

*From strategy to action: Charting the course  
for enduring impact and a resilient future for the SEAs*



**Third Meeting of the Regional Project Steering Committee (PSC)  
of the SCS SAP Project**  
7-8 May 2025, Manila, Philippines

**Report on National Activities to Implement the SCS SAP Project**  
(for the period January 2023 – April 2025)

**[Philippines]**

[The Society for the Conservation of Philippine Wetlands]





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## ❖ National set-up of the project

Grantee: The Society for the Conservation of Philippine Wetlands  
National Focal Point: Ms. Amy M. Lecciones  
Sub-Grantee: Community Centered Conservation (C3 Philippines Inc.)

### Project Management Unit

- Project Manager, Dr. Simplicia Pasicolan
- Technical Assistant, Chiara Loor
- Technical Assistant, Roman Daniel Trono
- Technical Assistant, *To be hired*
- Admin and Finance, Sonny Vibandor

### Focal Points

**Mangrove and Seagrass Focal Point** :Dr. Floredel Galon

**Coral Reef Focal Point**: Lucas Felix

**Coastal Wetland Focal Point** : Dr. Filiberto Pollisco

**Land-based Pollution Focal Point** : Dr. Michael Angelo Promentilla

**Economic Valuation Expert**: Dr. Casper Agaton

**Legal and Policy Expert**: Atty. Elpidio Peria



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## Key national meetings (IMC/NSC, NTWGs) related to SCS SAP Project during January 2023 – April 2024

Title of the meeting	Location & Date	No. participants	Key outputs
1 <sup>st</sup> Internal Meeting Planning Workshop	16-18 December 2024	14	Finalized Sub-grantee agreement; ToRs of project staff drafted
Project Inception Workshop	Mella Hotel, Las Pinas City  27-28 March 2025	39	Completed Work and Financial Plans for project sites





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## Key accomplishments under DENR (2008-2021)

The Philippines actively advanced the Strategic Action Programme (SAP) through ecological, institutional, and policy reforms.

- Expanding Marine Protected Areas, strengthening habitat management, and institutionalizing monitoring tools like METT, BAMS, and LAWIN.
- **Integrating coastal management at the local level** through programs like CMEMP, ECAN, and the NGP, which also supported mangrove rehabilitation.
- **Enacting legislative measures such as the ENIPAS Act** and local ordinances that enhance habitat protection.
- Implementing site-based initiatives, including eco-enterprises and ecotourism, demonstrated sustainable use models.

*These efforts highlight the Philippines' leadership in marine and coastal conservation.*



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## Key achievements under DENR (Report from BMB in RSTC 2022 in Bangkok, Thailand)

Component	National SAP Target (hectare)	Achievement (hectare)	Implementing Agencies and Partners	Co-Financing (US\$)
Mangrove	5,631	13,001	PCSD, NGP, LAWIN .DENR Field Offices etc.	3,755,778.75
Coral Reefs	12,500	19,193	LGUs, Greenfins Implementation, Integrated Coastal Resources Management Program (ICRMP), DENR Field Offices etc.	1,678,251.63
Seagrass	12,500	13,090	Greenfins Implementation, BBBIDA MPAN, CMEMP, DENR Field offices etc.	232,963.61
Wetlands	54,515	240,994	MPMPC, DENR- NGP, Manila Bay Fund, SBMCHEA, DENR Field offices etc.	219,391.34

**GRAND TOTAL Accomplishments (has): 286,278 has (336% of total target)**

**GRAND TOTAL Co-Financing: USD 5,886,384.99**



## Project Sites (Philippines)

Mabini & Tingloy, Batangas

Busuanga & Coron, Palawan

Malampaya Sound Estuary, Palawan

Website:  
[www.scssap.org](http://www.scssap.org)





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# Highlights of key achievements in Implementing the SAP on habitats during 2023 – April 2025

## Mabini – Tingloy (Coral Reefs)

Approval and implementation of management plans:

- **Approval and implementation of the Mabini ICM Code**
  - Ridge-to-Reef Framework
  - Institution Building
    - ICM Council
    - Coastal Resources Advisory Board
    - ICM Office
      - ✓ **Bantay Kalikasan (Ridge-to-Reef community based enforcement)**
    - Sustainable Financing
      - ✓ Users' Fees
      - ✓ **ICM Trust Fund (USD 400,000 raised in 2024)**





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# Highlights of key achievements in Implementing the SAP on habitats during 2023 – April 2025

## Mabini – Tingloy (Coral Reefs)

Reform of laws and regulations for the sustainable management of habitats:

