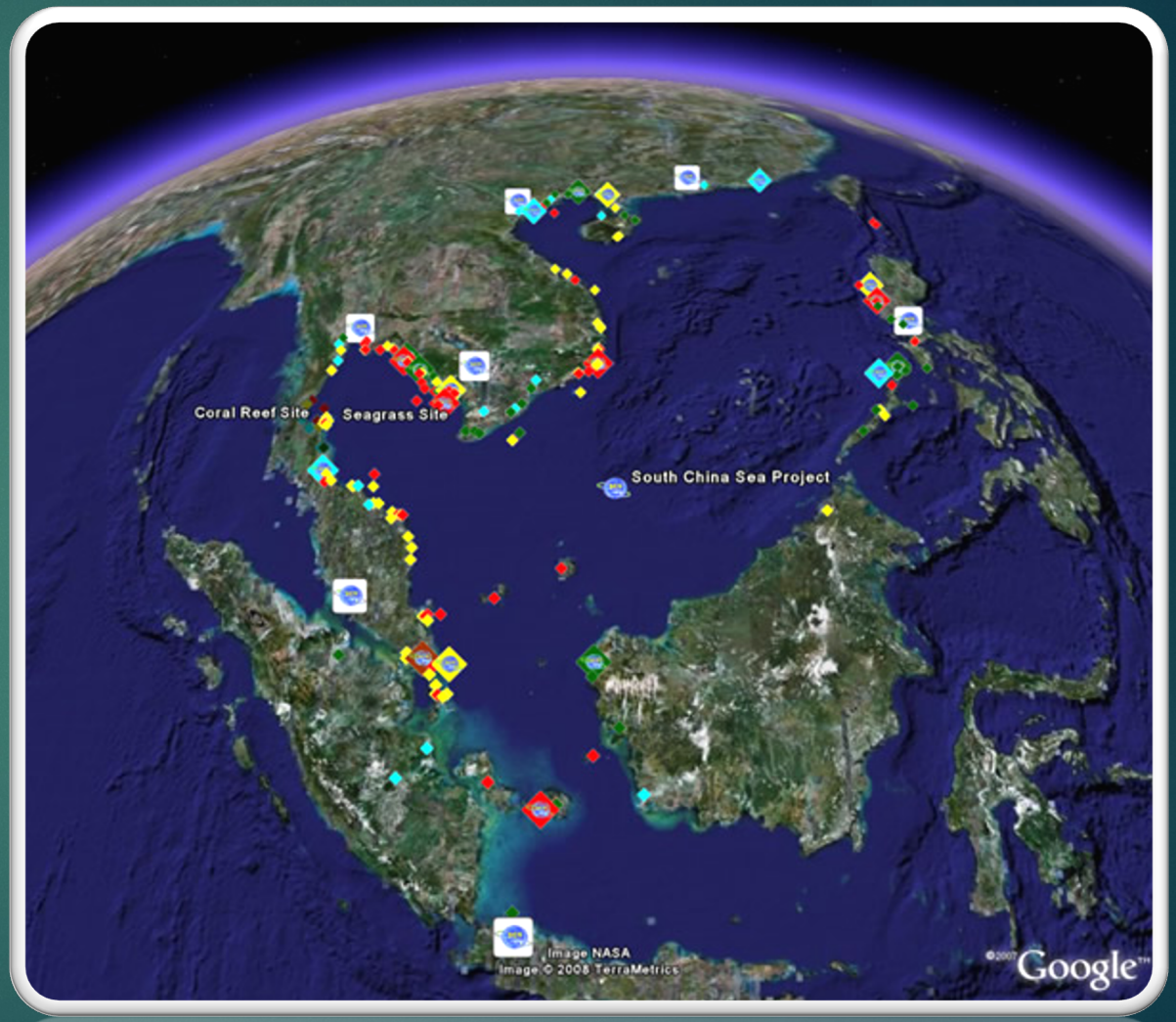
1st SCS SAP Regional Working Group on Seagrass (RWG-SG) Meeting, 03 December 2021

