



**REVERSING ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION TRENDS
IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA AND GULF OF THAILAND
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THE UNEP/GEF SOUTH CHINA SEA PROJECT: LESSONS LEARNT IN REGIONAL COOPERATION

Vo Si Tuan & John Pernetta

*For further information, please visit the project website or contact Vo Si Tuan
(vosituan@gmail.com)*



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PARTICIPATING COUNTRIES

**CAMBODIA, CHINA, INDONESIA, MALAYSIA, PHILIPPINES,
THAILAND, VIET NAM.**

FOCAL MINISTRIES ARE MINISTRIES OF ENVIRONMENT

**22 GOVERNMENT DEPARTMENTS 20 UNIVERSITIES AND
RESEARCH INSTITUTES AND 2 NGOs ENGAGED AS
SPECIALISED EXECUTING AGENCIES**

**AROUND 400 ENTITIES INVOLVED IN THE NETWORK AT THE
REGIONAL, NATIONAL AND LOCAL LEVEL**



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Project Components

- **Habitat Loss and Degradation**
 - Mangroves**
 - Seagrass**
 - Coral Reefs**
 - Wetlands**
- **Over-exploitation of Fisheries**
- **Land-based Pollution**
- **Regional Co-ordination**

Project Implementation: 2002 - 2008



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OUTPUTS OF THE PROJECT

Regional coordination

100 regional meetings
(14.3 per year)
involving in excess of
2,200 participants

Over 1,800 meeting
documents prepared
and distributed

Data and information, and technical publications

Short regional overviews of each of the
habitat types published in 2004

National reviews published in national
languages for in-country distribution and in
English as part of the UNEP/GEF/SCS
Technical Report series (2007-08)

Three technical publications reviewing the
status and achievements of habitat
demonstration sites (2007)

1800 documents and Meta & GIS
database uploaded in the website



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OUTPUTS OF THE PROJECT (cont.)

Innovation and knowledge documents

The project management framework (2005);

Procedure for establishing a regional system of Fisheries *Refugia* (2007);

Procedure for selection of demonstration sites (2007);

The regional guidelines for conducting economic valuation (2007)

Regionally applicable total economic values of coastal ecotones (2007);

A model for riverine inputs of nutrients to the South China Sea (2007)

A review of the development, key features and usage of the project databases and website was also published (2007)



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OUTPUTS OF THE PROJECT (cont.)

Demonstration sites

136 habitat sites characterised, including 26 mangrove, 43 coral reef, 26 seagrass and 41 coastal wetland sites

Eighteen habitat sites selected as the priority

Eleven sites funded through the grant of the Project, and seven selected for financing through the MSP mechanism

Regional training programme

Seven regional training workshops conducted by five implementing entities

All training materials loaded to the training section of the South China Sea project website

The thirty seven (37) national “echo” seminars, involved a total of 1,592 participants and 111 days of training



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Lesson 2: Separation of scientific and technical issues from political decision making

At the Regional level:

Regional Working Groups & Regional Scientific and
Technical Committee
Regional Project Steering Committee

At the national level:

National Committees or Sub-Committee & National
Technical Working Group
Inter-Ministry Committee

The Project Steering Committee and Inter-Ministry
Committees, are advised by, the Regional Scientific and
Technical Committee and the National Technical Working
Groups respectively, on matters of substance relating to the
scientific and technical soundness of the alternative courses
of action before each body, for decision

