



**MID-TERM PROGRESS REVIEW**

**Sustainable Development  
Strategy for the Seas of East Asia  
Implementation Plan  
2023-2027**







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**Implementation Plan**  
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## Mid-Term Progress Review: SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027

December 2025

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Published by Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA).

Suggested citation:

PEMSEA. 2025. Mid-Term Progress Review: SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027. Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA), Quezon City, Philippines. 74 p.

**ISBN 978-971-812-068-2**

The preparation and finalization of the Mid-Term Progress Review of the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027 received financial support from PEMSEA Country partners. This Review was completed with intensive consultations, discussions, and inputs from PEMSEA Country and Non-Country Partners. However, the contents of this publication do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of PEMSEA Country and Non-Country Partners and its other participating organizations. The designation employed and the presentation do not imply expression of opinion, whatsoever on the part of PEMSEA concerning the legal status of any country or territory, or its authority or concerning the delimitation of its boundaries.

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### About Us

Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) is a regional coordinating mechanism for the sustainable coastal and marine development in the East Asian Seas Region.

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# Table of Contents

<b>1. Background</b>	1
<b>2. Laying the Groundwork for PEMSEA’s Sustainability to 2030</b>	2
<b>3. The SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027</b>	5
<b>4. Assessing SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 Progress</b>	7
Scope and Methodology	7
Limitation of the Review	8
<b>5. Summary of Overall Progress and Assessment</b>	9
Highlights: Governance, Policies and Monitoring	9
Highlights: Environmental Thematic Issues/Priorities and Blue Economy	12
Highlights: Social Aspects, Stakeholder Engagement, and Communications	16
Highlights: Capacity Development and Knowledge Management	18
Highlights: Financial and Economic	21
Overall Observations on the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027	23
Proposed Way Forward	24
<b>6. Per Component Summary of Progress and Assessment</b>	25
<b>Component 1: Effective Governance</b>	25
Priority Program I.A: Regional Mechanism	27
Priority Program I.B: National Ocean and Coastal Policies, Legislations and Institutional Arrangements	33
Priority Program I.C: Capacity Development	37
Priority Program I.D: Knowledge Management	41
Priority Program I.E: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion	44
<b>Component 2: Healthy Ocean</b>	47
Priority Program II.A: ICM Scaling Up	50
Priority Program II.B: Biodiversity Conservation and Fisheries Management	53
Priority Program II.C: Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction	57
Priority Program II.D: Pollution Reduction, Waste Management, and Water Use Management	61
<b>Component 3: Healthy People</b>	65
<b>Component 4: Healthy Economies</b>	68
<b>Annex 1: SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 Progress Towards Target Outcomes (Detailed Report)</b>	74



Kampong Bay River Basin, Kampot Province, Cambodia. *(Photo by John Castillo/PEMSEA)*



# 1 Background

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Adopted in 2003, the Sustainable Development Strategy for the Seas of East Asia (SDS-SEA) serves as a regional framework to address the growing challenges of marine and coastal degradation in the East Asian Seas (EAS) region. Recognizing the vital role of healthy oceans in sustaining livelihoods, economies, and biodiversity, the SDS-SEA has since served as the overarching framework for sustainable development and a platform for cooperation among PEMSEA Country Partners, Non-Country Partners, and stakeholders in the EAS region. To remain relevant and effective, the SDS-SEA has continuously adapted to emerging priorities, global frameworks, and national commitments. Its most recent update in 2015 aligned with key international agreements, including the UNFCCC, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Rio+20 “The Future We Want”, and the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (Figure 1).

To operationalize the SDS-SEA, Implementation Plans (IPs) have been developed for different time periods, including 2012–2016 and 2018–2022, through extensive collaboration with PEMSEA’s Country and Non-Country Partners, networks, as well as other key stakeholders. These plans have facilitated joint actions, strengthened governance mechanisms, and aligned national and regional opportunities and efforts with global ocean sustainability goals.

The latest iteration, the [SDS-SEA IP 2023–2027](#), builds on previous achievements while addressing challenges and opportunities identified in the [Results and recommendations from the midterm review of the SDS-SEA IP 2018-2022](#); [PEMSEA’s Post-2020 Futures Report and Strategy](#); PEMSEA Country Partners COVID-19 Recovery Measures, and relevant actions or targets under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and other international instruments. Key guidance for the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 was laid by the Preah Sihanouk Ministerial Declaration (2021), which adopted the framework document on PEMSEA Roadmap to 2030. This was followed by the adoption of the final SDS-SEA IP 2023–2027 at the 14<sup>th</sup> Expanded Executive Committee Meeting (2022) and the approval of its Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) Framework and Plan by the 15<sup>th</sup> East Asian Seas (EAS) Partnership Council (2023). In 2024, the Xiamen Declaration reinforced the region’s commitment by introducing 10 synergistic actions addressing governance, ocean health, the blue economy, and food security to accelerate progress toward the SDS-SEA vision.