- Management tools such as **zoning** (e.g., MPAs, tourism zones, fisheries zones, navigational zone), permit systems, diver accreditation were adopted under the ICM Code of Mabini
- **Approval of Mabini’s Mun. Ord. No. 34-2023)** on Fisheries Seasonal Closure in support of the provincial program
- ICM Trust Fund for sustainable management of habitats





## Land-based Pollution related activities at national and provincial levels during 2023 – April 2025

1. Publication of a “Roadmap for the Management of Plastic Waste and Reduction of Non-recyclable Single-use Plastics in the Philippines.” (*Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), the Environmental Management Bureau (EMB), and the Solid Waste Management Division*)
2. Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) Act - promotes the adoption of sustainable waste management and has outlined a reward system for relevant organisations. Manufacturers can apply for various tax incentives related to their EPR programs.
  - As of August 2023, 662 firms had submitted their programs to the National Solid Waste Management Commission for the proper management of plastic waste
4. Online Permitting and Monitoring System (OPMS) - a web-based platform developed by the DENR- EMB that streamlines the application and monitoring processes for environmental permits, including the Wastewater Discharge Permit (WWDP).





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## Economic valuation related activities at national and site levels during June 2021 – April 2025

**Malampaya Sound (Wetlands)** - several studies on ecosystem/economic valuation and blue economy are published (WPU, PSU, IGES) including fisheries productivity, direct values from mangroves, ecosystem services, tourism potential, and payments for ecosystem services (PES) potential based on willingness-to-pay (WTP):

- Provision of fisheries (19% of national municipal fish landings and ranking among the top producers of anchovies; standing stock density and fisheries productivity of 6.5–9.7 t/km<sup>2</sup>; 2,750 metric tons annually)
- **Economic value is perceived by 37.4% of respondents; subsistence value (30.8%) and life-sustaining value (6.8%)**
- Economic values influence the ranking of ecosystems services and trends in willingness-to-pay for ecosystem services improvements in MSPLS
- **Direct economic revenue from mangroves is estimated at USD 368,920, with fisheries value at about USD 184,460**
- Potential PES approximately USD 10,600 from community's WTP for ecosystem improvements
- A popular tourist destination for diving and Irrawaddy dolphin watching





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# Economic valuation related activities at national and site levels during June 2021 – April 2025

**Coron-Busuanga (Mangrove, Seagrass, Coral Reefs)**- studies from both academic and non-academic sources on tourism, fisheries and blue carbon assets

- Coron's **tourism contributes USD 8,934,325** (PHP 499.2 million) in municipal revenue
- **Live Reef Food Fish Trade value of USD 18,000,000/yr**; value of pearl farms (unaccounted)
- Mangrove rehabilitation (1,652.2 hectares) storing ~1,000 tons of carbon/ha
- (indirect) CBA of the new airport: 2.5 million annual passengers, increased tourism revenue, job creation

**Mabini-Tingloy (Coral Reefs)**- for **further review** of more updated studies about the value of blue economy (fisheries, tourism, ecosystem services) in the area





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## Science and policies related to blue carbon and blue economy

1. **National State of the Coasts 2024** is under preparation by DENR-BMB, with a target launch in May 2025 to highlight coastal and marine governance.
2. The **10-Point Agenda on Blue Economy** was released to guide the Philippines' shift toward inclusive and sustainable ocean-based development.
3. The **National Blue Carbon Action Partnership (NBCAP)** was launched by the DENR-BMB, UK DFID, and ZSL at UNFCCC COP28 to promote carbon mitigation through coastal ecosystems.
4. **Senate Bill 1993**, known as the Blue Economy Bill authored by Sen. Loren Legarda, was consolidated into **SB 2450** under Committee Report 138 on September 25, 2023.
5. The **House of Representatives passed House Bill 69**, the Blue Economy Bill filed by Rep. Kiko Benitez, and agreed to a bicameral conference with the Senate on August 28, 2024. As of April 14, 2025, the **Blue Economy Bill remains under deliberation** in the bicameral conference committee.
6. **Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS) Act (Republic Act No. 11995)**. An Act Institutionalizing the Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System, Mandating Its Use in Policy and Decision-Making, Designating the Agencies Responsible for Its Implementation, Providing Institutional Arrangements Among Responsible Agencies, and Appropriating Funds Therefor





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# Highlights of key activities at the sites to support the implementation of the SAP during 2023– April 2025

## Mabini-Tingloy (Coral Reefs)

**SCS SAP Project related activities in Mabini started in 2022 prior to signing of the GSA and funded by the Local Government Unit.** Philippine NC provided guidance and advise to the LGU aligning the municipal initiatives with the targets and activities of the SCS SAP Project in Mabini

