# EAS CONGRESS 2018

## THE EAST ASIAN SEAS CONGRESS

**25** **Years of Partnerships for Healthy Oceans, People and Economies**

Moving as One with the Global Ocean Agenda

**27-30 November 2018** • **Iloilo Convention Center, Philippines**

**GOVERNANCE & PARTNERSHIP**

**TRACK 4: GOVERNANCE AND PARTNERSHIPS**

### SESSION 4.4
## Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs): An Engine for Achieving SDG14

**CONVENER:**

**IW**

IW:LEARN

gef    UNDP    PEMSEA

EAS Congress 2018

25 Years of Partnerships for Healthy Oceans, People and Economies: Moving as One with the Global Ocean Agenda

Iloilo City, Philippines, 27-30 November 2018

**Partnership Hub Track 4: Governance and Partnerships**

**4.4. Large Marine Ecosystems: An engine for achieving SDG 14**

**27 November 2018**

**Session Proceedings**

**Convener**

GEF IW/LME:LEARN

**Partnership Hub Chair:**

**Dr. Natalie Degger**, Deputy Project Manager, GEF IW/LME:LEARN

**INTRODUCTION**

1.1 In 1995, the Global Environment Facility adopted the concept of Large Marine Ecosystems (LMEs) — the majority of which are transboundary — as a conceptual and biogeographic framework for promoting sustainable, ecosystem-based management of the world's oceans and coasts. The LME approach promotes the creation of new and/or reformed institutions, the reform and implementation of marine resource and environmental management policies and legislation, and the leveraging of public and private sector investment for LME restoration and protection. At a regional scale, the GEF has supported 23 of the 66 recognized Large Marine Ecosystems in which multiple countries collaborate on strategic, long-term ocean governance of transboundary resources.

1.2 The Yellow Sea, South China Sea, East China Sea, Sulu-Celebes, Indonesian Sea, Bay of Bengal and Gulf of Thailand are seven LMEs of great ecological and economic importance to the region. The relationships developed through shared project implementation and coordination enables various LME partnerships to help countries incorporate the various SDG14 targets into existing dialogue and policy. Moreover, the forum provided by LMEs encourages important dialogues, emphasizes the exchange of experience and results,

provides a focus to scale up existing investments, and catalysis resources towards the achievement of SDG14 targets.

1.3     Drawing on the LME experience, this partnership hub not only offered a brief introduction to the Asian LME portfolio in the context of SDG14, but more importantly it highlighted proven approaches that have succeeded in reversing and reducing impacts using integrated ecosystem-based approaches to sustainable ocean and coastal management at both a local and multi-country scale.

**FOCUS**

1.4     **Natalie Degger** (Deputy Project Manager, GEF IW/LME:LEARN) emphasised how the GEF LME:LEARN project provides a sustainable global home for LME activities in the early years of the SDG period. The project aims to improve global ecosystem-based governance of LMEs and their coasts by generating knowledge, building capacity, harnessing public and private partnerships, and supporting south-to-south learning and north-to-north learning.  She also elaborated how GEF-IW/LME: LEARN is supporting the LMEs in creating partnerships through the Regional Networks and other service mechanisms.

1.5     **Dr. Sangjin Lee** (Environmental Economist, GEF-UNDP Yellow Sea LME Phase II project) provided insights on how the Yellow Sea LME Approach assists countries in Achieving SDG 14 Targets and the alignment with the Strategic Action Program (SAP). Ocean acidification, sustainable fisheries, marine protected areas and international ocean law are addressed via the project thereby assisting the countries achieve the following targets through the corresponding SAP interventions:

    i.   Target 14.4 (25-30% reduction in fishing efforts, rebuild marine living resources, improve mariculture techniques to reduce environmental stress);

    ii.   Target 14.5 (maintain and improve of current populations and distributions of genetic diversity of living organisms including endangered and endemic species;

    iii.   Target 14.2 (habitat maintenance according to 2007 standards; reduce of risks of introduced species);

    iv.   Target 14.C (meeting international requirements on contaminants);

    v.   Target 14.3 (better understanding and prediction of ecosystem changes for adaptive management);

    vi.   Target 14.1 (reduce total loading of nutrients from 2006 level, reduce standing stock of marine litter, reduce contaminants in bathing beaches and other marine recreational waters).