**Figure 1.** Evolution of PEMSEA and the SDS-SEA



Photo by Ysabel Victoriano/PEMSEA

## 2 Laying the Groundwork for PEMSEA's Sustainability to 2030

As 2030 approaches and new developments in ocean-related matters emerge, it is crucial to ensure the continued relevance, effectiveness, and long-term sustainability of PEMSEA and its SDS-SEA initiatives. To achieve this, updated assessments are deemed necessary. Recognizing this need, the PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) proposed a series of background assessments focusing on three key areas:



**Figure 2.** PEMSEA Sustainability Initiatives

**A. Strategic Programming of SDS-SEA IP to 2030** – Assessing progress of the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027, challenges and emerging trends and opportunities to refine and extend the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan to 2030, ensuring alignment with new relevant global and regional developments including the Xiamen Declaration's 10 action points and recommendations from the EAS Congress 2024 to accelerate actions towards fulfilling global and regional commitments. Refinement of the SDS-SEA IP M&E Framework and Plan will be undertaken subsequently to enhance tracking and reporting on implementation progress.

**B. Institutional Strengthening** – Evaluating PEMSEA's organizational effectiveness, to ensure it remains 'fit for purpose' in delivering its mandate. This is supported by the development of a PEMSEA-specific organizational capacity development framework, self-assessment tool and process that would inform the capacity building plan and recommendations for PEMSEA to better achieve 2030 goals.



**C. Financial Sustainability** – Identifying viable funding mechanisms and developing business models or resource mobilization strategies to facilitate stable and diversified financial support to implement the SDS-SEA.

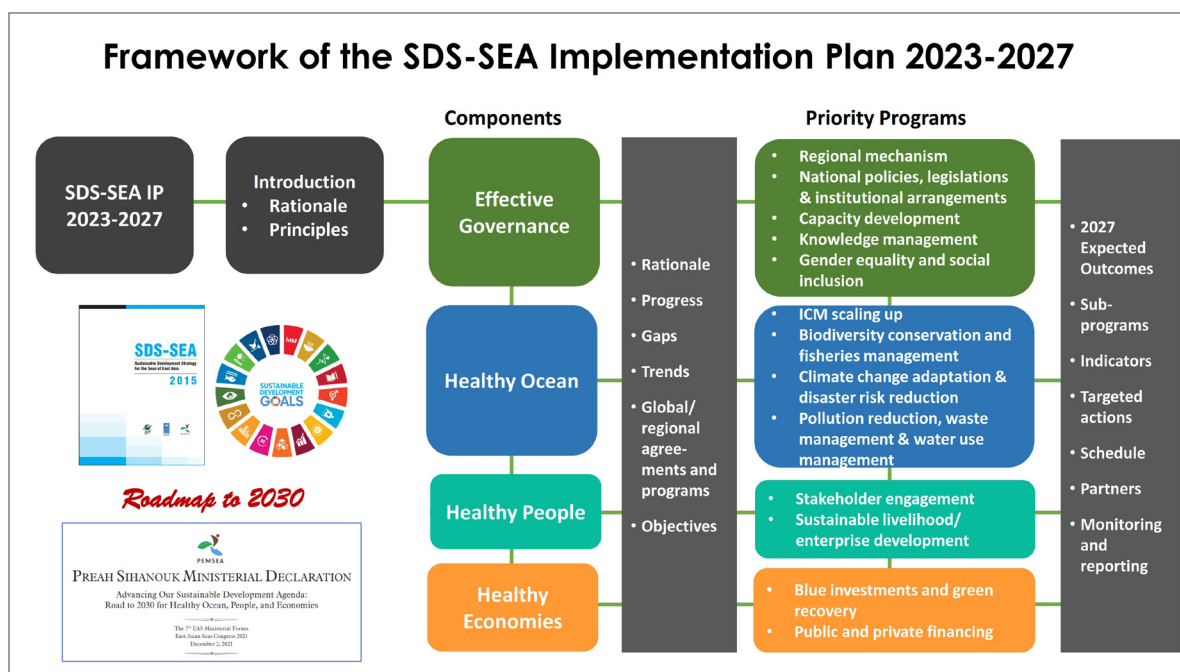
At its 33<sup>rd</sup> Meeting held on April 28, 2025, the PEMSEA Executive Committee reviewed and endorsed the PRF's proposal, emphasizing the importance of ensuring an inclusive and participatory process. The Committee also encouraged leveraging PEMSEA's established strengths, particularly the expanding application of Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) across the region.

The findings and recommendations from these background assessments are targeted to inform the final Strategy Map and Balanced Scorecard, which will serve as strategic guidance on enhancing PEMSEA's organizational effectiveness, financial sustainability, and the extension of the SDS-SEA IP's targets and timeframe to 2030. The insights generated from these assessments will also be useful in guiding PEMSEA's long-term direction, organizational sustainability, and role in advancing the SDS-SEA vision beyond 2030.

# 3 The SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027

This section provides an overview of the key features of the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 and the mechanisms through which its implementation is being carried out across multiple levels and sectors.

