



Implementing the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand (SCS SAP Project)

Second Regional Inception Phase Meeting
10.00 – 12.30 Bangkok Time, Friday 4th December 2020

INCEPTION PHASE PROGRESS SUMMARY REPORT

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1. Project Profile

Participating Countries:	Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam
Implementation Agency:	United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
Executing Agencies:	United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC)
Funding Agency:	Global Environment Facility (GEF)
Budget:	15 million USD (with approximately 8 million USD in co-financing)
Timeline:	2018-2023 (with possible extension)
Web-links:	https://scssap.org
Objective:	To assist countries in meeting the targets of the approved Strategic Action Programme (SAP) for the marine and coastal environment of the South China Sea (SCS) through implementation of the National Action Plans in support of the SAP, and strengthening regional co-ordination for SCS SAP implementation

2. Project Progress (since April 2020)

The SCS SAP project was endorsed by the GEF in November 2016 and began implementation in April 2018. Due to some initial delays on the execution and implementation arrangements of the project, and in spite of the challenges of COVID-19, the Inception Phase is now ongoing which will collectively review, discuss and elaborate, in close consultation with national and regional partners, the national and regional activities, partnerships and co-execution arrangements, workplans and budgets. The Inception Phase ensures that the project is fully in line with recent and current national initiatives and priorities, given the period of time between the SAP adoption in 2008, the GEF endorsement in 2016 and the present.

2.1. Inception Phase Objectives and documents

The purpose of the Inception Phase of a project is to fully elaborate and detail activities, workplan and budget as well as to identify the execution arrangements, partners and stakeholders for each output and/or activity and prepare terms of references (ToRs) for staff, consultants and draft contracts for execution of activities. It is also an opportunity in some cases to adjust project deliverables to be aligned with any new global, regional and national initiatives and partnerships. In the case of the SCS SAP, this is especially key as the SAP was adopted in 2008, and whilst overall the targets and identified actions are still valid in 2020, some review of the sites and ensuring alignment with new processes is essential to strengthen the project and ensure real sustainable impact of actions to be implemented. In addition to new regional and national processes, at the global level the Agenda 2030 on Sustainable Development includes a number of SDG targets and indicators are relevant the marine and coastal environment. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) has near universal membership (197 Parties) and is the parent treaty of the 2015 Paris Agreement [[LINK](#)]. Also work is ongoing to develop the Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework [[LINK](#)] which includes regional and thematic consultations, such as on Marine and Coastal Biodiversity for the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (see workshop report held in November 2019 [[LINK](#)]).



The Inception Phase package of documentation is to be presented, reviewed and adopted at the 1st Steering Committee Meeting, provisionally scheduled for March/April 2021.

2.2. Project Coordination Unit (PCU) and staffing

A Project Inception Team has been engaged by UNOPS since April 2020 to work on the preparation and documentation for the SCS-SAP project inception phase: Dr. Virginie Hart, Lead Inception Consultant and Mr. Reynaldo Molina, Project Management Support Analyst/Country Liaison. Partly due to the challenges of COVID-19, the recruitment of the full PCU has been delayed. The TORs are under preparation for recruitment in 2021. In November 2020, a consultancy to provide technical and scientific support to countries to develop national level activities was launched and is currently under recruitment from UNOPS to support the Inception Phase.

The Project is fully established, equipped and functional in 2019 located at:

3rd Floor Main Building, SEAFDEC Training Department
 Suksawasdi Road, Laem Fa Pha, Phra Samut Chedi District
 Samut Prakan 10290 Thailand

