

Asian Environmental Scenarios

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In the aftermath of the economic turmoil that began in mid-1997, the future of Asia - and indeed the world - is uncertain. In addition to macro-economic instability, Asia is undergoing profound political change, both internally and geo-politically. The financial panic that spread through Asia has altered the perceptions of policymakers, businesses, and civil society of not only the benefits of participating in the global economy, but moreover, the very basis for their own economic and political systems. Policy decisions made today and tomorrow, based on interpretations of what caused the crisis, are likely to have profound impacts on Asia's resources and environment ten years down the line.

Such a moment demands - and provides an opening for - fresh thinking and new conceptual frameworks. It requires deep, sustained and well-informed strategic thought about a range of possible futures. Decisionmakers, businesspeople, and social activists need to reconsider old assumptions and develop not only new tactics but new ways of thinking and new strategies effective in a variety of changed circumstances. Most important, in order to develop a new regional consensus about the social and environmental objectives of economic growth, they need to develop new ways of thinking and talking together.

The Asia Pacific Scenarios Project will bring together key multi-sectoral "movers and shakers" in the Asia Pacific region in two 4-5 day workshops. Each workshop will include 30 participants who will together develop four ten-year scenarios about the future of Asia under different economic and political assumptions; and who will consider the strategic implications and potential policy responses and initiatives in each scenario. The workshops will be facilitated by staff from the Global Business Network (GBN). GBN is widely recognized for its pathbreaking role in the use of scenarios to help governments, multi-stakeholder groups, and private and public organizations develop strategic thinking and planning.

The Asia Pacific Scenarios Project has three key objectives:

Developing a Regional Common Agenda

The primary aim of the project is to build common understanding and sense of common strategy among the region's key "up-and-coming" NGO, business, and government leaders. This project will provide a vehicle for regional stakeholders to re-conceptualize the "big picture" and to reformulate strategies and develop a new sense of direction for socially and environmentally sound development paths in Asia.

Capacity Building

Over the next two years, the project will train over 60 NGO, government, and business leaders in scenario methodology. While staying clearly focused on the strategic issues, we will deliberately structure the two workshops in such a way as to maximize their training potential.

Research Agenda

Finally, to maximize the benefits of the Scenario Workshops, the Nautilus Institute will: 1) produce a series of background studies on the future of social and environmental governance in Asia; 2) undertake research to feed into the scenarios process for "mid-way course-corrections;" and 3) produce the scenarios and the discussion of the strategic implications of the scenarios as a report.

Beyond their intrinsic interest to advocates of sustainable development, the scenario building workshops aim to build two kinds of regional capacity: 1) participants will be trained in the use of scenario methodology and will be able to utilize it in their own organizations and networks; 2) the workshops will create a core group for what we hope will develop into a larger, on-going, influential "strategic conversation" in the rubric of something which might be called an "Asian Sustainable Development Dialogue." The workshops - the first to be held in November of 1999 - will nurture such an effort, which would be the work of the two years following this project.

Project donors include the [Ford Foundation](#) and the [Rockefeller Brothers Fund](#).

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Nautilus Institute

608 San Miguel Ave., Berkeley, CA 94707-1535 | Phone: (510) 423-0372 | Email:

nautilus@nautilus.org