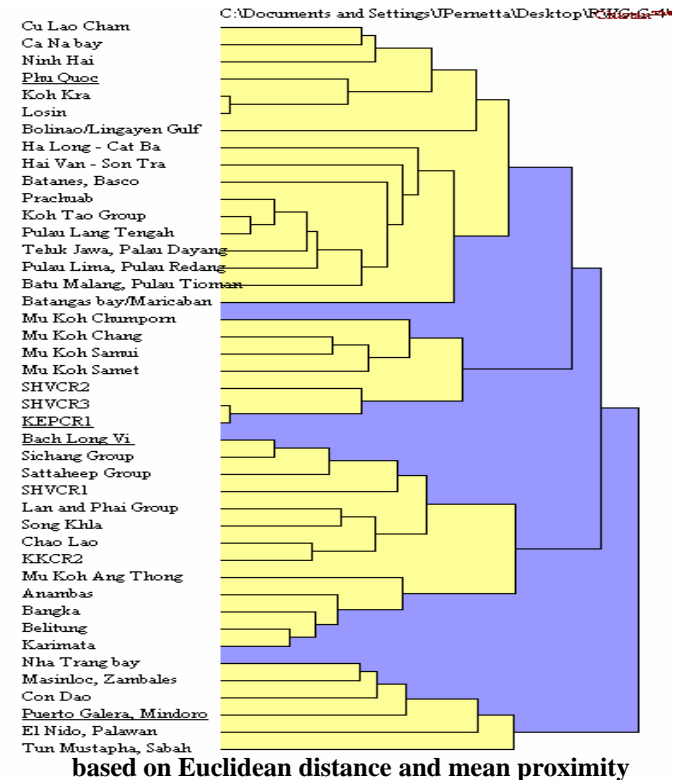


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TRANSPERANCY PROCESS IN THE SELECTION OF
DEMONSTRATION SITES

Site selection in SCS involved building from ground up regional and national consensus on:

- biological, environmental, transboundary and socio-economic indicators
- assembling maximum number of site related data sets
- conducting a cluster analysis to group the sites
- agreeing the scale or scores for criteria and indicators
- ranking sites within clusters & prioritisation
- deciding on the sites



**PROCESS DISCUSSED AND AGREED AT ALL STAGES
AND ALL LEVELS ONCE COMPLETE NO DISAGREEMENT**



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Lesson 3: Individuals' role in the success or failure of Inter-ministry Committees at the national level

The Inter-Ministry Process: POLITICAL MOMENTUM, SENIORITY OF REPRESENTATION

SCS Inter-Ministry Committee's:

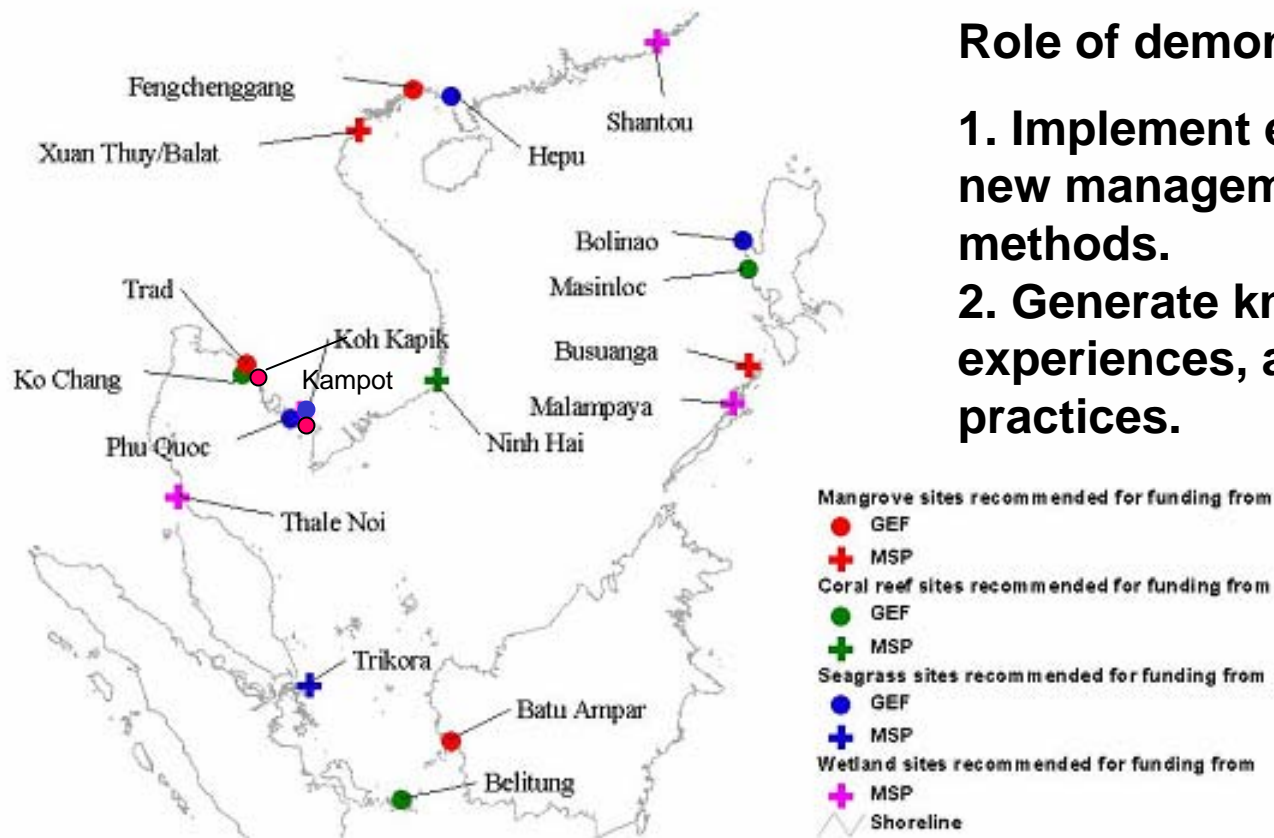
- Work well in some countries do not in others
- Concerned only with cross sectoral matters not with scientific or technical issues
- When Chaired by Senior Officials or Ministers/Deputy Minister's they attract higher level representation from other sectors

