



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

First Meeting of the Regional Working Group on Seagrass

Teleconference, 3 December 2021

Provisional Terms of Reference for the Regional Working Group on Seagrass UNEP/GEF SCS SAP Project



INTRODUCTION

According to the initial project document of the SCS SAP project in line with the Strategic Action Programme, Outcome 1.3 Conservation, management and sustainable use of 15,848 ha of known seagrass area in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand through the following:

- 1.3.1 Twenty-one seagrass areas totalling 15,848 ha under sustainable management with supporting laws and regulations
- 1.3.2 Amended management plans for 7 existing MPAs with significant seagrass areas, to include specific seagrass-related management actions and policy, legal & institutional reforms
- 1.3.3 Designation of 7 new Marine Protected Areas focusing on seagrass areas identified in the prioritized listings of the SCS Project
- 1.3.4 Established mechanism for monitoring management, ecological and socio-economic indicators at 20 sites [based on SAP results framework]

According to the Terms of Reference of the Regional Working Group on Seagrass (RWG-SG), adopted at the 1st Project Steering Committee (29-30 June 2021), the purpose of RWG-SG has the responsibility ***“for coordinating the work of the National Seagrass Committees established in each of the participating countries; for ensuring effective implementation of project activities undertaken in the context of the achievement of the seagrass management targets of the project; and to provide a mechanism for exchange of information and experience of seagrass management activities in each country.”***

The RWG-SG of the SCS SAP Project shall consist of the Chairpersons of the National Seagrass Committees together with one member of the SCS SAP Project Coordination Unit and selected regional experts. The SCS SAP Project Coordination Unit in consultation with the National Technical Focal Points for the project shall nominate no more than four such experts to ensure a balance of expertise and specialization consistent with the mandate of the working group. The membership of the RWG-SG shall be formally established at the first meeting of the Working Group, which shall elect a Chairperson and a Vice-Chair from amongst its members. The Vice-Chair shall act as Chairperson of meetings in the absence of the Chairperson. The Chairperson of the RWG-SG will represent the RWG-SG on the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC) and will attend the meetings of that Committee.

The objectives of this First Meeting of the Regional Working Group on Seagrass include:

1. Present and discuss the SAP targets for seagrass, and selected sites
2. Present the compiled information provided on the status of SAP implementation between 2008- 2020, which will be further developed into a publication in 2022
3. Present the compiled information on the national revisions to targets and sites, building upon recent and ongoing projects, initiatives and best practices;
4. Discuss executing arrangement and workplans for 2021-2022

The meeting will be conducted using Zoom, and therefore will be open for additional national experts to participate.

Provisional Terms of Reference for the Regional Working Group on Seagrass

1. RATIONALE AND PURPOSE OF A REGIONAL WORKING GROUP ON SEAGRASS

1.1 To facilitate the achievement of the Strategic Action Programme targets for seagrass, a Regional Working Group on Seagrass (RWG-SG) shall be established with overall responsibility for: co-ordinating the work of the National Seagrass Committees established in each of the participating countries; for ensuring effective implementation of project activities undertaken in the context of the achievement of the seagrass management targets of the project; and to provide a mechanism for exchange of information and experience of seagrass management activities in each country.

2. MEMBERSHIP

2.1 The RWG-SG of the SCS SAP Project shall consist of the Chairpersons of the National Seagrass Committees together with one member of the SCS SAP Project Coordination Unit and selected regional experts. The SCS SAP Project Coordination Unit in consultation with the National Technical Focal Points for the project shall nominate no more than four such experts to ensure a balance of expertise and specialisation consistent with the mandate of the working group.

2.2 The membership of the RWG-SG shall be formally established at the first meeting of the Working Group, which shall elect a Chairperson and a Vice-Chair from amongst its members. The Vice-Chair shall act as Chairperson of meetings in the absence of the Chairperson. The Chairperson of the RWG-SG will represent the RWG-SG on the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee (RSTC) and will attend the meetings of that Committee.

3. SECRETARIAT

3.1 The SCS SAP Project Coordination Unit shall act as Secretariat to the RWG-SG, and shall ensure that reports of the meetings are circulated to all members of the working group, and are copied to the members of the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee. The National Seagrass Committees shall serve as the principal source of national scientific and technical data and information to the RWG-SG.

4. MEETINGS OF THE COMMITTEE

4.1 The SCS SAP Project Coordination Unit in consultation with the Chairperson shall convene meetings of the RWG-SG according to an agreed schedule, which will form part of the agreed work plan and timetable for the work of the Committee. The first meeting of the RWG-SG will be convened within three months of signature of the operational project document to agree on the detailed activities, workplan and timetable for the first twenty-four months of project execution leading to the project's mid-term review.

5. TERMS OF REFERENCE

The RWG-SG shall:

5.1 Provide direction, and strategic guidance to the National Seagrass Committees regarding the conservation, management and sustainable use of 15,848 ha of known seagrass area in the South China Sea by Year 5 of the project, including the achievement of the following targets¹:

- Twenty-one seagrass areas totalling 15,848 ha under sustainable management with supporting laws and regulations
- Amended management plans for 7 existing MPAs with significant seagrass areas, to include specific seagrass-related management actions
- Designation of 7 new Marine Protected Areas focusing on seagrass areas
- Established mechanism for monitoring management, ecological and socio-economic indicators at 20 sites

5.2 Assume overall responsibility for the timely execution of project activities in support of the achievement of the abovementioned targets;

5.3 Update, in close collaboration with the National Seagrass Committees, the regional seagrass meta-database and GIS, including meta-data on biodiversity and the results of seagrass research pertaining to this project.

5.4 Develop, in close collaboration with the National Seagrass Committees, public awareness and information materials concerning the national and regional importance of such ecosystems;

5.5 Receive, and review reports, data and information from the National Seagrass Committees and compile the regional syntheses regarding seagrass management needs and priorities;

5.6 Develop guidelines regarding best practices for sustainable seagrass management for adoption and application at national level in participating countries;

5.7 Develop, review and recommend for adoption by the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee the proposed targets and timelines that may be included in a revised Strategic Action programme in order to achieve, sustainable management of seagrass of the South China Sea in the longer-term;

5.8 Prepare a regional review of national experiences in seagrass restoration with a view to developing widely applicable guidelines concerning best practices in seagrass restoration and rehabilitation;

5.9 Review and evaluate, at the regional level, progress in implementation of the seagrass activities of the project, and provide guidance for improvement when necessary; and

5.10 Develop annual workplans and provide periodic progress reports to the Regional Scientific and Technical Committee.

¹ To be revised if required following finalization of the National Implementation Reports