Best Practice in Seagrass Management in Southeast Asia



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GOAL of SAP: SEAGRASS

"To conserve, manage & sustainably utilize seagrass habitats & resources"

CHALLENGES FOR SEAGRASS MANAGEMENT

1. Lack of sustainable financing
2. Lack of awareness among people who are causing damages to seagrass
3. Coastal development plans, if any, usually do not take seagrass into consideration.
4. Poverty of coastal communities.
5. Lack of effective seagrass management systems.
6. Weak law enforcement.
7. Lack of long-term regional & international cooperation/coordination

Some recent documented best practices addressing the challenges:

- at the site scale; &
- at multi-scale

At the site scale (not focused on seagrass):

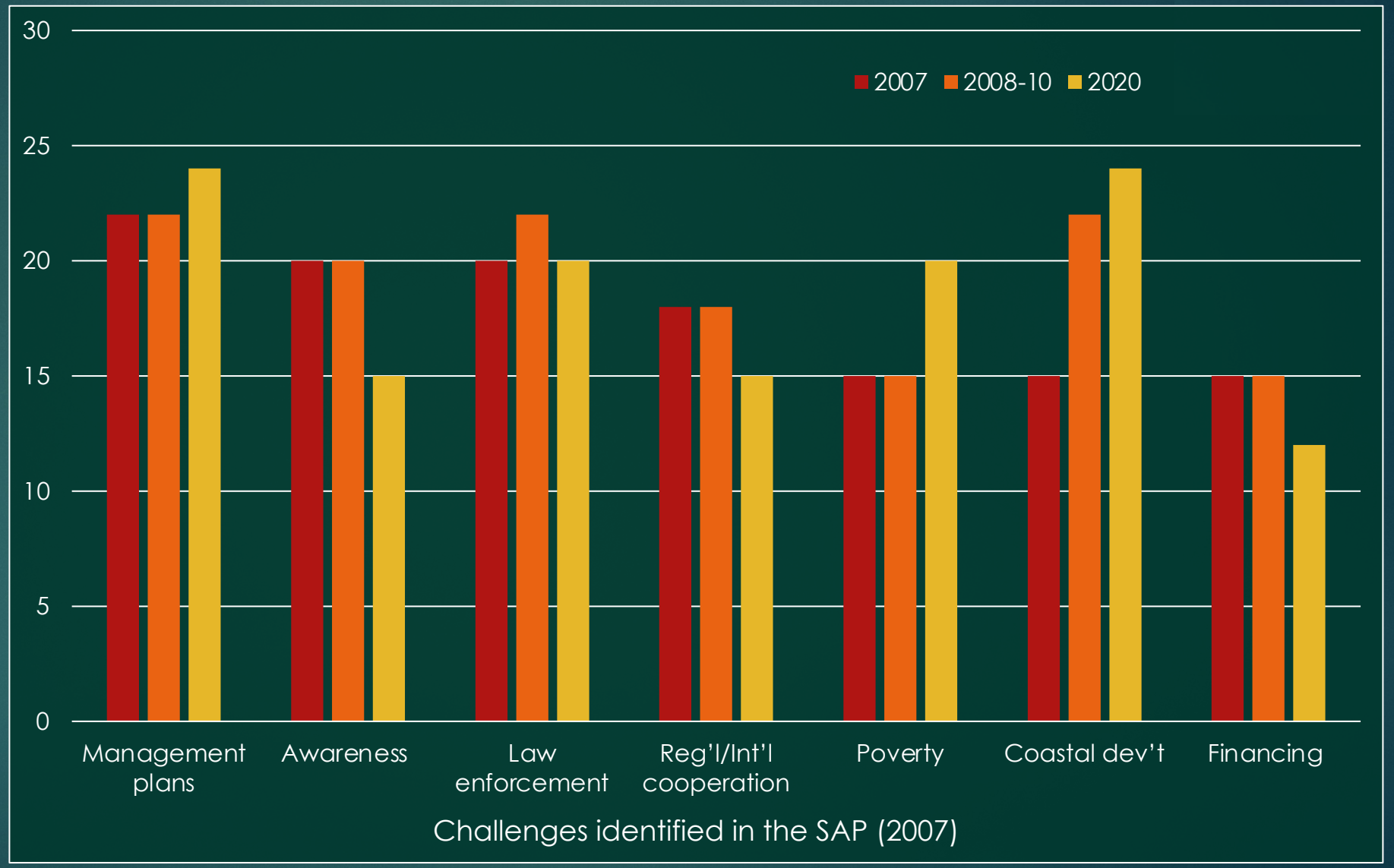
Effectiveness & true success in conservation & management of coastal resources in SE Asia are predicated upon:

1. a scope that prioritizes the prevailing natural eco-geological conditions;
2. monitoring & adaptive management that underlie the decision making process;
3. involvement of local people in planning, monitoring & implementation;
4. identification of how, when & to whom the benefits accrue; &
5. ecocentric, not egocentric, leadership & intensions.

At multi-scale (focused on seagrass):

1

Change in community perception of the challenges



2007-2010 data from 43 seagrass sites in the Philippines; 2020 data from informal literature-based opinion polls

2 Some milestones in the recent global & regional efforts to manage seagrass

1998 - *Bolinao Declaration (Seagrass Charter)* which gave birth to the World Seagrass Association

2002 - Start of project, The UNEP/GEF South China Sea & Gulf of Thailand Project

- Kirkman & Kirkman: First comprehensive work on management of seagrasses in SE Asia, (Bull Mar Sci, 71(3): 1379–1390,)

2009- COP15: seagrass as a blue carbon ecosystem; initiated the Blue Carbon Initiative & IBCSWG & IBCPWG

2014 - Coles et al. 20 years of seagrass networking & advancing seagrass science: The ISBW Series. Pacific Conservation Biology Vol. 20(1): 1-10.

2016 - Approval of the project Implementing the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea (SAP-SCS)

2018 - Fortes, MD. Seagrass conservation in SE Asia needs to link science to policy & practice. (Ocean & Coastal Management 159 (2018) 51–56).

- Fortes et al. Seagrass habitats in SE Asia: A review of status & knowledge gaps, & a roadmap for conservation. (Botanica Marina. Botanica Marina 2018; 61(3): 269–288)

2019 - Duffy J. E. et al. A Coordinated Global Observing System for Seagrasses. (Frontiers in Marine Science vol. 6 p317