SUCCESS OR FAILURE REFLECTS INDIVIDUAL'S COMMITMENTS AND EFFORTS RATHER THAN THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE GOVERNMENT CONCERNED



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Lesson 4: Encouragement of cooperation at the local level through the demonstration site network



Role of demonstration sites:

1. Implement experiment in new management models and methods.
2. Generate knowledge, experiences, and good practices.

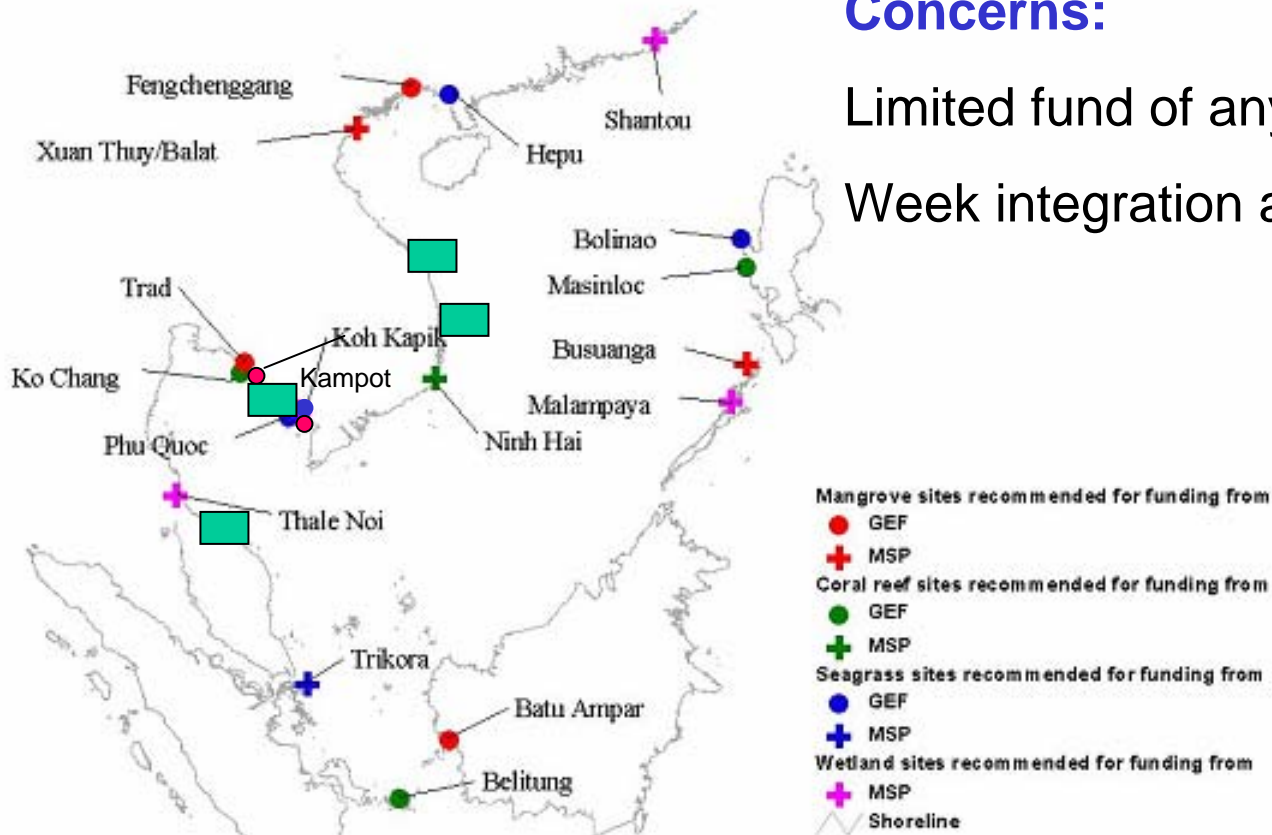
3. Serve as nodes in a regional learning network for the South China Sea.