The SDS-SEA Implementation Plan (IP) 2023–2027 serves as a strategic medium-term roadmap for advancing the SDS-SEA 2015 shared vision of “Healthy Oceans, People, and Economies” across the East Asian Seas (EAS) region. It provides a structured framework to drive the mission of fostering and sustaining healthy and resilient oceans, coasts, communities, and economies through integrated management solutions and strengthened partnerships. To achieve this, the IP adopts a structured and strategic approach, focusing on four key components and 13 supporting priority programs, with defined outcomes, indicators, target actions and timeframe, and indicative listing of partners/collaborators. A set of key indicators has been established to facilitate tracking of progress or changes and inform adaptive implementation strategies if needed.



**Figure 3.** Framework of the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027

The SDS-SEA IP is driven by collective efforts from a diverse range of stakeholders, including the PEMSEA Country and Non-Country Partners, PEMSEA networks such as the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG) and PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers with Regional Centers of Excellence (PNLC), collaborators from academic institutions, non-government entities, civil society, the private sector, as well as regional and international partners.

Its implementation is carried out through:

- (a) Relevant Country-led policies, plans, programs, and legislation;
- (b) Collaborative initiatives with Non-Country Partners, the PNLG and PNLC;
- (c) PRF-managed projects and services; and
- (d) Cross-sector partnerships or collaborations.

Various strategic documents, such as the PNLG Strategic Action Plan (SAP) 2022-2030, PNLC Operational Plan 2023-2027, and multi-year work plans of various PRF-managed projects (i.e., GEF-UNDP-IMO Glofouling Partnerships Project; GEF-UNDP ATSEA-2 Project; ATSEA Program; GEF/UNDP IRBM Project; MOF/PEMSEA Marine Plastics Litter Project; and GEF/UNDP ASEAN ENMAPS Project) are also aligned with and contributing to the implementation of the SDS-SEA IP.

In terms of monitoring and reporting, a corresponding SDS-SEA M&E Framework and Plan was developed and adopted in 2023, with pilot testing conducted in 2024. However, following recommendations from the EAS Partnership Council, further refinements will be pursued after this SDS-SEA IP Progress Review, to simplify the M&E template, improve reporting process, and ensure effective tracking of results to align with the Strategy Map and Balanced Scorecard that will be developed for the updated SDS-SEA IP 2023-2030 as a result of this sustainability initiative.

# 4 Assessing SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 Progress

This document focuses on reviewing the progress of the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 as part of the aforementioned broader initiative to strengthen PEMSEA's institutional and financial sustainability toward 2030. Separate reports will be developed to assess PEMSEA's organizational capability and financial sustainability, complementing this review.

The progress review of the SDS-SEA IP 2023–2027 is an essential first step in understanding the current status of implementation, achievements, challenges, and lessons learned. This review aims to inform the refinement and updating of the SDS-SEA IP to 2030, support adaptive management and ensure PEMSEA's continued strategic relevance and sustainability.

## Scope and Methodology

The SDS-SEA IP 2023–2027 progress review is spearheaded and facilitated by the PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) under the guidance of the PEMSEA Technical Session Chair Dr. Keita Furukawa and Co-Chair Dr. Suk Jae-Kwon.

The review adopts a structured and evidence-based approach to assess progress in delivering the target outcomes under the four Components of the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027. The entire review and updating of the SDS-SEA to 2030 involves a five-step process as illustrated in **Figure 4**.



**Figure 4.** Process Flow for SDS-SEA IP Progress Review and Development of Updated SDS-SEA IP

**Step 1: Data Collection and Analysis** - Involves gathering of quantitative and qualitative data through desk research and stakeholder consultations. Key sources include available reports submitted by Country and Non-Country Partners, progress updates from PRF-managed projects and from annual EAS Partnership Council (PC), Executive Committee (EC), PNLG and

PNLC meetings. Recognizing gaps in SDS-SEA reporting, particularly from the country level, additional research conducted by PRF supplements available data.

**Step 2: Assessment of Emerging Trends** - Considers recent developments in the EAS region, including the regional commitments and recommendations from the Xiamen Ministerial Declaration and EASC 2024. Based on additional research, other external factors such as evolving regional and global policy landscapes and shifts in ocean governance and Blue Economy, which may influence the pace and effectiveness of SDS-SEA implementation, are also considered.

A separate research report will be prepared, with its findings informing the final updated SDS-SEA Implementation Plan (IP) 2023–2030.

**Step 3: Consultation, Prioritization, and Validation** - This step builds on initial findings from steps 1 and 2. To ensure a participatory and inclusive approach, semi-structured stakeholder consultations will be conducted with representatives from PEMSEA Country and Non-Country Partners, select members of the PEMSEA Networks of Local Governments (PNLG) and Learning Centers (PNLC). Insights and guidance will be sought from the members of the PEMSEA Executive Committee. These consultations may take the form of online surveys, key informant interviews (KIIs) or focus group discussions (FGDs) to validate key findings, evaluate the progress of remaining targets under the current SDS-SEA IP, and to determine which areas should be continued, added, modified or updated.

