change adaptation (CCA). Experience from disasters such as the Western Indian Ocean tsunami in 2004 demonstrates that well managed protected areas can help reduce risks posed by natural hazards and longer term climate change impacts. Defining and highlighting the role of ecosystem services within protected areas and explaining how they contribute to CCA and DRR should be a priority for regional and national policy dialogues and platforms.

Quick guide to this report

Chapter	Relevant element of Aichi Biodiversity Target 11
2 – Threats to Protected Areas in Asia	“...integrated into the wider landscape and seascape.”
3 – Protected Area Coverage	“...17 % of terrestrial and inland water areas and 10 % of coastal and marine areas...”
4 – Protection of Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services	“...especially areas of particular importance for biodiversity and ecosystem services...”

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