Habitat demonstration sites approved by the Project Steering Committee



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Demonstration Site Network of the SCS Project
Expanded by Joining of the Self-Funded Projects



Concerns:

Limited fund of any single project

Weak integration among projects

Solutions:

Projects funded by different sources can work together, especially in sharing information & experiences

Four Self-funded Project Included in the SCS network: Cham MPA, Thi Nai Sanctuary (Viet Nam), LACRM (Cambodia) & CHARM (Thailand)



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Established and operational regional network to ensure information and experience exchange in the region

Three Mayors' Round-tables with more than 40 participants each, as fora for senior government officials and site managers



Information exchange through the project website (visits to demonstration site page; e-forum by Koh Chang & CHARM)

Site visits from one to another (Kampot, Koh Chang, Phu Quoc, Masinloc, Bolinao)

All meetings of the RWGs convened at the demonstration sites enable exchanges between local people and regional experts





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Encouraged transboundary management of resource and environment between: Kampot – Phu Quoc and Trat – Peam Krashop demonstration sites

- Institutional arrangements for cooperation - Periodic joint meetings of management teams
- Development of joint policy for management of habitats & resources in transboundary waters
- Establishment of joint GIS database
- Capacity building through training & exchange



Signature of MoA by the provincial leaders of the two provinces of Kampot (Cambodia) and Kien Giang (Viet Nam)



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Lesson 5: Ownership of participating countries

Funding for activities at the national level provided directly to the SEAs for implementing project activities under the coordination of focal ministries within their countries

Chairperson of the Inter-ministry Committee serves as a member of the regional level Project Steering Committee

Political decision making in the project should be the sole prerogative of the governments without IA, GEF or donor influence





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Problems and solutions

**National perspectives and policies focus on national
relevance**

**General lack of understanding of the relevance of global
issues and priorities among both scientists and
decision makers**

**National process of priority setting that tend to ignore or
downplay regional and global concern**

**Exchange of data and information between countries
and development of joint approaches to problem
solving that reflect regional and global perspectives as
well as national priorities and concerns**



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Lesson 6: Strong involvement of national and regional experts in implementing project tasks

All activities at the national level implemented under the coordination and guidance of the national and regional committees without participation of international experts or consultants from outside the region

“Learning by doing” emphasised throughout project implementation and resulted in improved capacity for environment management and cooperation in a number of countries and entities at the national level

Intellectually challenging issues: assessing the assimilative capacity of the SCS with regard to nutrient loading, database development and management, economic valuation of coastal habitats, and the statistical analysis of similarity between habitats all addressed and solved by experts and consultants from the region. The development of the procedures for developing “regional Total Economic Values” of coastal habitats as an innovation



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“Perceived truth” that developing countries lack scientific and management expertise; and that international consultants are needed to design and execute projects or programmes in developing countries?

International scientists generally do not design practical action oriented projects in developing countries since they tend to: be rather narrow in their specialisation; take a theoretical rather than an applied view; focus on what is lacking rather than what can be done now; are unaware, or take no account of, cultural differences in the development and application of science

Developing countries generally have strong scientific capacity but often: lack international language skills; have inadequate national library and reference resources; lack familiarity with donor or partner specific requirements; and display significant cultural differences in the approach to “science and its” application to management

International consultants may be needed during project design to address the language and information resource inadequacies identified

