



# Transformation Report

Contributing towards a sustainable future for the SEAMEO Region



Transformation means changing, thinking about and doing our work in new ways. For SEAMEO RIHED, transformation is a way of building a more sustainable future for the SEAMEO region, taking into account and embracing the diversity present in the region as well as addressing the social, economic, environmental and health challenges currently impacting the region and the world.

The 2020/2021 Transformation Report provides an overview of our transformation progress including the journey towards a new strategic plan and our new priorities for the region.

## **SEAMEO RIHED 2020/2021 Transformation Report**

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# Foreword

This past year has been one of both challenge and opportunity – an evolving pandemic, accelerating climate change, an ongoing transition to remote learning and work. Through it all, we have seen the need for resilience, agility, and leadership.

The volatility, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity of the world around us also confronted RIHED with an important decision to play a more active role in the wider development trajectory of the SEAMEO region. As the SEAMEO Regional Centre specialising in higher education and development, we are ideally placed to work with SEAMEO Member Countries, Associate and Affiliate Members and partners around the world to contribute to a more sustainable future for the region.

With this realisation, SEAMEO RIHED has embarked on an important path of transformation in FY 2020/2021, one that will take us closer to a new strategy for the future. This path has not only meant a re-prioritisation of our focus of work and making use of technology to enhance our efficiency, but also the drawing up of new strategic goals to better meet the needs of the region.

The development of the Centre's 6<sup>th</sup> Five-Year Development Plan, which will cover the period of FY 2022/2023 to FY 2026/2027, was undertaken a year in advance to give ourselves a compass with which we can reflect, re-assess and plan forward our actions in the coming year to ensure our alignment with broader

education and sustainable development goals, repositioning ourselves as an inclusive learning organisation committed to lifelong learning and sustainable development and as your partner in enhancing higher education for the sustainable future of the SEAMEO region.

Our re-prioritised focus of work for the region now includes the following areas and goals:

**Policy Dialogue:** contributing to the development of the region by providing platforms for multilateral and inter-governmental dialogue to align higher education sectors and enhance resiliency and sustainability.

**Leadership:** empowering countries and academic institutions to help bridge and narrow existing gaps in the region and promoting robust and sustainable development of higher education.

**Mobility and Linkages:** promoting inclusive education and enhancing mobility and linkages through engagement with regional and international partners to develop global citizens and lifelong learners.

**Knowledge Maximisation:** pursuing policy research and knowledge projects at regional and international levels to provide policy options and direction to help decision makers make informed decisions.

# “Enhancing Higher Education for the Sustainable Future of the SEAMEO Region”

This shift has been part of a larger strategic transformation of SEAMEO RIHED that will see us work in new ways to minimise risks, monitor and evaluate our progress and encourage organisational change to see more tangible outcomes for the region, with more enabling policy options to support higher education and sustainable development at national and regional levels, more futuristic and transformative leaders that can embrace principles of inclusion and sustainability, wider access to innovative learning and mobility experiences and increased collective intelligence for the sustainability and resilience of the SEAMEO Region.

Over the course of the past year and with COVID-19 travel restrictions still in place, our day-to-day operations have been digitalised and all our collaborative projects turned virtual. Despite this, it was an opportune time to revisit and

think strategically about who we are and what we do. You are invited to explore our transformation journey and learn more about the direction that we will be taking. For more than 6 decades, RIHED has been serving this region, focused on higher education and development. What you will find in this Transformation Report, we hope, is a more partnership-driven and sustainability-minded partner specialising in higher education and sustainable development for a better, more sustainable future.

**Asst. Prof. Dr. Romyen Kosaikanont**  
Centre Director  
SEAMEO RIHED

# SEAMEO RIHED Today

## About Us

When RIHED began in 1959 as the Regional Institute for Higher Education and Development, it set out to facilitate cooperation and enhance the contributions of higher education to social and economic development of the region. Following a decision to reconstitute RIHED under the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO), approval was obtained by the Royal Thai Government to host RIHED under the umbrella of SEAMEO in Bangkok, Thailand, where RIHED was re-established in 1993 as the SEAMEO Regional Centre specialising in higher education and development (SEAMEO RIHED).

As our regional engagement has expanded under SEAMEO, SEAMEO RIHED continues to engage in close collaboration with SEAMEO Member Countries, SEAMEO Associate and Affiliate Members and our partners across the world as part of our strategy for the future and sustainability of the SEAMEO region. Our new strategic plan has directed RIHED to move away from a 'business-as-usual' strategy as it no longer suffices in coping with the increasing complexities, uncertainties, and challenges of the current landscape. The next new normal conditions in Southeast Asia compel RIHED to initiate a strategic shift towards enhancing higher education for the sustainable future of Southeast Asia.

## Our Mission

To foster cooperation and provide policy platforms among governments and universities to enhance higher education for the sustainable future of the Southeast Asian region.