**Step 4: Final Assessment and Recommendations** - The final findings and recommendations will feed into the drafting of the refined or updated SDS-SEA IP 2023-2030.

**Step 5: Final Strategy Map and Scorecard and Draft SDS-SEA IP 2030** - By this stage, insights from separate organizational capacity and initial financial sustainability assessments are expected to be available. By consolidating the results from the SDS-SEA IP review along with these assessments, a final Strategy Map and Scorecard will be developed and considered in the Final Draft of the updated SDS-SEA IP 2023-2030 for review and endorsement by the EAS Partnership Council.

## Limitations of the Review

The SDS-SEA IP Progress Review encountered some constraints, including the limitation in progress reports and data from partners, particularly at the country level. Online research supplemented the review, but data accessibility issues and information gathered to support some targets may not be as exhaustive, owing to broad scope of certain SDS-SEA IP targets (e.g., national policies, plans, programs), as well as some access and language limitation issues.



## 5 Summary of Overall Progress and Assessment

To facilitate a comprehensive and structured review of progress on SDS-SEA IP implementation, the PRF conducted a detailed assessment of the SDS-SEA IP results framework ([Annex 1](#)). This assessment focused on tracking key achievements, identifying gaps, and outlining remaining actions under the four core components of the SDS-SEA IP, measured against the established target outcomes and indicators. Based on Annex 1, a summary of assessments per component is provided in Section VI below.

This section presents a high-level summary of progress under the SDS-SEA IP 2023–2027, covering key developments from 2023 to June 2025.<sup>1</sup>

### Highlights

### Governance, Policies and Monitoring



8<sup>th</sup> Ministerial Forum delegates together with PEMSEA Non-Country Partner representatives. (Photo by EASC2025 Secretariat)



Participants of PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC) General Assembly in Xiamen, PR China. (Photo by EASC2025 Secretariat)

This covers policies, institutional mechanisms, governance, and monitoring priorities and targets mainly under Component I (Governance) and policy-related aspects of Component II (Healthy Ocean).

Since its adoption in 2023, the current SDS-SEA IP has demonstrated significant progress in strengthening PEMSEA's governance, operational, and monitoring systems, aligning these with national, regional, and global priorities. PEMSEA's institutional and partnership frameworks continue to evolve, evidenced by increased voluntary agreements, financial and in-kind

<sup>1</sup> Note, however, that select data from as early as 2021 were also included (in Annex 1 and component-level results), particularly where country policies remain relevant to current targets. Older policies and programs were no longer mentioned as they have been recognized and covered in the previous SDS-SEA IP reviews.

contributions from Country Partners, and continuing collaboration with Non-Country Partners, albeit at varying levels of engagement. The growing membership of the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG) and the PEMSEA Network of Learning Centers (PNLC) has likewise reinforced on-the-ground implementation, capacity building and knowledge exchange, directly contributing to SDS-SEA IP delivery. While the EAS Congress and Ministerial Forum mechanisms continue to support PEMSEA and SDS-SEA monitoring and advancement. However, it was observed that engagement with Partners and Networks has been uneven, with varying levels of participation and commitment. While some stakeholders remain actively involved, others engage on a more limited or ad hoc basis. Additionally, many joint initiatives tend to be short-term in nature or governed by short-term agreements.

At the operational level, the PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) has maintained its role as secretariat and technical support provider while also managing and implementing a diverse portfolio of projects. As of this review, five projects have been completed, six are ongoing, and several more are under development. These projects, supported through bilateral and multilateral funding, encompass a broad range of themes and highlights the expanding application of ICM along with other area-based integrated management approaches. Experiences gained from managing projects have contributed to PEMSEA's and PRF's continuous enhancement of systems in compliance with donors' and international standards. With the growing portfolio of projects under PEMSEA's management, a key emerging challenge is ensuring that all initiatives remain strategically aligned with the core objectives of the SDS-SEA and PEMSEA's overarching frameworks—particularly on capacity building, stakeholder engagement, and gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). Strengthening coherence across projects is essential to maximize synergies, avoid fragmentation, and reinforce collective impact.

Within the PEMSEA member countries, there is continuing advancement, at varying levels, in the adoption of policies in support of green growth and blue economy, Marine Spatial Planning, ocean management, climate change, biodiversity and habitat protection, sustainable fisheries, pollution reduction, and equality and inclusion. Institutional changes have also been noted in some countries with the aim of enhancing efficiencies and establishing dedicated entities for better coastal and ocean governance. Note that further details on these policies are reflected under Environmental highlights below to show linkages with the relevant thematic priorities of the SDS-SEA IP.