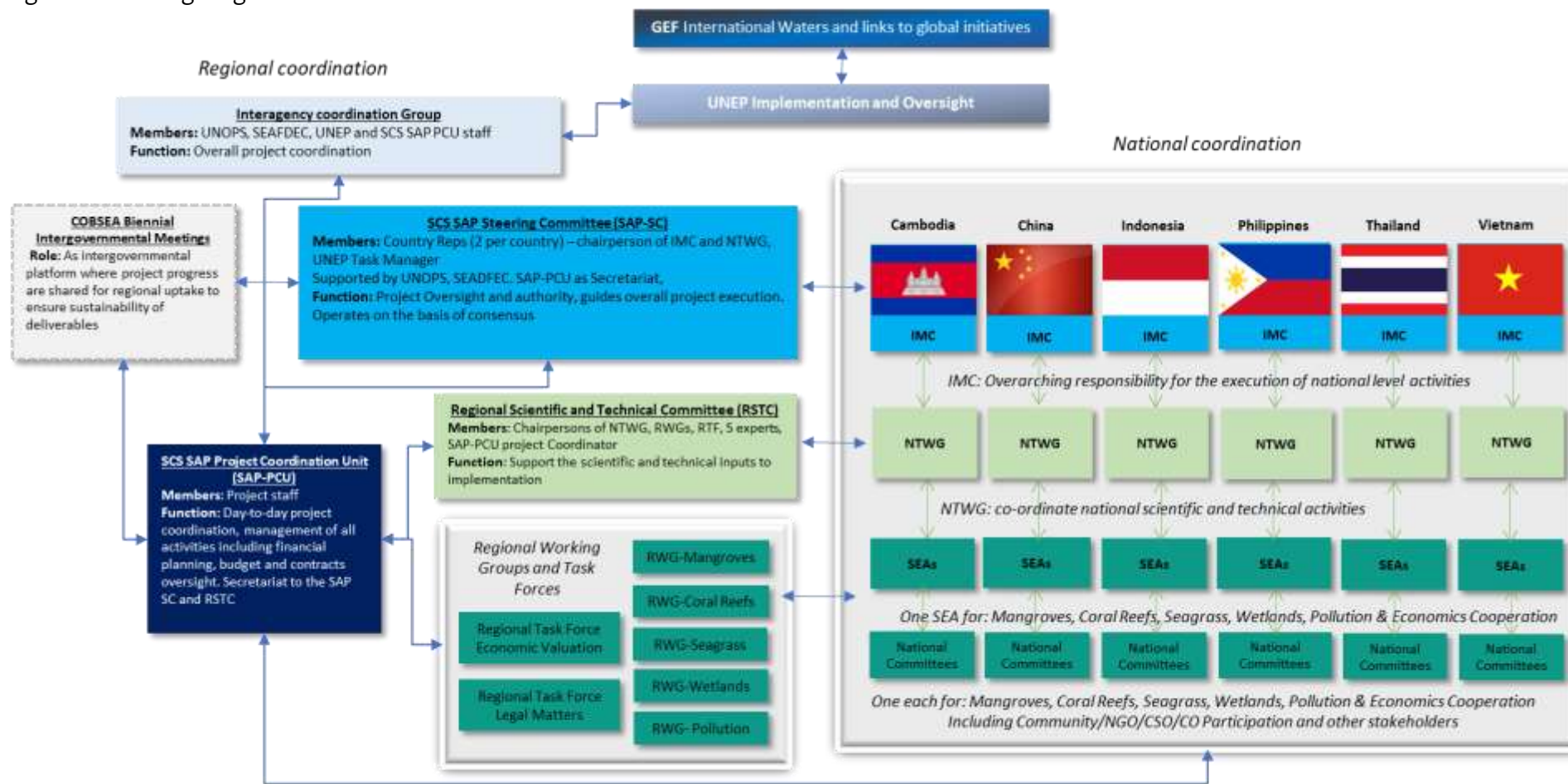
2.3. Regional and National Coordination Arrangements

The SCS SAP project is co-executed by SEAFDEC and UNOPS, whereby UNOPS is responsible for national contracts, staff and consultants and SEAFDEC is responsible for the project office, regional contracts, meetings, training and conferences. The PCU are responsible for the day-to-day management and execution of activities, reporting etc., on behalf and under the guidance of SEAFDEC and UNOPS.

The draft organogram of the project (see SCSSAP Inf.6) details the regional and national coordination of the project. The National level coordination required the nomination of the Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC), the National Technical Working Group (NTWG), and National Committee members as well as the Specialized Executing Agency (SEA).

