

Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Partnership 2025

Terms of Reference

The Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Partnership Terms of Reference is executed by the undersigned parties as an expression of their mutual intent to collaborate in good faith. By signing below, the parties acknowledge their understanding that this agreement is not legally binding and serves solely as a framework for future discussions.

Mr. Joseph Martin
Director, CFE-DM
U.S. Indo-Pacific Command

Brigadier ME Baldock, CSC
Director General Fuel Capability Branch
Joint Logistics Command, Australian Defence Force

pp CDSM.

Commodore BJ Oakley, RNZN
Chief Defence Strategy Management
New Zealand Defence Force

Table of Contents

Introduction **1**
Purpose of the IPESP **2**
Mission 2
Vision 2
Objectives 2
Principles 2
Partnership Structure **3**
Steering Committee 3
Members 3
Administrator 4
Ways to Participate 5
Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Forum (IPESF) 5
Working Groups 5
Projects 6
Appendices **7**
History 7
Indo-Pacific Environment Security Forum (IPESF) 7

Introduction

The Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Partnership (referred to as IPESP or 'the Partnership') is an international network in the Indo-Pacific region with a shared interest in addressing environmental security issues through cooperation and capability development.

The focus of the Partnership is on developing actionable engagement between regional military organizations and organizations from national governments and civil society. Partnerships between military and civil organizations are crucial for addressing environmental security challenges. Militaries have significant strategic capabilities that can be used to resolve or mitigate security threats, including logistics, trained and experienced personnel, intelligence-gathering, planning expertise and capability-building support. Cooperation and collaboration with civil society and government organizations enables these capabilities to be used for shared benefits and to have the greatest impact.

Environmental Security involves the threats posed by environmental and natural hazard events and trends to individuals, communities and nations that have the potential to degrade peace and stability of nations (national security) and the basic wellbeing of people (human security)[1].

The impacts of environmental change on security are complex, and seldom are the linkages direct. Environmental security is often a threat multiplier that produces security issues through complex interactions with other factors. The focus of the IPESP is to address the security issues generated by environmental change through a range of possible responses and actions (as illustrated in Figure 1).

The IPESP is distinctive compared with other multilateral organizations in its purpose to develop international civil-military relationships to address and mitigate environmental security threats.

The benefits for members of the Partnership are collaborating in working groups, capability development activities and projects with organizations from across the region. The capstone event is the annual Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Forum (IPESF), where members can meet in-person and collaborate on a range of environmental security issues.

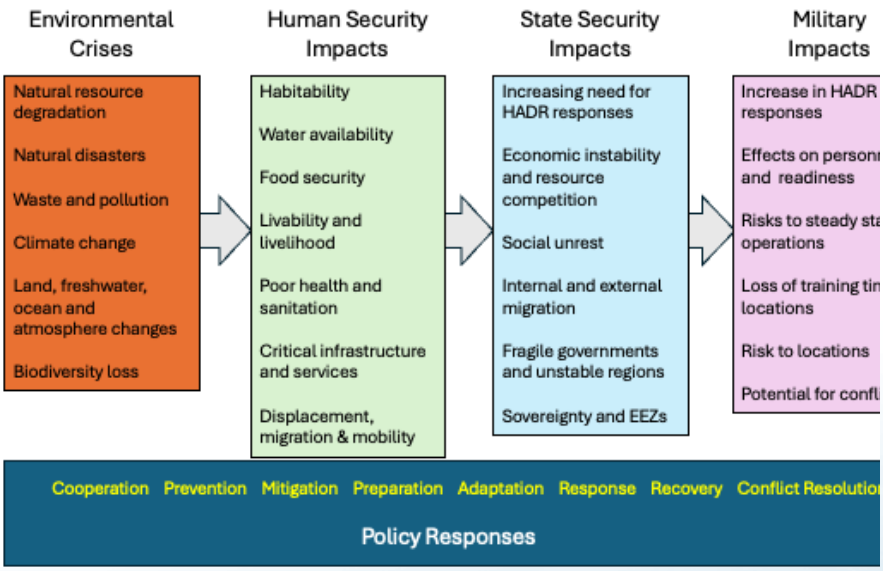


Figure 1: The environmental security system, linking environmental change with security threats and policy responses.

1 This definition is adapted from Hauger, J.S. (2024) Competition and Collaboration in the Environmental Security Domain. *Journal of Indo-Pacific Affairs*, 7(2), 44-67.

Purpose of the IPESP

Mission

The IPESP is a network of military and civil organizations across the Indo-Pacific region, working together to enhance environmental security and address the region's destabilising issues that are the result of environmental crises.

Vision

Share an understanding of environmental security threats and support militaries and civilian organizations to take collective action.