Monitoring and reporting mechanisms have also expanded. The 2021 Regional State of the Ocean and Coasts (RSOC) and its COVID-19 impact supplement remain important references, informing recent efforts such as the second National SOC report in the Philippines and an updated local SOC report for Bataan. Complementary monitoring and reporting systems have also emerged through PRF-managed projects, including the State of River Basin (SORB) reporting under the IRBM project, the Beach Plastics Monitoring Tool, Plastics Analysis and Classification System (PACS) under the Marine Plastics ODA project, and project-specific GESI

monitoring under the completed ATSEA-2 project and ongoing IRBM project. Additionally, the introduction of the PNLG SAP reporting and SDS-SEA IP Monitoring and Evaluation Framework and reporting templates in 2023 signifies aspiration toward standardized progress tracking of the SDS-SEA among partners and networks. However, the planned periodic development/ updating of the SOC reports in particular encounter delays; such updates are crucial to provide an EAS- and PEMSEA-specific reference on status, developments, challenges, and trends to inform policy-making in countries as well as direction-setting at the regional, national and local levels.

### **Pending Targets**

- Updating of local SOC, NSOC, and RSOC, integrating updated policies/programs and indicators from tools such as SORB, GESI, and the Blue Economy Development Index. This may be supported by having a collaborative roadmap on SOC in place.

### **Areas for Strategic Actions/Considerations**

- Strengthen strategic and consistent engagement with CPs, NCPs, and networks to sustain collaboration and reporting (e.g., proactive engagement through regular consultative mechanism apart from annual meetings, designation of specific contact persons by partners and networks, thematic events or forums in between PC meetings and EAS Congresses, identification of medium- and long-term thematic joint initiatives)
- Operationalize the PNLG SAP tracking tool across all member local governments.
- Collaborate with partners on updated regional studies/assessments (e.g., updated regional assessment on coastal and ocean governance policies) to inform SOC and reinforce regional ocean governance.
- Discuss with countries on possible support needs in line with development/ updating of relevant policies
- Enhance specific demonstration/documentation of ICM mainstreaming in national plans and legislative agenda
- Promote the ICM recognition and certification system with support from PNLG and PNLC.
- Initiate early planning and securing of host(s) for EAS Congress, Ministerial Forum, and Youth Forum 2027
- In preparation for the SDS-SEA IP 2030, engage Partners in the institutional assessments to enhance PEMSEA and PRF's organizational effectiveness and sustainability.

## Highlights

## Environmental Thematic Issues/Priorities and Blue Economy



Stakeholders representing seven priority river basins across six ASEAN Member States: Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Malaysia, the Philippines, and Viet Nam took part in the Stakeholder Engagement Workshop to advance IRBM strategies. (Photo by O. Omengan/PEMSEA)



The MOF/PEMSEA Marine Plastics ODA Project conducted a Plastic Assessment and Characterization Study in Tandag City, Surigao del Sur, Philippines. (Photo by R. Dejucos/PEMSEA)

This covers various priorities under Component II (Healthy Ocean), health aspects of Component III (Healthy People), and Blue Economy initiatives, nature-based programs, sustainability upgrades, innovations in marine biotechnology and digitalization under Component IV (Healthy Economies).

Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) continues to be a key driver for integrating biodiversity conservation, sustainable fisheries management, climate resilience, and pollution reduction into national and local governance frameworks across the EAS region. The PNLG continues to advance ICM through the implementation of the PNLG Strategic Action Plan (SAP) 2022–2030, contributing directly to the achievement of SDGs 6, 11, 13, and 14. The application of the ICM Code and recognition system remains ongoing, with six sites achieving Level 1 and Level 2 certifications in 2022 and 2023. Further reinforcing this effort, the China-PEMSEA Center (CPC) has launched an ICM Effectiveness Assessment initiative, which is envisioned to have broader regional applications in the coming years. However, the review observed that since the completion of the previous SDS-SEA Project in 2022, there has been limited uptake of the ICM Recognition System among local government units. It is anticipated that ongoing initiatives led by the China-PEMSEA Center (CPC), alongside continued support from the PNLG, will reinvigorate interest and participation in the recognition process. Additionally, efforts to track PNLG members' progress in applying ICM programs are currently constrained by the low rate of report submissions aligned with the PNLG SAP tracking system, underscoring the need for improved reporting mechanisms and member engagement.

The scope of ICM implementation has also expanded through integration with other area- and theme-based approaches. This is evident in several PRF-managed projects, including the ASEAN-Norwegian Cooperation ASEANO Project (2020–2023), the GEF/UNDP Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action (ATSEA-2) Project (2019–2024), the GEF/UNDP Integrated River

Basin Management (IRBM) Project (2023–2027), the MOF/PEMSEA Marine Plastics Reduction Project (2023–2028), and the GEF/UNDP Enhancing Marine Planning and Sustainability (ENMAPS) Project (2024–2029). These initiatives have significantly contributed to ecosystem protection, particularly under ATSEA-2 and ENMAPS, which support healthy and resilient habitats through marine protected areas (MPAs). Collectively, these projects are contributing to global biodiversity goals, with MPA coverage already exceeding 3.4 million hectares (764,565ha under ATSEA-2 with pending 51,000ha from Timor-Leste, and >2.6m ha targeted under ENMAPS) and a further target of 13.3 million hectares under ENMAPS, aligned with the 30x30 global biodiversity target. In line with the SDS-SEA IP objectives and targets, further efforts are needed to demonstrate and document case studies of ICM synergies or mainstreaming in line with the different thematic areas covered under Component II on Healthy Ocean.