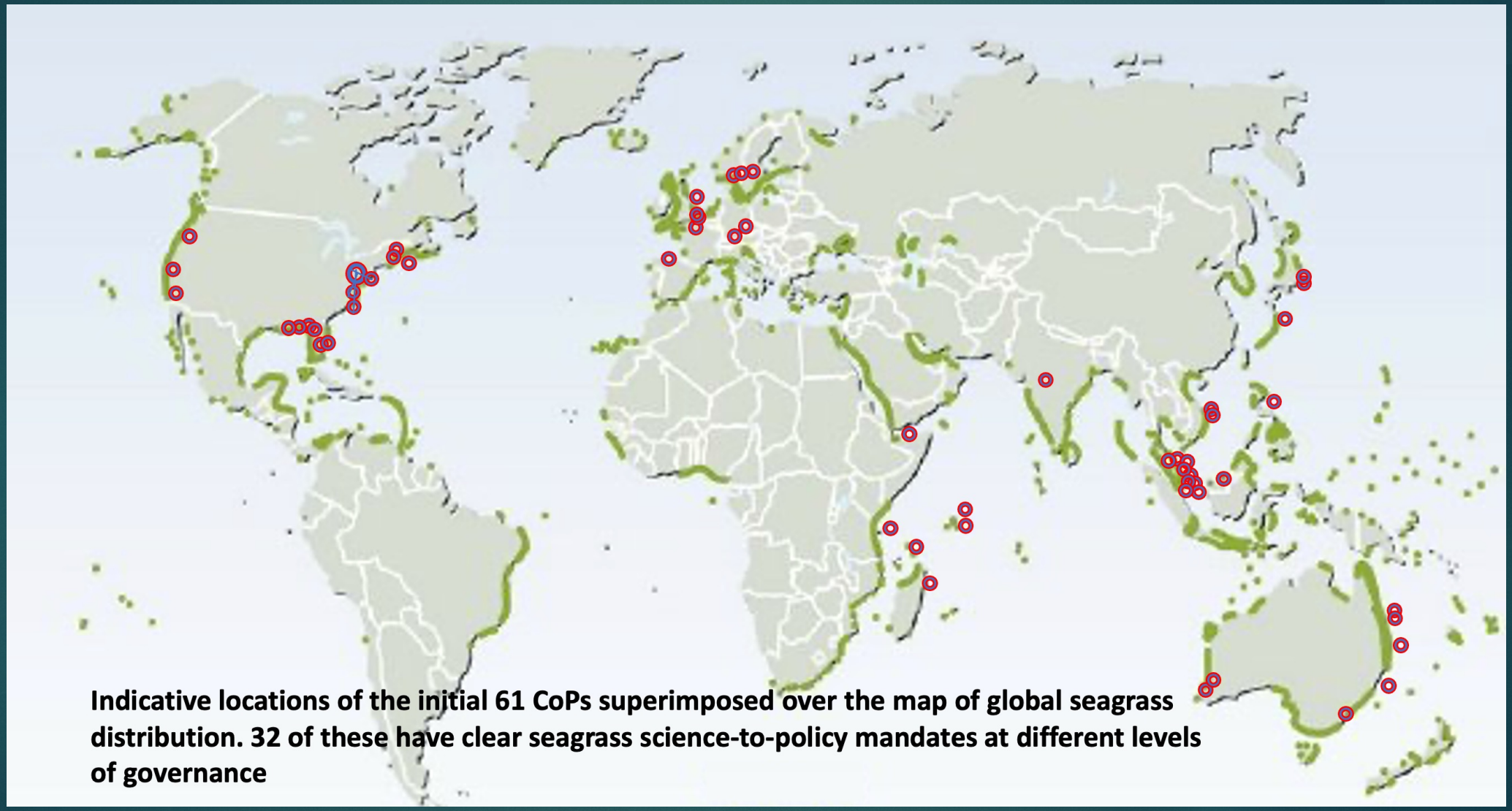
2020 - United Nations Environment Programme. The value of seagrasses to the environment & to people. (UNEP, Nairobi)

2021 - Stankovic M et al. Blue carbon in seagrass ecosystems of SE Asia & their potential for climate change mitigation. (Science of the Total Environment 783 (2021) 146858.)

- Sudo Kenji et al. Distribution, temporal change, & conservation status of seagrass beds in SE Asia: 2000–2020. (Frontiers in Marine Science vol 8)

3

Initial curation of the world's seagrass **Communities of Practice**. They are a platform linking the science-policy-practice interphase in seagrass management



Indicative locations of the initial 61 CoPs superimposed over the map of global seagrass distribution. 32 of these have clear seagrass science-to-policy mandates at different levels of governance

4 Advances in the following areas of concern*:

1. Seagrass ecosystem services but their trade-offs are lesser understood
2. Local & global natural & anthropogenic threats to seagrass meadows
3. Integrated management options that recognize the multiple benefits of seagrass ecosystems.
4. Regional, national & local practices that have led to proven benefits for seagrass ecosystems.
5. Citizen Science can be used to strengthening seagrass conservation.
6. Access to funds for seagrass conservation & restoration, with a mixed approach likely to be the most effective.

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* The same areas where more data & information are needed to meet project objectives

Next best thing to do:

- Assess where we are now vis-a-vis original intent of SAP
- Localize & contextualize those best practices using updated data & info;
- Put the region's seagrass initiatives within the broader global perspective of issues & scientific & social concerns

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