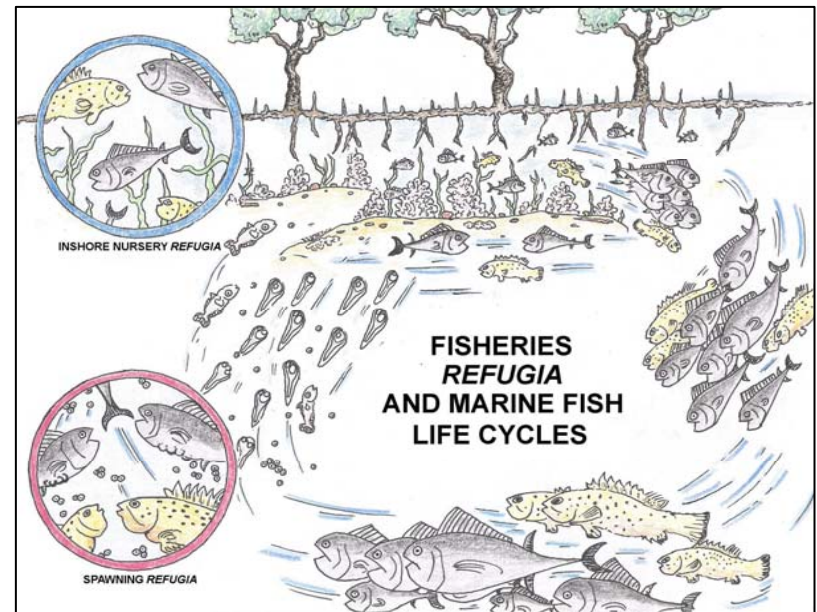


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Lesson 7: Linkages between habitat and fisheries management for developing fisheries refugia network

Fisheries *Refugia*:

- ❖ Specific areas of significance to the life-cycle of particular species
- ❖ Should be defined in space and time
- ❖ Should NOT be no-take zones
- ❖ Serve to safeguard spawning aggregations, nursery grounds, and migration routes



Fisheries *Refugia* are “Spatially and geographically defined, marine or coastal areas in which specific management measures are applied to sustain important species [fisheries resources] during critical phases of their life-cycle, for their sustainable use.”



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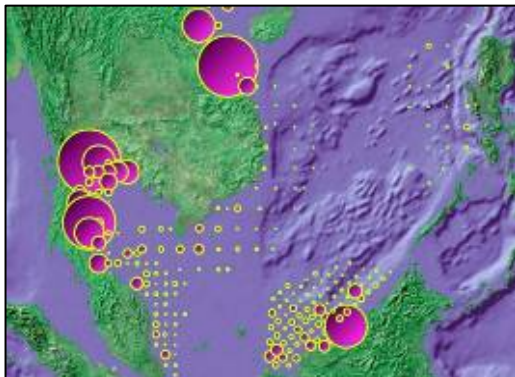
Stakeholder Consultations
on *Refugia* Concept



Intergovernmental
Guidelines on *Refugia*



Local Consultations on
Mapping Known *Refugia*



Review of Fish Egg and
Larvae Data for *Refugia*
Identification



Development of a
Fisheries *Refugia*
Information Portal



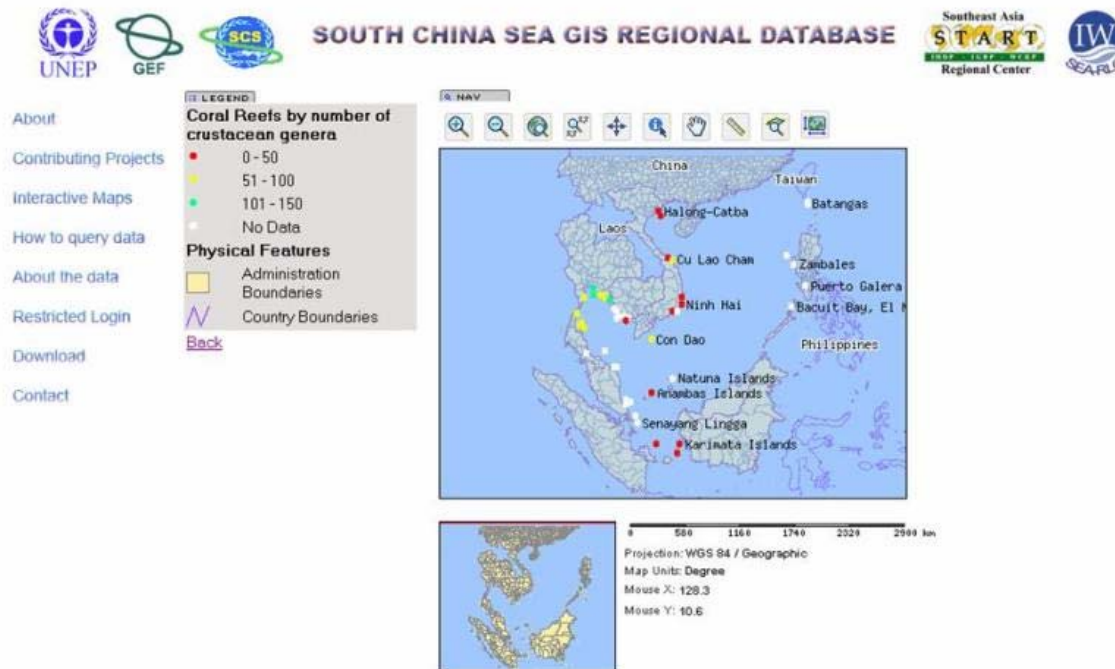
Conduct of Regional
Training Events on *Refugia*
Science and Management