Objectives

- Enhance understanding among Indo-Pacific military and civilian organizations regarding the direct and indirect security risks posed by environmental hazards (e.g., resource scarcity, natural disasters, ecosystem degradation) and their potential to exacerbate existing tensions and conflicts.
- Establish and maintain a robust network of Indo-Pacific military and civilian organizations, fostering partnerships through regular communication, information sharing on best practices, lessons learned, and solutions to emerging environmental security threats.
- Facilitate collaborative development and implementation of practical solutions and approaches by member organizations to reduce the security impacts of environmental hazards. This includes promoting partner capabilities, project development, joint training exercises, coordinated resource management plans, and integrated response protocols.
- Proactively identify and cultivate opportunities for joint civil-military projects and initiatives focused on environmental security challenges (e.g., enhancing resilience to natural disasters and environmental hazards, managing or brokering resources and solutions to prevent conflict, and supporting community recovery efforts following environmental crises).
- Establish strategic partnerships and coordinate activities with relevant multilateral organizations and initiatives in the Indo-Pacific region to leverage resources, avoid duplication of effort, and maximize the impact of IPESP's environmental security programs.

Principles

- Core focus on civil and military cooperation to address and mitigate complex environmental security threats and issues.
- Strive for transparency and open communication.
- Value the collaboration amongst Members with shared interests.
- Value the security interests of Members in developing responses and actions.
- Maximize the impact of Member capabilities through this Partnership.

Partnership Structure

Steering Committee

The purpose of the Steering Committee is to provide overall direction and oversee the IPESP to ensure that it is delivering the desired benefits and outcomes for Members.

The Steering Committee will:

- Engage Members to participate in the activities of the IPESP;
- Contribute to the planning of the annual Forum with the Host Nation;
- Decide opportunities for Working Groups;
- Support Members to establish continuity and lead Working Groups;
- Consider opportunities for collaborative projects and support Members to establish and execute projects;
- Approve requests to join the Steering Committee; and
- Meet quarterly to manage Partnership activities

The IPESP Steering Committee consists of lead defense/military representatives from national Members to focus the Partnership's activities on contemporary traditional and non-traditional environmental security matters across the Indo-Pacific region. The Steering Committee is currently comprised of:

- The United States Indo-Pacific Command's (USINDOPACOM) Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM),
- The Australian Defence Force (ADF), and
- The New Zealand Defence Force (NZDF).

To become a part of the Steering Committee, members can self-nominate or be nominated. Appointments will be by consensus of the Committee. The Steering Committee shall meet at the IPESF and at least quarterly thereafter.

Members

The IPESP is open to organizations that share its principles and values and that wish to contribute to the common mission and goals. The IPESP does not charge a fee or subscription for being a Member. Members may explore cost-sharing arrangements to facilitate collaborative activities undertaken in support of the goals of the IPESP.

National representatives in the Indo-Pacific region from such areas as defense and military, security, foreign affairs, disaster management, environmental protection and humanitarian assistance are encouraged to become Members. Representatives from these areas across civil society organizations, academic institutions, international and regional NGOs and think tanks are also welcome to consider becoming a Member.
Members are expected to be actively involved in the IPESP and contribute to IPESP activities by:

- Attending the annual Forum event;
- Contributing to the Forum through hosting, presentations, posters and workshops;
- Proposing topics for Working Groups and projects;
- Participating in Working Groups and projects;
- Brief the Building Capability Working Group once annually to advance Members capabilities or project updates;
- Suggesting other organizations and activities that could contribute to the Partnership's mission and vision.

Benefits of IPESP Membership:

- Access to expertise and resources. IPESP members have a wide range of experience, skills and capabilities to share with other Members.
- Improved situational awareness. The Forum is a venue for discussions and activities about a wide range of contemporary challenges and approaches from across the Indo-Pacific region that increase Members' knowledge and understanding.
- Improved relationships with like-minded organizations. The Forum, working groups and projects enable members to work alongside other nations and organizations and develop closer relationships.
- Professional development and leadership opportunities. Forum presentations and panels, working groups and projects are opportunities for individuals to grow professionally and exhibit leadership in the field of environmental security.
- IPESP members will receive a priority invitation to the annual Forum to promote continuity, participation, collaboration, and relationship building.

Administrator

Administration is provided to the IPESP by USINDOPACOM through the Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM).

The Administrator's responsibilities are to:

- Provide administrative functions, such as organising Steering Committee meetings, maintaining communications channels and leading annual Forum planning and logistics;
- Support project development in accordance with IPESP guidelines;
- Maintain a list of Members; and
- Maintain a website.

Ways to Participate

Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Forum (IPESF)

The capstone Forum is an annual multi-day event to meet in-person and discuss matters of interest regarding civil-military engagement in addressing environmental security threats and issues. The agenda is varied, consisting of keynote speakers, presentations, posters, networking events, workshops, field trips, reports on current and completed activities, educational gatherings and cultural events.

The Host Nation is a volunteer, rotating responsibility across the Members. A hosting schedule is set 3-years in advance by the Steering Committee. Host Nations manage the logistics and planning for the Forum with the financial and leadership support of the Administrator.

Attendance at the IPESF is by invitation from the Host Nation and CFE-DM. National representatives from defense/militaries and civilian government agencies are prioritized to participate in the event. The United States embassy invitation process is used to determine national representatives. Continuity of participation by Members (and their individual representatives) is encouraged to support the long-term development of relationships and knowledge.

The Host Nation and Steering Committee will invite other Members depending on the regional and topical focus.