The first step is the nomination of the chairpersons of the Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) and the National Technical Working Group (NTWG) who will together be members of the overall Steering Committee responsible for the project oversight.

Figure 1. Draft Organogram



IMC = Inter-Ministry Committee; NTWG = National Technical Working Group; National Committee = Specialized Executing Agency; RWG= Regional Working Group

2.4. Meetings

All meetings have been conducted online due to COVID-19.

The First Regional Inception Phase Online Meeting was held on 30 July 2020, with forty-five (45) participants from national lead agencies from Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam as well as implementing and executing agencies, UNEP, UNOPS, SEAFDEC, and the Inception Phase consultants. The meeting was organized to present the project, its arrangements and requirements to the participating countries including discussion on the next steps in terms of nominations to the various project regional and national working bodies and ensure their active contribution towards the further elaboration of the project activities, workplan and budget [[LINK](#)].

Bilateral meetings with national teams to guide and provide details of the inception phase activities were organized and held on 11th September 2020 (China), 21st September 2020 (Cambodia), 23rd September 2020 (Philippines), and 24th September 2020 (Thailand), complete with meeting reports and participants lists. Bilaterals with Indonesia and Vietnam are still pending and awaiting schedule.

The project was presented during the 4th Steering Committee meeting of the Fisheries Refugia Project on the 6th October 2020 [[LINK](#)]. Numerous other online meetings have been conducted regarding the coordination and execution of Inception Phase meeting including regular meetings with UNEP, UNOPS, SEAFDEC and the Fisheries Refugia project and initial bilateral discussions with COBSEA and PEMSEA.

2.5. National Coordination of Inception Phase Activities

Following the First Inception Phase online meeting held on 30 July 2020, national teams had organized their respective internal coordination and consultations with concerned agencies and institutions to discuss the project and inception phase activities.

A draft template National Implementation Reports (NIR) was developed and shared with each participating country, along a guidance document for the NIR development (see SCSSAP IP2/Inf.7). The report is divided into two parts: Part 1 Background and general information, contain sections introducing the project and its components; an overview of key national strategies and policies, relevant initiatives and projects, national reports and publications developed and produced during the SCS project, and key national stakeholders; and national coordination and oversight arrangements for the implementation of this project; Part 2 contains the national actions to be implemented in the participating countries, particularly the detailed information on the components and associated outcomes and outputs to be implemented at site level. This includes the targets and priority sites for mangroves, coral reef, seagrass and wetland including site level information such as location and characteristics, past and current initiatives and project to manage the site, proposed activities, workplans and budgets, and implementation arrangements of each site.

In the completion of the NIR's countries are to note the following:

- Nomination of Specialized Executing Agencies (SEAs) and National Focal Points (NFPs) for mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass, wetlands, land-based pollution and economic valuation components, including the chairs and memberships of the Inter-Ministry Committee (IMC) and National Technical Working Group (NTWG). The SEAs and NFPs and Chairs of the various national bodies had been initially identified and provided during the project preparation phase in 2016. However, given the time lapsed, a lot of staffing changes occurred in the agencies that will be involved. Countries were requested to submit a confirmed/updated list of SEAs and NFPs and chairs of IMC and NTWG, which to date has not been submitted. This information is also provided and required in Section 3 of the NIR.