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Lesson 8: Sharing data through developing regional database

The South China Sea Regional Geographical Information System



Data in agreed format of 26 mangrove, 43 coral reef, 26 seagrass & 41 coastal wetland sites available

Web-based GIS be up-updated and added by approved users

Example of the outcome of a simple search for numbers of crustacean genera at coral reef sites in the South China Sea



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The South China Sea Meta-database

A “living” database that can be revised and updated online, providing habitat, fisheries & land-based pollution managers with a tool they can collaboratively build and share within the region.



SOUTH CHINA SEA META-DATABASE



main menu

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WELCOME to the **South China Sea Meta-database** - an initiative of the UNEP/GEF Project on Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand ([UNEP/GEF SCS](#)).

Since 2002, partners of the UNEP/GEF SCS Project have collected metadata on existing environmental datasets in the Southeast Asia region and this information can now be searched online in the South China Sea Meta-database.

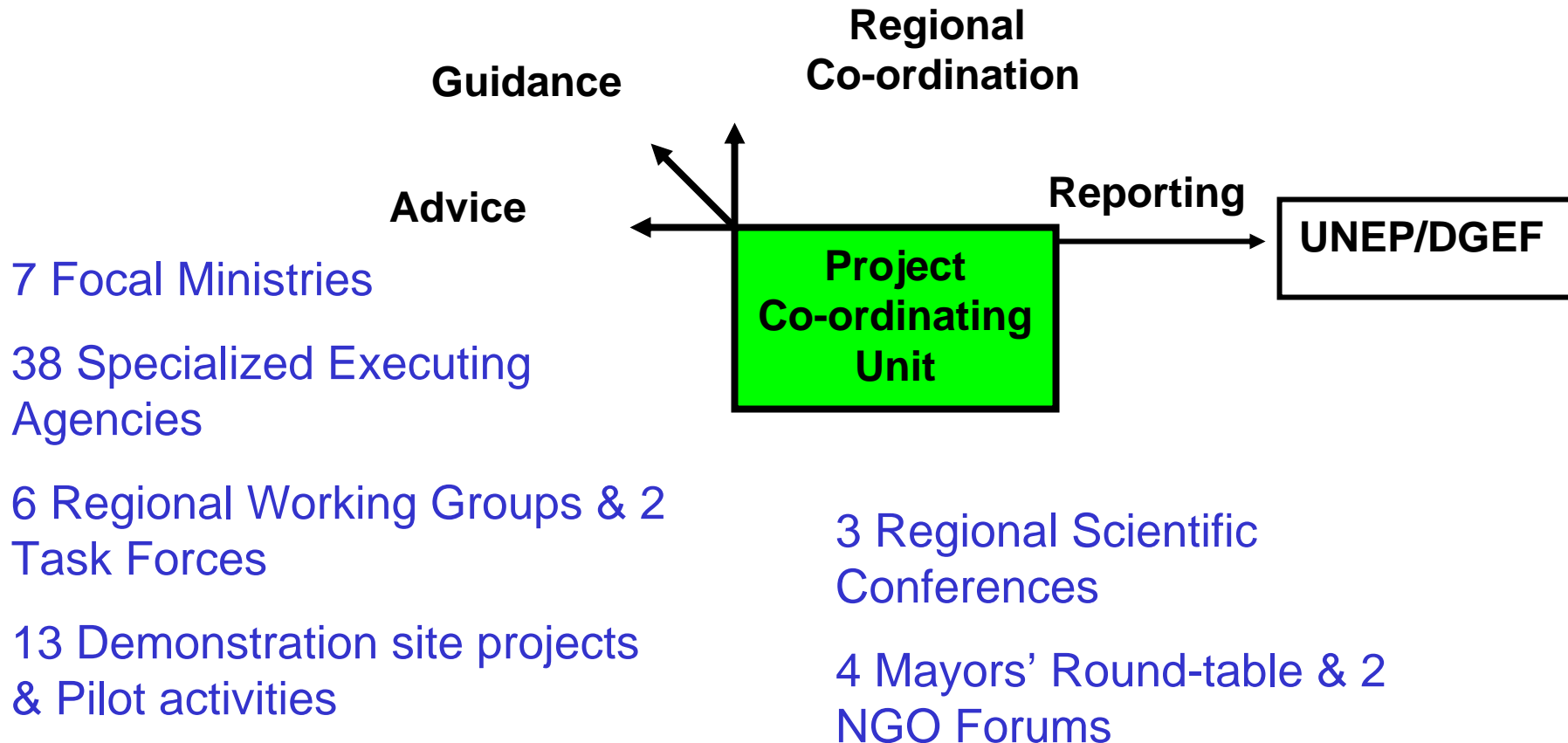
The South China Sea Meta-database is a 'living' database that is constantly being updated with new content from SCS project partners in Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand and Viet Nam.