## Our Vision

An inclusive learning organisation and leading partner in higher education committed to partnership for higher education and sustainable development

## Our Priorities

Policy Dialogue  
Leadership  
Mobility and Linkages  
Knowledge Maximisation



### **SEAMEO Member Countries**

Brunei Darussalam  
Cambodia  
Indonesia  
Lao PDR  
Malaysia  
Myanmar  
Philippines  
Singapore  
Thailand  
Timor-Leste  
Vietnam

### **SEAMEO Associate Member Countries**

Australia  
Canada  
France  
Germany  
Kingdom of Morocco  
Netherlands  
New Zealand  
Spain  
United Kingdom

### **SEAMEO Affiliate Members**

British Columbia Council for International Cooperation  
British Council  
International Council for Open and Distance Education  
University of Tsukuba  
China Education Association for International Education

To learn more about SEAMEO RIHED,  
visit us online at: [www.rihed.seameo.org](http://www.rihed.seameo.org)

# Our Transformation Journey

In a world defined by constant change, there comes a time when the speed or amount of change is so dramatic, incremental improvements no longer ensure success. In these times, transformation is the answer.

Transformation for SEAMEO RIHED is seen as a deliberate journey associated with profound change. It positions an organisation, or person, to move in an entirely different direction and provides a new level of effectiveness to achieve results. Transformation is not incremental. It is comprehensive, and affects all that we do.

Today, the current COVID-19 pandemic has changed our ways of learning, working, and relating to each other on a regional and global scale. As we set out to strategise our new five-year development plan, it was also clear that throughout this region and around the world an equally severe social, economic and environmental crisis has been running in tandem with the health crisis. Suddenly, and dramatically, the need to transform and leverage collective intelligence and learning for the future has never been more clear.

The process of confronting the COVID-19 pandemic through our work in higher education also reinforced the importance of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), not only as a lens through which we can understand and share our approach to

transformation, but far beyond that too. Even before the pandemic we were seeing a significant shift in the pace of change, and an increase in the expectations placed on higher education to be partners in society. These increased expectations have been an invitation for SEAMEO RIHED to critically reflect on our purpose of engaging in higher education and development and to question where our future focus should lie, whether on continuing to meet the commitments we have made to the region, or on playing a more active role in the wider development trajectory of the region - or a combination of both.

The higher education sector can do more than respond to a changing world around it. The sector can commit to transform itself and help ensure a more sustainable future going forward. In the same way, and through our own transformation, we will steer a more partnership-driven and sustainability-minded RIHED, repositioning ourselves as an inclusive learning organisation committed to sustainable development and as your partner in enhancing higher education for the sustainable future of the SEAMEO region.

We are also engaging in organisational change for a greater impact. Our organisational priorities include improving our operational efficiency, creating a digitally-enabled organisation, increasing the capability and effectiveness of our team and strengthening our insight, research and evidence capability.



As an international organisation working in one of the most diverse regions in the world, understanding the extent of risks and managing them effectively is also crucial and we will continue to embed strategic risk management in accordance with SEAMEO RIHED's vision and mission, into core processes and the strategic planning of our initiatives and activities. We commit our operation and programme delivery under principles of accountability, transparency and integrity.

With reprioritisation, the focus of our work for the region revolves around lifelong learning as a cross-cutting issue among four priority areas: policy dialogue, leadership, mobility and linkages and knowledge maximisation. We will also strengthen our capabilities for monitoring and evaluation and ensure robust and objective assessment of

our programmes and initiatives against our strategic goals. In this way, we will develop a greater understanding of the type of interventions that help us achieve our mission and support the aims of our partners.

Through these ongoing efforts to shape a smarter and better organisation, enhance our monitoring and evaluation, we are reorienting our mission towards enhancing higher education for the sustainable future of the SEAMEO Region and repositioning ourselves as an inclusive learning organisation committed to sustainable development to remain now and into the future as your partner in enhancing higher education for a sustainable future.



# Our Commitment to Higher Education and Sustainable Development

To overcome global challenges, partnership, and especially partnership in education is key to stimulate action in areas of critical importance, including our planet, people, and prosperity. Regional and international organisations have increasingly reorganised themselves around global priorities in the form of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In the region of Southeast Asia, the Education Ministers have also put forward 7 Priorities on Education from 2015 to 2035 to ensure the relevance and excellence of SEAMEO. The SDGs are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere. The 17 Goals were adopted by all UN Member States in 2015, as part of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which set out a 15-year plan to achieve the Goals. To remain relevant, RIHED commits to participate in the achievement of these regional and global priorities that relate to our mandate and contribute to developing awareness, changing mindsets, and initiating collective action in collaboration with SEAMEO Member Countries, Associate and Affiliate Members and our partners.