Linked to the earlier section on governance and policy developments, several PEMSEA countries—namely China, Indonesia, Japan, and RO Korea—have completed updates to their National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans (NBSAPs) to incorporate targets under the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, while other countries are currently undergoing national consultations and updates. Regional and national fisheries policies have also advanced, focusing on combating illegal, unreported, and unregulated (IUU) fishing, promoting the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM), encouraging innovation in fisheries and aquaculture, and enhancing food security and livelihoods. The development and ASEAN endorsement of a Regional Strategy and Action Plan on Biofouling Management, facilitated by the Glofouling Partnerships Project involving PEMSEA, also marks a notable milestone in marine environmental protection.

Climate change adaptation (CCA) and disaster risk reduction (DRR) strategies have also gained traction, with EAS countries aligning national plans with the Paris Agreement, Glasgow Climate Pact, the Sendai Framework for DRR, and the Sharm El-Sheikh Implementation Plan. PEMSEA continues to integrate CCA into ICM initiatives, such as through the ATSEA-2 Project's livelihood programs, the PNLG SAP, and project development assessments conducted under the IRBM and ENMAPS projects. Additionally, the launch of the PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program in 2024 has led to significant progress in assessing blue carbon stocks, standardizing accounting methodologies for coastal ecosystems, and initiating work on a regional carbon credit system.

Pollution reduction efforts have been strengthened through findings from the ASEANO Project, which informed interventions in plastic waste management. The MOF/PEMSEA Marine Plastics Reduction Project is building on this and have carried out baseline studies, plastic waste characterization, community engagement, and the rollout of the Marine Environment Protector Program across 10 pilot sites in the Philippines and Timor-Leste. Parallel progress in oil spill preparedness has been undertaken with Cambodia, Thailand, and Viet Nam adopting a Strategic Action Plan and dispersant guidelines for the Gulf of Thailand. In East Nusa Tenggara,



Indonesia, and Covalima, Timor-Leste, the ATSEA-2 Project has enhanced local response capacity on oil spills through training and early warning system development.

In water use management, the ongoing IRBM Project is assisting seven target river basin and watershed sites in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Malaysia and Viet Nam in conducting biophysical, socioeconomic, and governance assessments, leading to the development of State of River Basin (SORB) reports, as well as establishment of River Basin Coordinating Committees. To date, SORB reports have been developed for Kampong Bay, Cambodia, Nam Tha River Basin, Lao PDR, Imus-Ylang Ylang River Basin and Pasac-Guagua Watershed, Philippines.

Progress in advancing nature-based job creation, sustainable industries, low-carbon technologies, and marine biotechnology remains largely country-driven. More advanced economies in the region are generally leading in marine biotechnology and digitalization initiatives. PEMSEA can leverage on these country-led initiatives to identify areas for regional collaboration as well as regional support to further boost the initiatives in support of Healthy Ocean and Economies.

### **Pending Targets**

- Scale up ICM coverage from 2020 status
- Establishment of PNLG sister-city programs
- Update NBSAPs in Cambodia, DPRK, Lao PDR, Philippines, Singapore, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam
- Consultations to consolidate existing and planned initiatives at regional (e.g., CTI RPOA, ATSEA2), national (CTI NPOA, etc.) and bay-wide level with EAFM plans and fisheries management programs.
- Design of standardized monitoring programs or enhancement of existing monitoring programs to track changes in areal extent, health and resiliency of coastal habitats and watershed areas, biodiversity hotspots and priority fishing grounds
- Conduct of consultations to identify priority locations for convergence with subnational ICM programs that will contribute to mainstreaming of climate smart, biodiversity and fisheries management, marine pollution reduction policy and legislation into comprehensive development plans, as well as with GESI

- Monitoring and reporting of progress in implementation of various NAPs
- Establish national platform for assessment utilizing standardized protocols for sampling and analyzing blue carbon stocks and fluxes in other EAS countries. (potential linkage with ongoing PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program)
- Demonstrate engagement of communities in the conservation and rehabilitation of blue carbon ecosystems. (potential linkage with ongoing PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program and PNLG initiatives)
- Nature-based solutions promoted to enhance the carbon sequestration potential of coastal habitats.
- Promotion of innovations in marine biotechnology and digitalization of the fisheries and ports and shipping sectors.