Homepage of the SCS Meta-Database



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Lesson 9: Productive services of the project coordinating unit





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**Lesson 10: Framework for long –term cooperation in
environment management**

Strategic Action Programme (SAP) with a framework for improved regional co-operation developed

23 National Action Plans (NAPs) for habitats and 6 NAPs for Land-based Pollution finalised and submitted for approval

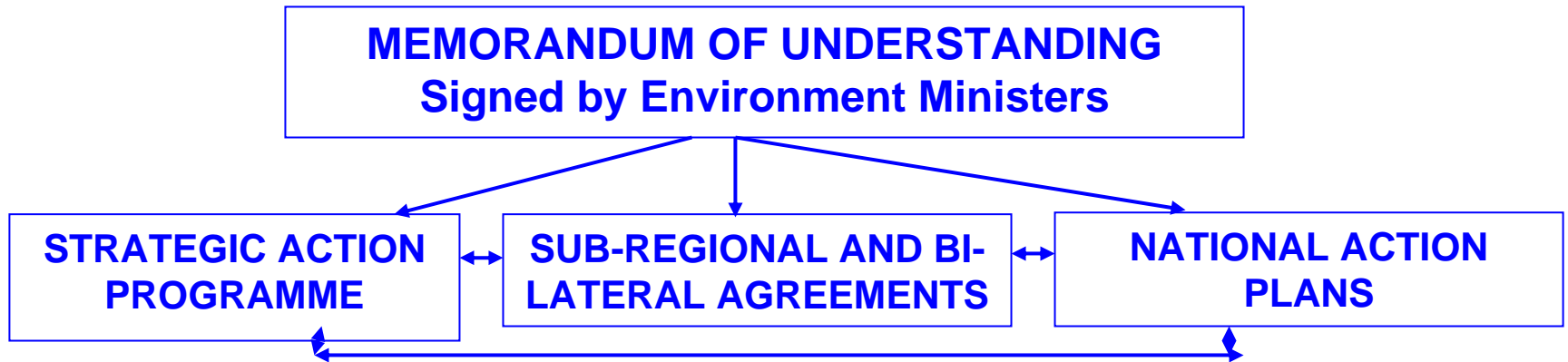
Strategy for regional fisheries refugia developed

The South China Sea regional SAP and NAPs developed under the SCS project seen as the starting point for strengthening the consensus and cooperation in the region



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**PROPOSED FRAMEWORK FOR MANAGEMENT OF THE
MARINE ENVIRONMENT OF THE SOUTH CHINA SEA**



BASED ON

**Sound Science: Ecologically effective action: Cost effective actions:
Appropriate economic valuations: Consensual knowledge base:
Knowledge based decision making: Communication: Periodic
assessment: Adaptive Management**



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The overall goals of this framework are: to create an environment at the regional level, in which collaboration and partnership in addressing environmental problems of the South China Sea, between all stakeholders, and at all levels is fostered and encouraged; and to enhance the capacity of the participating governments to integrate environmental considerations into national development planning.