



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

Summary Facts

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)
GEF Funding:	15 million USD (with approximately 8 million USD in co-financing)
Timeline:	2018-2023
Web-links:	https://scssap.org

The Challenge

The South China Sea is a semi-enclosed sea, which supports a number of unique habitats and ecosystems that are amongst the most biologically diverse shallow water marine ecosystems globally. The richness and productivity of the South China Sea and associated environments are, however, seriously threatened by high population growth, pollution, overharvest and habitat modification, resulting in high rates of habitat loss and impairment of the regenerative capacities of living resources. The socio-economic impacts of environmental deterioration are significant for the economies of this region.

Recognising that actions were urgently needed to halt degradation of the environment of this marine basin, the countries of the region sought the assistance of UNEP and the Global Environment Facility (GEF) in preparing a Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis of the issues and problems and their societal root causes as the basis for development of a Strategic Action Programme (SAP) which was inter-governmentally adopted in 2008. The SAP established a series of objectives and priority costed actions for coastal habitats, land-based pollution management, and the over-exploitation of fish stocks in the South China Sea.

The Solution

The objective of the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand (SCS SAP Project) is:

“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.”

This will be achieved through the cooperation of participating countries, intergovernmental organizations, regional organizations, public-private sectors partnerships, civil society and non-governmental

organizations (NGOs), leading scientists from the region. The project will also contribute to global targets such as the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030 and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) Post 2020 Biodiversity Framework.

Actions will be taken from the local to the regional level through three main components to achieve the following outcomes:

Component 1. Reducing habitat degradation and loss via national and local reforms to achieve Strategic Action Programme targets for coastal habitat management in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand

- ✓ Outcome 1.1 Appropriate forms of sustainable management established for 860,000 ha of mangrove
- ✓ Outcome 1.2 153,000 ha of coral reef at 82 priority sites managed sustainably, including a reduction in the decadal rate of degradation in live coral cover from 16 to 5%
- ✓ Outcome 1.3 Conservation, management and sustainable use of 25,900 ha of known seagrass area in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand
- ✓ Outcome 1.4 Integrated management of 783,900 ha of coastal wetland at 19 sites, including habitat restoration and protection strengthened at priority locations
- ✓ Outcome 1.5 National and regional level cooperation in tracking results of SAP actions for coastal habitat management

Component 2. Strengthening knowledge-based action planning for the management of coastal habitats and land-based pollution to reduce environmental degradation of the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand

- ✓ Outcome 2.1 Enhanced information-base for coastal habitat management, monitoring and action planning
- ✓ Outcome 2.2 Effective integration of regional science in the management of land-based pollution
- ✓ Outcome 2.3 Strengthened and harmonized national policies and laws, and supporting financial mechanism, for the management of habitats and land-based sources of pollution
- ✓ Outcome 2.4 Updated Total Economic Values of coastal habitats for use in development planning and decision-making and blue economy
- ✓ Outcome 2.5 Regionally appropriate tools and mechanisms to guide the development of sustainable management systems for coastal habitats and land-based pollution
- ✓ Outcome 2.6 Updated and Ministerially adopted Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis and Strategic Action Programme, including prioritization of national management actions to address climate variability and change

Component 3. Facilitating regional and national level integration and cooperation for implementation of the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand Strategic Action Programme

- ✓ Outcome 3.1 Regional and sub-regional co-operation in the integration of scientific knowledge and research outputs with management and policy making
- ✓ Outcome 3.2 Capacity for civil society and community organization participation in SAP implementation strengthened via operational partnership with GEF SGP
- ✓ Outcome 3.3 Relationships between central and local governments and the private sector strengthened and formalized
- ✓ Outcome 3.4 Revitalization of regional mechanisms for communications, knowledge exchange, and information and data management and sharing
- ✓ Outcome 3.5 Agreed arrangements for strengthened regional cooperation in the management of the marine and coastal environment of the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand

The SCS SAP project is complemented by the UNEP GEF “**Establishment and Operation of a Regional System of Fisheries Refugia in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand**”, executed by SEAFDEC in Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam with the objective to operate and expand the network of fisheries refugia in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand for the improved management of fisheries and critical marine habitats linkages in order to achieve the medium and longer-term goals of the fisheries component of the Strategic Action Programme for the South China Sea’. See <https://fisheries-refugia.org/> for further information.

Current Status 2020

The Inception phase of the SCS SAP is fully underway with the support of participating countries to finalize detailed activities at the national and regional level and in spite of the challenges of COVID-19, all partners and national teams are able to initiate initial actions. The First Inception Phase online meeting was held on Thursday 30th 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 (<https://scssap.org/9-uncategorised/136-2030-agenda-sustainable-development-01>).

Following the meeting, national teams organized their respective internal coordination and consultations with concerned agencies and institutions to discuss the project and inception phase activities. This includes the review and confirmation of national focal points of different project bodies including memberships, review and confirmation of intervention sites, and review and updating of the draft National Implementation Report (regarded as the national project document) to include activities, workplan and budget.

At the regional level, the project organized bilateral meetings and calls with: national teams to guide and provide details of the inception phase activities; implementing and executing agencies, UNEP, UNOPS and SEAFDEC on project implementation progress and concerns; and regional projects and partners such as the Fisheries Refugia Project, COBSEA and PEMSEA on possible complementation and collaboration. The project has prepared, in different stages of progress, the following: draft Regional Implementation Report detailing the activities for regional execution, draft contracts (Project Cooperation Agreements) for national execution, draft terms of reference for project staff and consultants, draft execution scheme between UNOPS and SEAFDEC, and documentation for the project inception/first steering committee meeting, including updating the project website at www.scssap.org to include mapping of project sites using Google Earth. Aside from the Inception Coordinator and Project Management Support Analyst, one regional and two national advisors were recruited to provide technical and scientific support to the project and national teams in developing regional and national level activities. The project office is fully equipped and functional.

On 4th December 2020, the Second Inception Phase online meeting was held with sixty-five (65) participants from national lead agencies from Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam as well as implementing and executing agencies, UNEP, UNOPS, SEAFDEC, the Inception Phase consultants, and regional and national advisors.

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