### **Areas for Strategic Actions/Considerations**

- Consult with countries on future plans related to development/approval/implementation of national ICM or ICM-related strategic (long-term) and operational plans (medium-term) for ICM demonstration and implementation and upscaling.
- Identify more priority locations for convergence of thematic sustainable development programs with sub-national ICM programs.
- Continue implementation, monitoring, and documentation of progress, results and effectiveness of ICM alignment with area-based management approaches in targeted project sites.
- Enhance promotion of ICM Code and Recognition System
- Identify collaborative projects on use of gender-based methodologies and tools and establish systematic tracking of GESI mainstreaming across PEMSEA initiatives and projects.
- Identify support for countries undergoing updating of NBSAPs
- Consider conducting an in-depth regional review of country-led initiatives and results from PEMSEA projects to package lessons learned, best practices, overall impacts, new developments and innovations on BE and specific thematic areas
- Continue/strengthen documentation, packaging and dissemination of good practices on ICM and GESI mainstreaming (linked to Communications and KM)

## Highlights Social Aspects, Stakeholder Engagement, and Communications



Training on seafood processing techniques provided to women's groups from Betanu, Uma Berloi, and Clacuc villages in Timor-Leste under the ATSEA-2 Project. (Photo by ATSEA)

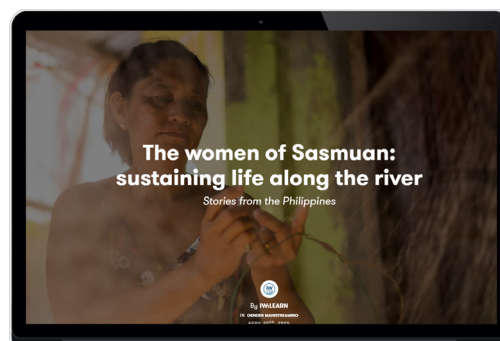


Alternative livelihood for women promoted in Dobo, Aru Archipelago District, Indonesia through the Fish Skin Waste Processing Training under the ATSEA-2 Project. (Photo by ATSEA)

This covers aspects of stakeholder participation or outreach and GESI under Component I, stakeholder/community engagement of Component III (Healthy People), and cross-cutting engagements with stakeholders under the different priorities of the SDS-SEA IP.

In keeping with PEMSEA's principles on partnership and integration, PEMSEA has continued to integrate stakeholder expectations into its strategies and plans, particularly through participatory planning processes, thematic/project consultations, actual implementation and monitoring. During this period, PEMSEA has also pursued GESI-related initiatives to strengthen equal and inclusive participation of women and marginalized groups.

Multiple engagement channels (in-person and online) are in place to facilitate communication, collaboration, and coordination. Key platforms such as the EAS Congress, PNLG and PNLC Forums, and the EAS Youth Forum, and various capacity development programs have enabled dynamic multi-stakeholder participation, dialogue, learning and knowledge exchange. In 2023, PEMSEA launched its Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy, which established a framework for outreach and stakeholder engagement across various media and knowledge platforms. Strong collaboration with GEF IW:LEARN and other partners has also helped increase PEMSEA visibility and expand reach internationally. In the area of communications, it was noted that the promotion and visibility of the PEMSEA brand remain limited. This underscores the need to review and strengthen the current



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Communications and Knowledge Management (KM) strategy to better position PEMSEA's work and impact. Additionally, while the triennial Youth Forum provides a valuable platform, there is an opportunity to establish more regular, structured, and programmatic engagement with youth to foster sustained involvement and leadership in coastal and ocean governance.

Several PRF-managed projects have embedded stakeholder assessments and engagement strategies within their design and implementation, ensuring that local perspectives are considered and incorporated. Sustainable livelihood and enterprise development initiatives (e.g., under ATSEA-2) have also demonstrated stakeholder engagement with environmental conservation and economic resilience.

In terms of inclusivity, a comprehensive GESI Assessment was conducted and a GESI Action Plan was developed in 2023, providing guidance on gender engagement. GESI-focused initiatives have been implemented mainly through projects and have included awareness campaigns, capacity-building, with some livelihood support component for women and marginalized groups. To further strengthen GESI implementation, it is important to include a systematic tracking of GESI integration and mainstreaming in local initiatives.

A PEMSEA and project-specific Grievance Redress Mechanisms (GRM) are also in place, providing a structured, transparent, and accountable way to receive, assess, and resolve concerns or complaints from stakeholders.

### **Pending Targets**

- Finalize review or updating of PEMSEA Communications and KM Strategy
- Establishment of systematic tracking of GESI mainstreaming across PEMSEA initiatives and projects.

### **Areas for Strategic Actions/Considerations**

- Possible updating of Stakeholder Engagement plan (for consideration in the identification of potential partners and stakeholders for the updated SDS-SEA IP 2023-2030)
- Enhance efforts on PEMSEA branding and expand PEMSEA's strategic media engagement efforts to further increase visibility, reach and impact
- Conduct of full-scale KAP surveys as part of monitoring and targeted communication strategies or efforts

## Highlights Capacity Development and Knowledge Management



Learning Exchange Program (LEP) conducted in Seoul, RO Korea under the MOF/PEMSEA ODA Project to facilitate knowledge-sharing and collaboration in addressing common challenges on marine plastics management. (Photo by J. Dacaymat/PEMSEA)



PNLC members attended the FISO Training of Trainers on Marine Spatial Planning (MSP) Application in the Scaling-up of Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) from 21-25 April 2025 in Xiamen, PR China (Photo by FISO, Xiamen University)

This covers capacity development and knowledge management aspects of Components I, II, and III.