**14 Local Consultations/meetings/trainings were conducted with a total of 287 participants**

Title of the meeting	Location & Date	No. participants
Review and Amendment Workshop of CRM Code of <u>Mabini</u> (MO 02-2015)	<u>Bagalangit, Mabini</u> March 13, 2023	26
Public Consultation of Draft ICM Code	CRM/TOURISM OFFICE October 14, 2023	60
<u>Ligaya</u> MPA Management Board Meeting	BRGY.HALL LIGAYA MABINI July 19, 2024	15
<u>Bagalangit</u> MPA Management Board Meeting	BRGY. BAGALANGIT COVERED COURT Aug 1, 2024	22
San <u>Teodoro</u> MPA Management Board Meeting	BRGY. HALL SAN TEODORO MABINI Aug 6, 2024	12
Organization Meeting of <u>Mabini</u> Marine Protected Area	ICM/TOURISM OFFICE Sept. 13, 2024	15
Presentation of ALWAN Coral Reef Survey Results	ICM/TOURISM OFFICE Sept. 20, 2024	20



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# Highlights of key activities at the sites to support the implementation of the SAP during 2023– April 2025

## Mabini-Tingloy (Coral Reefs)

**14 Local Consultations/meetings/trainings were conducted with a total of 287 participants**

Title of the meeting	Location & Date	No, Participants
BK General Assembly Meeting for 2025	ICM/TOURISM OFFICE January. 16, 2025	30
Courtesy Call and Project Brief for <u>Tingloy</u> LGU	<u>Tingloy</u> Municipal Hall January 29,2025	25
1st ROAM Bot Meeting for 2025	ICM/TOURISM OFFICE Feb.21 ,2025	12
1st Quarterly of 2025 ICM Council Meeting	OM, Municipal Hall, <u>Mabini</u> Feb. 25, 2025	16
Presentation of Citizen Science (ALWAN) Coral Reef Survey	San <u>Teodoro Brgy. Hall Mabini</u> March 6, 2025	17
Meeting with the Vice Mayor and MAO of <u>Tingloy</u>	Session Hall, <u>Tingloy Mun. Hall</u> March 14, 2025	5
2nd ROAM BOT Meeting for 2025	ICM/TOURISM OFFICE March 18, ,2025	12



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# Highlights of key activities at the sites to support the implementation of the SAP during 2023– April 2025

## Mabini-Tingloy (Coral Reefs)

### Enforcement/patrolling

- Established **daily patrolling in four MPAs** and weekend seaborne patrols in the municipal waters of Mabini
- Adopt-A-Marine-Protected-Area MoU between Mabini LGU and PNP-MG

### Public awareness raising and communication

- Conducted **ICM Code Orientation** for ICM staff, MPA Management Bodies and Bantay Kalikasan members
- Maintained ICM of Mabini social media account for info dissemination
- Distributed brochure on seasonal closure
- Partnerships with civil societies, NGOs, and PNP-MG

### Ecological/environment Monitoring

- **Trained 16 Bantay Kalikasan** members on citizen science (ALWAN method) coral reef monitoring survey
- Established baseline data on coral reef condition in four MPA sites
- Conducted bi-annual citizen science coral reef monitoring survey





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# Highlights of key activities at the sites to support the implementation of the SAP during 2023– April 2025

## **Malampaya Sound Protected Landscape and Seascape (Wetlands)**

### **Local Consultations/meetings/trainings:**

- **Courtesy calls and project briefing** conducted for DENR field offices, LGUs and PCSD
- Presentation of SCS-SAP Project at the PAMB Board Meeting, 27 February 2025, Taytay, Palawan
- Presentation of SCS-SAP Project at the PCSD Council Board Meeting, 10 April 2025, Puerto Princesa City, Palawan

### **Additional accomplishment (MSPLS):**

- Facilitated the **submission of a Small Grant Proposal** for the UNOPS SEA Grants Program (for additional budget and implementation of Activities in SCS-SAP Output 1.4.1)





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# Highlights of key activities at the sites to support the implementation of the SAP during 2023– April 2025

## Coron and Busuanga

### Local Consultations/meetings/trainings:

- **Courtesy calls and project briefing** conducted for DENR field offices, LGUs and PCSD
- In the first quarter of 2025, two barangays in Coron were visited to formally present the project and ensure local awareness of its objectives and activities.
- In Busuanga, four barangays were visited during the same period as part of the project's initial launch.
- Activities during the visits included a formal presentation of the project to local barangay officials and community representatives to ensure awareness and engagement in the ongoing initiatives within their respective areas.