- The review and confirmation of priority project sites identified in the SAP and listed in the project document is ongoing. The project sites were identified in the SAP that was adopted in 2008, which may no longer be valid for interventions and may not be aligned with current national priorities and initiatives. Countries were requested to submit a confirmed/updated list of priority project sites, which to date has not been submitted. This information is also provided and required in Part 2 of the NIR.
- National consultations are required to ensure integration into national priorities and activities that compliment current initiatives and projects. National coordination should include exchange with COBSEA, GEF, Fisheries Refugia and SEAFDEC National Coordinators¹, as well as with other departments (i.e. agriculture, industry, tourism etc.), private sector and any other relevant experts, institutions, projects and initiatives.
- Component 1 of the SCS SAP project is fully executed at the national level. Components 2 and 3 include a mixture of activities executed at the regional and the national level. Therefore, whilst initial focus is to be given to Component 1 activities, the NIRs will also be further developed to include national actions under Component 2 and 3 in the following months under the guidance of the PCU.
- The original budget currently available for national activities is approximately 5.5 million USD in total, with the majority allocated to activities under Component 1 (see SCSSAP IP2/5). Countries should develop activities initially assuming an equal allocation of funding between the six participating countries (i.e. 669,104, 187,574 and 53,267 USD respectively for Components 1, 2 and 3). However, it should be stressed that final allocation of resources will depend on proposed targets, activities and budgets, with some flexibility if needed between Component 1 and 2. This process will be done transparently and in close consultation with all countries.
- National activities should be supported by co-financing (cash and in-kind) as agreed in the project document.

In close consultation with UNOPS, a draft agreement and Terms of Reference (TOR) to support the countries in the implementation of the Inception Phase activities has been prepared. The TOR was shared with the participating countries for review and inputs particularly on the proposed budget and agency that will be contracted to execute the inception activities. All participating countries are yet to confirm their budget and agency. The Philippines and Thailand requested that their NIR consultant be contracted directly by UNOPS, rather than receive funds through a PCA and contracts are under finalization.

The NIRs, once finalized and adopted at the 1st Steering Committee will be used as the basis for the Project Cooperation Agreements with the execution of national activities for the duration of the project.

2.6. Reporting and access to documents and information

A new and updated website was created at <https://scssap.org/>. Key documents included are the 2008 Strategic Action Programme, which is the basis of the current project, and the SCS SAP Project Document endorsed by the GEF Secretariat. The new website is still in its early stage and will be updated as the project progresses. The original SCS Project website (<http://www.unepscs.org/>) is still active, where all documents and reports are available, which the participating countries could use as reference in the implementation of the current SCS SAP Project.

¹ China is not a member of SEAFDEC and would therefore consultant instead with relevant fisheries departments.

Reporting requirements of the project include joint UNOPS/SEAFDEC SCSSAP yearly Project Implementation Review (see SCSSAP IP2/Inf4) which are shared with the GEF Secretariat and Quarterly Progress Reports (see SCSSAP IP2/Inf5) submitted to UNEP as Implementing Agency. In terms of financial reporting separate quarterly expenditures reports are prepared by UNOPS and SEAFDEC as executing agencies and submitted to UNEP (see summary of expenditures in SCSSAP IP2/5).

The project budget requires further detailed elaboration and for national budgets to be developed in line with new UNEP requirements including a breakdown of costs for project management and monitoring and evaluation. This will be developed based on the elaborated RIR and NIRs and will broadly in line with the current summary budget and presented at the 1st Steering Committee Meeting for adoption.

3. Inception Phase Next Steps

The Inception Phase workplan (SCSSAP IP2.3) elaborates all activities to be undertaken in preparation for the Inception Phase Workshop and 1st Steering Committee meeting. The main objective of the 2nd Inception Phase meeting is for all countries to clearly agree on the activities and responsibilities to be undertaken in preparation for the Inception Phase Workshop and 1st Steering Committee meeting.

The Inception Phase will be completed with the Inception Phase Workshop and 1st Steering Committee meeting, two back to back meetings (total of 2-3 days) provisionally planned for March/April 2021:

- The 1st Steering Committee meeting (IMC and NTWG chairs from each country, UNEP Task Manager, with UNOPS, SEAFDEC and the PCU in support) which will review and adopt the Inception Phase documentation including activities, workplan, budget, communication plan and monitoring and evaluation plan as described above;
- The Inception Phase Workshop which will a broader meeting also inviting other key national, regional and global focal points, partners and organizations to launch and present the SCSSAP project

It should be noted that the Inception Phase documents, workplan and budget once adopted will supersede (i.e. replace) the project document. The SCS SAP Steering Committee has this authority as long as the objectives, outcomes and overall targets of the project are still maintained.

Following these meetings, all contracts etc. for execution of the project will be finalized in line with the adopted work-plan and budget.

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