More information regarding Forum planning is in the Appendices.

Working Groups

Working Groups are teams of Members that work together to achieve a shared goal on a specific topic. Working Groups enable people with a range of skills, knowledge and interests to collaborate and make more progress collectively than they would on their own.

Working Groups have set objectives, time frames and membership, i.e. they are not always enduring. They are intended to produce tangible results that contribute to the overall mission of the Partnership.

Proposals for future Working Groups can be made by Members. Approval is by consensus of the Steering Committee. Reports of Working Group activities and projects will be presented at each Forum (by presentation or posterboard) for the collective awareness and development of all Members.

Building Capability Working Group

The Building Capability Working Group is proposed to be the foundational Working Group established under IPESP. The goal of the Building Capability Working Group is to advance Members' capabilities in addressing environmental security issues. The mechanisms for building capability include:

- **Shared learning**, which may include technical expert exchanges, visits, or online seminars;
- **Training courses**, provided by Members or external experts; and
- **Mentoring** of a Member by another Member.
- **Host an event** midway between IPESFs for the wider IPESP membership to receive updates from the partnership, working groups and projects, and engage in the discussion to progress the partnership.

The Building Capability Working Group will propose capability building topics and activities to the Steering Committee. These may be areas in which Members wish to increase their knowledge and expertise, or areas of expertise that they are willing to share. The Group will contact Members about opportunities, and if there is sufficient interest in a topic then those who wish to participate can then organise the activity. The Steering Committee may provide support if applicable.

Given the important enduring nature of the Building Capability Working Group, this group will initially be chaired by the Administrator of the Partnership. The Building Capability Working Group shall meet at the IPESF and every second month following.

Projects

The IPESP can broker and support projects on specific environmental security threats in the Indo-Pacific region that can be addressed through civil-military engagement. Proposals will be considered by the Steering Committee on a case-by-case basis. Proposals should be prioritized by the capabilities of Members that can provide Subject Matter Expert support. Members are encouraged to find synergies among capabilities to foster collaboration and successful project execution.

Projects will usually result from a Working Group's activities or a specific need that is aligned to the objectives of the Partnership. Project teams will present a report at the Forum (through presentations or posterboards) while the project is in progress and following its conclusion.

Appendices

History

The Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Program was established by the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command J4 Directorate as a means for the U.S. military components and commands throughout the Indo-Pacific region to improve their understanding of environmental threats to operations and mitigate environmental impacts as a result of military activities.

The program expanded in 2011 to engage with militaries across the region through hosting the original Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Forum (IPESF) in Honolulu, Hawaii. The intention of the 2011 forum was to showcase the topic of environmental security to Indo-Pacific militaries. At this time, there was no common environmental security definition, and it was an opportunity to introduce the subject, initialize best practices, and determine priorities to help shape future engagements.

Since 2011, civil and military representatives from across the Indo-Pacific have gathered annually at IPESF events to share lessons-learned and best practices, deliberate on topics, participate in group activities and exercises, and conduct site visits to environmental security projects. Throughout the years, participants from diverse sectors and backgrounds have engaged on environmental security at the Forum, building common knowledge and experiences as a network of environmental security practitioners.

The IPESF evolved from an annual discussion-based event to an ongoing action-oriented program with a network of civil-military subject matter experts focused on advancing environmental security through tangible capacity-building projects. This gave rise to the concept of formalizing the network into the Indo-Pacific Environmental Security Partnership (the "Partnership" or IPESP). In 2019, 34 countries established the original Partnership charter at the IPESF in Wellington, New Zealand. The intent of the Partnership is to serve as a non-binding community of civil-military members dedicated to enhancing environmental security cooperation and capacity in the Indo-Pacific region. In 2024, the U.S. Indo-Pacific Command transferred the operational requirements of the Environmental Security Program to the Center for Excellence in Disaster Management & Humanitarian Assistance (CFE-DM).

Indo-Pacific Environment Security Forum (IPESF)

Event Planning

The Host Nation and CFE-DM co-lead Forum planning, managing all activities including site surveys, theme development, logistics, invitations, agenda goals, and more. This planning group may include Steering Committee members and other relevant organizations to discuss themes and identify speakers. The planning group reports regularly to the Steering Committee for relevant updates and input.

Event Funding

The CFE-DM will generally take the lead in financing the Forum event. The intent is for funding to cover the costs of the venue, invitational travel for 2 individuals from U.S. Title 10 eligible countries, invitational travel for select guest speakers; organizational staff to plan, and coordination of the event.

The Host Nation will provide leadership as part of the event planning and will contribute funding and staff to event execution. Any cultural events and field trips will be planned by the Host Nation.

Objectives

The following are the standing objectives for every IPESF:

- Develop long-lasting relationships within the region between military and civil organizations;
- Share knowledge and build collective action toward environmental security challenges, solutions and best practices;
- Build the Partnership network, building relationships with new members and participants that align to the mission and vision of the Partnership; and
- Create action and activities amongst Members between forums.

Each planning group has the option to set bespoke objectives for the event that they host that are relevant to their goals and circumstances.