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## Highlights of key activities at the sites to support the implementation of the SAP during 2023– April 2025

### Coron and Busuanga (Mangroves, Coral Reefs, Seagrass)

#### Research/Assessment:

- **In Busuanga**, approximately **732 hectares of mangroves** and **25.3 hectares of coral reefs** were validated and assessed across four barangays.
- **In Coron**, preliminary observations estimate around **256 hectares of mangroves** in two barangays, **with validation, species identification, and mapping** planned for future project phases.
- Based on the ECAN Resource Management Plan (2017–2022), an estimated 529.24 hectares of seagrass and 657.54 hectares of coral reefs are present in the area, pending field validation in the next quarter.





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## Summary of the progress in development of National TDA

- The Society for the Conservation of Philippine Wetlands (SCPW) has **established a National TDA-SAP Team** composed of Technical Consultants specializing in mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass, wetlands, land-based pollution, economic valuation, and legal and policy matters, supported by project staff.
- The team has initiated data collection efforts; however, they continue to face challenges, including outdated datasets, spatial coverage inconsistencies, and the pending formal engagement of a Fisheries Specialist.
- Additionally, the limited timeframe for completing the National Report remains a significant concern for the technical team which necessitates request for extension





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## Issues and Challenges (Mabini – Tingloy Coral Reefs)

The drafting and enactment of the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) Code of Mabini was completed with manageable difficulties. However, the real test lies in its implementation. The key issues and challenges observed are:

- 1. Lack of Qualified Personnel:** The municipality lacks qualified and experienced staff, particularly in the field of coastal and marine resource management. This shortage limits the technical and operational capacity needed to implement the ICM Code effectively
- 2. Under-utilization of the ICM Trust Fund:** While the Annual ICM Work Plan and Budget have been approved by the ICM Council and the Sangguniang Bayan (Legislative Council), implementation has been inconsistent. Funds remain underutilized, and key components of the work plan have not been delivered as intended, reflecting weak LGU project execution and monitoring.
- 3. Weak Law Enforcement:** Although Bantay Kalikasan personnel have managed to apprehend some violators, illegal activities persist. Gaps in consistent law enforcement and a lack of logistical support contribute to ongoing violations.





## Issues and Challenges (Mabini – Tingloy Coral Reefs)

The drafting and enactment of the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) Code of Mabini was completed with manageable difficulties. However, the real test lies in its implementation. The key issues and challenges observed are:

- 4. Political Instability:** Political turnover affects the continuity of coastal management programs. New administrations often replace trained personnel with politically aligned appointees, resulting in a loss of institutional memory and experience.
- 5. Limited Community Engagement:** Community participation remains sporadic, with low awareness and limited incentives for sustained involvement. This undermines grassroots support essential for effective coastal governance.





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## Lessons Learned (Mabini – Tingloy Coral Reefs)

- 1. Need for a Multi-Sectoral and Coordinated Approach:** Implementing a successful ICM program requires an integrated strategy involving all sectors—government, civil society, and local communities. Full backing from decision-makers such as LGU executives and policy makers is essential for long-term viability.
- 2. Stakeholder Participation is Key:** A participatory, stakeholders-led approach to coral reef conservation and coastal protection fosters ownership, accountability, and sustainability.
- 3. Institutional Stability is Crucial :** Stable staffing structures and depoliticized implementation mechanisms are vital to maintaining institutional capacity and ensuring long-term program continuity.



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## Recommendations (Mabini-Tingloy Coral Reefs)

1. **Sustained Capacity-Building and Awareness Programs:** Conduct CEPA\* activities targeting LGU staff, community stakeholders, youth, and fisherfolk to improve awareness and participation.
2. **Strengthen Law Enforcement and Monitoring Mechanisms:** Establish more rigorous compliance monitoring systems, with community-based enforcement teams supported by LGUs and national agencies.
3. **Depoliticize Program Implementation:** Recruit and empower community stakeholders and volunteers who are not politically affiliated to ensure continuity and reduce vulnerability to political shifts.
4. **Implement Performance-Based Budgeting:** Link budget releases to actual implementation milestones to ensure accountability and optimal use of ICM funds.

*\*CEPA means Communication, Capacity-Building, Education, Participation and Awareness*



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## Issues and Challenges (MSPLS Wetlands)

1. DENR field offices have expressed their interest as important stakeholders in supporting project activities but are finding difficulty in participating due to the decision of DENR not to implement the project
2. Difficulty in acquiring a copy of the updated MSPLS Protected Area Management Plan (MSPLS-PAMP)

## Lessons Learned

1. Persistence, particularly in pursuing dialogue with DENR in order to achieve desired outcomes. Employing all possible means to get invited to meetings e.g. Council Meetings of PCSD and Board Meetings of PAMB to present SCS SAP project could get positive results.