1.6     **Dr. Susana Siar** (Fishery and Aquaculture Officer, GEF-FAO Bay of Bengal LME project) gave an overview of the project and the issues it hopes to address through the SAP. Dr. Siar mentioned that FAO is the custodian of target 14.b.1 that measures progress by countries in the degree of application of a legal/regulatory/policy/institutional framework, which recognizes and protects access rights for small-scale fisheries. This specific target is addressed through Component 4 of the Bay of Bengal LME Sap implementation project that looks at social and economic concerns, more specifically:

i. Relatively low standard of living and working conditions of people involved in fishing;

ii. Coastal people are often unable to participate in and benefit from sustainable development practices; and

iii. Vulnerability of coastal communities to natural hazards, climate variability and change.

1.7 **Dr. David Brown** (Regional Coordinator, GEF-FAO Indonesia Sea LME project), spoke about enabling transboundary cooperation for sustainable management of the Indonesian Sea LME and the key issues which the project addresses directly including governance, fishery resources, and socio-economic factors such as trade in fishery resources and lost income from IUU activities. The project will assist the countries achieve the following targets through the corresponding SAP interventions:

i. Target 14.2 (development of strategies and plans to implement EA, piloting of approaches, capacity building, piloting (EAFM, EAA, MSP, MPA), monitoring);

ii. Target 14.4 (development and/or strengthening of EAFM plans, strengthening of co-management, strengthened livelihoods and value chains);

iii. Target 14.6.1 (identification of key issues related to combatting IUU fishing, capacity development (Fisheries Management), capacity development to strengthen and develop national and transboundary cooperation for the monitoring, control and surveillance (MCS) and vessel inspection, strengthen regional and national governance of fisheries and natural resource management).

1.8 **Dr. Somboon Siriraksophon** (Director of SEAFDEC, GEF-UNEP Restoring fisheries through refugia systems in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand project) introduced the project and highlighted the key concepts behind the creation of fisheries refugia. Through this regional approach, the project assists countries in achieving target 14.4. Under the first phase of the project, Thailand established refugia system through a 50,000 km$^2$ network of critical habitats, Vietnam included a 10,000 hectare seagrass area, and China increased mangrove cover by 150 hectares. The ongoing project seeks to build upon these successes and establish 14 fish refugia sites in the South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand.

1.9 **Panel Discussion**. The discussion evolved on increasing the number of stakeholders to support the initiatives of the Large Marine Ecosystems, which partnerships need to be created in order to achieve the SDG 14 targets through the LME Approach, and how good practices could be replicated throughout the region. The panellists included: Dr. Sangjin Lee, Dr. Susana Siar, Dr. David Brown and Dr. Somboon Siriraksophon. The following summarizes the highlights of the discussions.

i. Although there does not appear to be a direct relationship in the utilisation of refugia to reduce threats at the LME level, by scaling up this successful approach

via the LME SAPs a shared vision is created regarding the activities that need to be undertaken at the regional level in support of national actions. Good examples of these include assisting countries with ongoing identification of fishery and critical habitat linkages, improving the management of fish stocks and critical habitats for fish stocks of transboundary significance;

ii. When faced with the exploitation of endangered species and overfishing, LMEs and refugia contribute to the reduction of these activities by harnessing multiple management interventions, working with the navy (in the case of ISLME) and sharing big data to learn behaviour of fishing vessels;

iii. It was commented that LMEs do not fit into a political box, making it difficult to work with the projects as they do not respond to the realities on the ground. This perception was corrected by explaining that the SAP implemented by the LMEs is a road map that sets out the policy, legal and institutional reforms and investments that are required to address the problems identified by the Transboundary Diagnostic Analysis. It outlines the actions needed to resolve these problems. The preparation of the SAP is a cooperative process that is undertaken between the countries of a given region. Specific actions are then set out for each country, which can be adopted nationally, but must be harmonised with those of the other countries in the region.

1.10  **Recommended Actions**. The following recommendations were put forward during the session:

i. Some of the LMEs share countries within their boundaries and it was suggested that they could enhance their efforts by working closely together and sharing good practices;

ii. Partnerships in the region need to be strengthened to achieve SDG 14, including those with the private sector;

iii. Lessons learned from the LMEs in helping countries achieve SDG 14 need to be captured for scaling up efforts and replication.

1.11  Regional organisations and countries implementing the GEF-funded LME projects are tasked with taking up the recommended actions, some of which can be achieved in collaboration with GEF IW/LME: LEARN.

\*\*\*