A ‘business-as-usual’ strategy no longer suffices in coping with the increasing complexities, uncertainties, and challenges of the current landscape. The next new normal conditions in Southeast Asia compels RIHED to initiate a strategic shift towards enhancing higher education for the sustainable future of Southeast Asia.

SEAMEO RIHED, in this transformative year, commits to strategically deliver greater outcomes and impact for its stakeholders—the region’s higher education sector and its learners. The Centre will also work in more effective and efficient ways, to ensure progress towards the achievement of the SEAMEO Education Agenda and the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly SDG 4 on quality education, SDG 5 on gender equality and SDG 17 on partnership for the goals.

Specialising in higher education and development, RIHED works at a policy level with Member Countries and aligns with other regional and international organisations towards contributing to the achievement of the United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. As part of our continuous efforts to promote the effective implementation of our work, SEAMEO RIHED engages in encouraging the fostering of lifelong learners and global citizens as our main goal and integrating lifelong learning as a cross-cutting issue through our programmes and activities and as an essential element to help us carry out our strategy the best way possible.



**4** QUALITY EDUCATION  
**Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all**

**5** GENDER EQUALITY  
**Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls**

**17** PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS  
**Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development**

**SEAMEO RIHED's commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals**

Education and lifelong learning are not only the core of SDG 4 (to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all), they are also crucial to the achievement of all other SDGs and encourage connections between them.

# A Closer Look at our Priorities

## Enhancing higher education for the sustainable future of the SEAMEO region

SEAMEO RIHED is redirecting its mission to better cope with the increasing uncertainties, complexities, and challenges of the world and initiate a shift towards enhancing higher education for the sustainable future of the SEAMEO region. Our key priorities, which align with the Agenda for Sustainable Development, form four thematic areas that shape the focus of our work for the SEAMEO Region:



The revised priorities and shift towards the sustainable future of the SEAMEO Region in our mission are intended to lead to the following outcomes:

1. Enabling policy options and common frameworks supporting higher education and sustainable development at national and regional levels
2. Futuristic and transformative leaders embracing principles of inclusion and sustainability
3. Wider access to innovative pedagogy and mobility experiences including inter-cultural exposure and learning
4. Increased collective intelligence for enhanced sustainability and resilience of the regional higher education sector



## Policy Dialogue

**We contribute to the development of the region by providing platforms for multilateral and inter-governmental dialogue to align higher education sectors and enhance resiliency and sustainability.**

Moving forward, the Centre commits to support the development of the region's higher education sectors by bringing together policy makers and professionals to learn from leading practices, explore different policy options and shape future directions, while also encouraging stakeholder engagement in dialogue with other regions to deepen collaboration and inter-regional exchange.

Regional, multilateral and inter-governmental policy fora and platforms are planned as interactive and strategic spaces for dialogue that provide access to knowledge, learning resources, indicators and communities of practice on the design, implementation, and evaluation of higher education and sustainable development policies. The Fora and Platforms can help to identify good practices across different countries and review effective policy choices. More broadly, the Fora and Platforms will serve to facilitate knowledge exchange and collaboration across countries and regions.



## Leadership

**We empower countries and academic institutions to help bridge and narrow existing gaps in the region and promote robust and sustainable development of higher education.**

Our new Programme on Capacity Enhancement for Collective Learning and Continuous Development of Higher Education Institutions in the SEAMEO Region aims to empower institutional capacities across 4 key components, including futuristic leadership and good governance, future-oriented internationalisation, innovative learning and teaching and sustainable research ecosystems. Recognising the potential contributions of the GMS countries as well as Timor-Leste and the crucial role that their higher education institutions can play for regional sustainable development, the Programme will also encourage higher education institutions across the region to redefine a new common space in higher education to foster human resources of the future and serve as an open venue for universities and stakeholders in the region to continue collaboration in generating new skills and updated knowledge to tackle global challenges and achieve a sustainable future for the region.



## Mobility and Linkages

**We promote inclusive education and enhance mobility and linkages through engagement with regional and international partners to develop global citizens and lifelong learners.**

Mobility and linkages are key strategies to advance the harmonisation and internationalisation processes of higher education towards a more inclusive and sustainable region. SEAMEO RIHED's flagship mobility initiative, the Asian International Mobility for Students (AIMS) Programme, will continue to explore innovative approaches to learning and integration of appropriate technologies for mobility, as well as promote university contributions in addressing societal challenges for a sustainable future. Intra-regional networks such as the Greater Mekong Subregion University Consortium (GMS-UC), provide a platform to foster experience sharing, mutual partnerships and the provision of technical support in the form of capacity enhancement. In addition, SEAMEO RIHED has coordinated the establishment of inter-regional networks with the ASEAN-China Centre and is actively exploring strategic opportunities between Southeast Asia and Europe and other regions of the world to facilitate greater connectivity and development.