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## Issues and Challenges (Coron and Busuanga Mangroves, Coral Reefs, Seagrass)

- 1. Limited Time and Weather Constraints:** Some site visits were delayed or shortened due to weather disturbances and logistical limitations, affecting the extent of the assessments.
- 2. Incomplete Baseline Data:** Certain barangays lacked updated ecosystem data, requiring additional time for field validation.
- 3. Community Scheduling Conflicts:** Coordinating with barangay officials proved challenging in some areas due to overlapping community events and administrative duties and on-going campaign sorties for the upcoming national and local election (12 May 2025)





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## Lessons Learned (Coron and Busuanga Mangroves, Coral Reefs, Seagrass)

1. **Early Coordination is Critical:** Initiating communication with local officials well in advance improves community participation and access to target sites.
2. **On-the-Ground Familiarity Informs Strategy:** Preliminary visits provided essential insights into local conditions, enabling more efficient planning for future fieldwork.
3. **Flexible Field Schedules:** Building in buffer days for weather and logistical setbacks is essential for field-based ecosystem assessments.





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## Recommendations (Coron and Busuanga Mangroves, Coral Reefs, Seagrass)

1. **Prioritize Data Gaps:** Focus on barangays with incomplete or outdated data in the next quarter to improve the accuracy of ecosystem mapping.
2. **Strengthen LGU Coordination:** Maintain regular communication with LGUs to align project activities with local schedules and governance frameworks.
3. **Allocate Time for Mapping:** Integrate map production into the next project phase to support spatial planning and visualization.
4. **Conduct Capacity-Building Activities:** Where appropriate, orient local stakeholders on ecological monitoring methods to support sustainability and community engagement.





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## Recommendations (National Coordination)

1. Strategize and formulate plan to fast track implementation of activities
2. **Increase frequency of meetings** among project team members for continuous updates and timely resolution of issues and concerns
3. **Explore other partnerships and co-financing sources** for conservation activities aligned with SCS SAP targets.
4. **Improve and maintain coordination with government agencies, NGOs, local stakeholders, and other potential partners.**
5. **Provide regular updates** to all government agencies, NGOs, local stakeholders, and other potential partners.
6. Request PSC for **project extension as per recommendation in the Medium Term Evaluation**





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## Conclusions

- The Philippines has made substantial progress in implementing the SCS SAP Project through a strong collaborative effort led by the Society for the Conservation of Philippine Wetlands, supported by technical experts and site-based partners.
- Key accomplishments include strengthened habitat protection through site-based management, policy reforms such as the Mabini ICM Code and Seasonal Closure Ordinance, and advancements in pollution control and economic valuation.
- Despite setbacks—including data limitations, expected weather-related delays, and coordination challenges—these experiences have offered valuable lessons that now inform more adaptive and locally grounded strategies.
- As the project moves into its next phase, continued coordination with government agencies, enhanced data gathering, and expanded stakeholder engagement will be critical in achieving the SAP targets and fostering long-term resilience in the country's coastal and marine ecosystems.



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## Way Forward

- Moving forward, the **Philippines will focus on completing the national TDA report** by filling in data gaps and finalizing the engagement of key experts, including for fisheries.
- **Stronger coordination with government agencies**, especially DENR and PCSD, will be pursued to secure support and updated plans.
- At the site level, **more assessments and community consultations will continue**, especially in areas with limited data.
- The team will also **strengthen communication and training for local partners and explore additional funding from LGUs** and through synergies with other possible partners to support ongoing work.

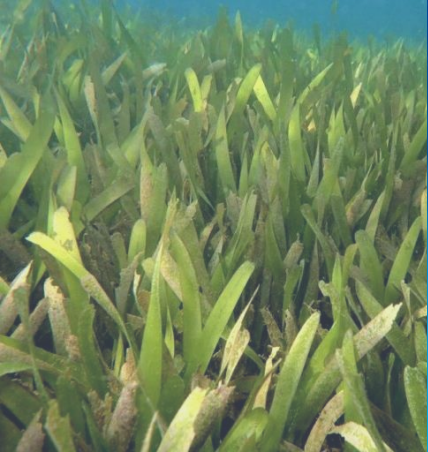
*These actions aim to keep the project on track and ensure meaningful progress in protecting our coastal and marine areas.*

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

***Maraming Salamat Po!!***