## Knowledge Maximisation

**We pursue policy research and knowledge projects at regional and international levels to provide policy options and directions to help decision makers make informed decisions.**

To assist higher education decision-making in a rapidly evolving and globally competitive environment, SEAMEO RIHED aims to promote policy research to support higher education development in the region, ensure effective dissemination of knowledge and information through policy briefs and a new Knowledge and Information Hub, and create, support, and maintain a sustainable research ecosystem in the region through its networks. In addition, RIHED's Inter-Regional Research Symposium can continue to facilitate further opportunities for joint-research and innovation.

Policy research reports will bring to a broad audience the results of our research on higher education and sustainable development policy, while policy briefs and summaries will be small reports tailored to the needs of higher education policy-makers for informing them about available evidence on specific questions and issues. In addition, an online Knowledge and Information Hub will further serve to share relevant knowledge, good practices and trends on higher education and development for the SEAMEO Region helping to contribute to informed decision-making.



# Connect with Us

## Our new Website

Explore our new website to learn more about our transformation, our strategy and approach to serving the region achieving enduring results.

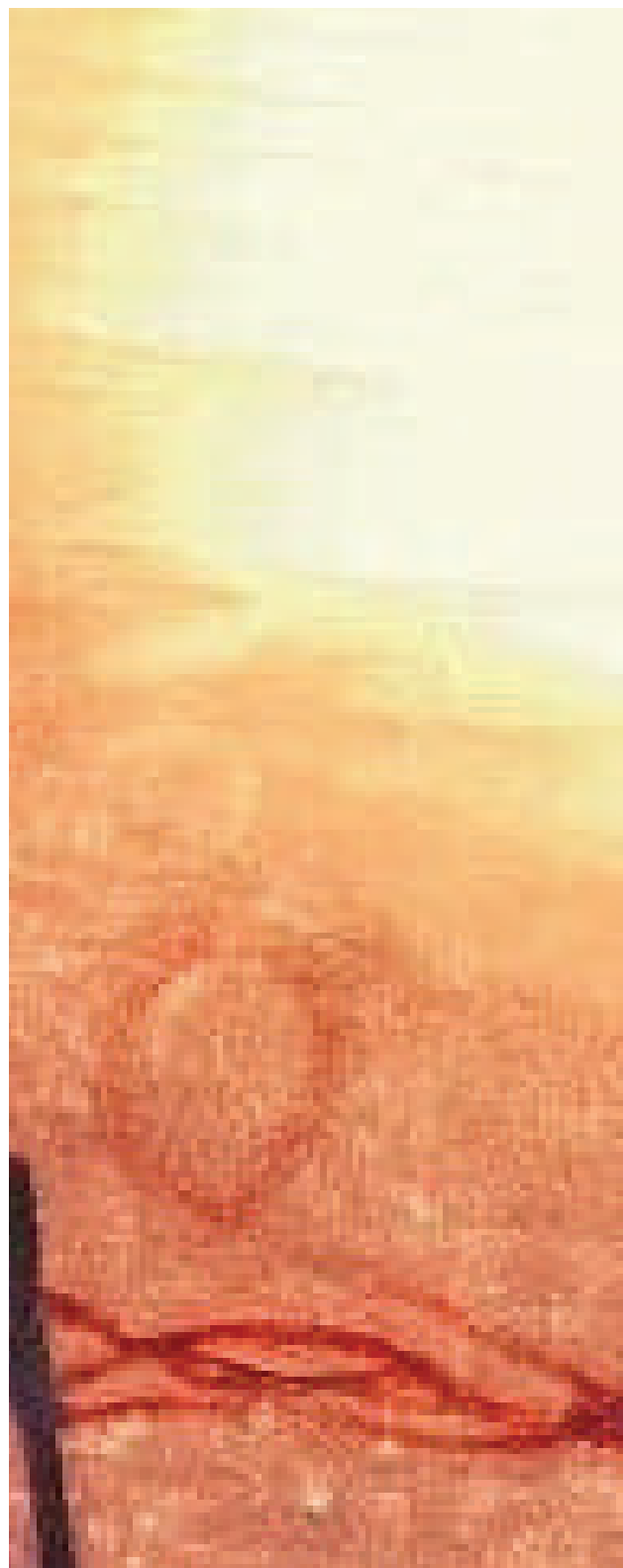
We are excited to announce the launch of our newly designed website. Visit us at **[www.rihed.seameo.org](http://www.rihed.seameo.org)**. We are delighted to launch the site in October 2021 and wanted to make the new website faster, easier to navigate, and more user-friendly.

As the region's partner in higher education and development, it's important for us to make information regarding our strategy, our priorities and impact of our work easily accessible for the region and our partners. The new website gives better access to Who We Are, What We Do, News and Media as well as a forthcoming Knowledge and Information Hub and improved Careers page.

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