PEMSEA has made considerable progress in promoting human capital development, fostering innovation, and strengthening knowledge management systems under the SDS-SEA IP. With the continuing implementation and expansion of ICM with other integrated area-based approaches, as well as the growing integration of Blue Economy principles and priorities in partner countries, the need for enhanced technical capacity, leadership development, and knowledge sharing has grown further. In particular, PEMSEA has responded through targeted training, collaborative knowledge sharing platforms from local to regional level, and development or application of various tools.

More than 100 training activities have been conducted across PRF-managed projects (e.g., ATSEA-2 (2019-2024), IRBM, and Marine Plastics ODA project for 2023-2024), benefiting thousands of stakeholders, including national and local government officials, scientists/academe, youth, and community representatives. These initiatives have helped develop expertise in coastal and ocean governance, sustainable fisheries, river basin management and water resource management, biodiversity and habitat protection and conservation, marine pollution control, and climate resilience. These trainings have utilized tailored training modules and materials with support from experts as well as PNLC members. Some pre- and post-training evaluations were also undertaken, providing initial evidence of increased awareness and technical competencies. To improve the measurement of engagement effectiveness, it is recommended to advance the SDS-SEA IP target of utilizing tools such as Knowledge, Attitude, and Practices (KAP) surveys to monitor stakeholder contributions and impact. At present,



the use of such tools is not yet institutionalized within PEMSEA's activities, highlighting an opportunity to strengthen evidence-based monitoring and adaptive engagement strategies.

The Seas of East Asia Knowledge Bank (SEAKB) has been upgraded with enhanced functionalities to support digital learning, knowledge dissemination, and monitoring. It now serves as an open-access repository of regional tools, publications, policies, and good practices. While SEAKB's visibility has improved, there remains a need to strengthen linkages with global knowledge-sharing platforms and increase its integration with PEMSEA's communications, KM, as well as investment strategies.

Institutionally, PEMSEA has developed foundational frameworks, including a Capacity Development Framework and GESI Action Plan, to guide inclusive and responsive learning systems.

In support of the bigger objectives of the UN Decade of Ocean Science (UNDOS) in promoting science-policy-action interface, PEMSEA has facilitated a number of forums, seminars, and thematic exchanges with PNLG, PNLC, some NCPs, and other stakeholders to facilitate learning between practitioners and policymakers. However, there has been no direct PEMSEA-trainings conducted under the UNDOS program. The 12<sup>th</sup> WESTPAC International Marine Science Conference and the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN Ocean Decade Regional Conference, scheduled to be held in the Philippines in 2027 may be an opportunity to undertake specific initiatives.

As part of the ongoing PEMSEA Sustainability initiative, an initial workshop has been conducted within the PRF in support of assessing PEMSEA's, including PRF's, organizational capacity development status and needs, which resulted in an initial Organizational Capacity Assessment (OCA) framework, which will feed into a more detailed OCA report and Capacity Development Plan.



## Pending Targets

- Update PEMSEA's overall Capacity Development Plan
- Develop a Regional Plan of Action in support of UNDOS and identify possible UNDOS trainings with IOC UNESCO and other programs, with consideration of participation of women scientists and expert
- Establish SEAKB linkages with other national, regional and global KM platforms to improve data sharing and accessibility (e.g., International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IWLEARN), Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Information Platform, National Clearinghouse Mechanisms, ASEAN Center for Biodiversity Dashboard, etc.)
- Carry out KAP surveys as part of monitoring and targeted communication strategies or efforts

## Areas for Strategic Actions/Considerations

- The updating of PEMSEA Capacity Development Plan as well as KM Strategy may be done following the updating of the SDS-SEA IP to 2030 to ensure alignment with update country needs and priorities.
- Related to UNDOS, collaborate with IOC WESTPAC (PEMSEA NCP) to organize PEMSEA technical sessions (can be linked in designing the EAS Congress 2027 Technical Conference) at the 12<sup>th</sup> WESTPAC International Marine Science Conference and the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN Ocean Decade Regional Conference in 2027, as an opportunity to align training and learning with broader regional and global agenda.
- Collaborate with PNLG and PNLC in organizing leadership and innovations forums and knowledge sharing events
- Promote active participation from women scientists and experts in various knowledge sharing events or initiatives.

## Highlights Financial and Economic



Panel discussion of the Start-up and Leadership Development for Sustainable Blue Economies Workshop during the EAS Congress 2024. (Photo by EASC2024 Secretariat)



Participants of the 16<sup>th</sup> EAS Partnership Council Meeting, Costa Palawan Resort, Puerto Princesa, Philippines. (Photo by J. Castillo/PEMSEA)

This covers partner contributions/agreements, bilateral/multilateral projects, and resource mobilization aspects of Component I, sustainable livelihood and enterprise development aspects of Component II, and sustainable financing of Component IV.

In terms of internal operations, PEMSEA has demonstrated sound financial management, supported by an established system within the PRF for management, monitoring and reporting of funds (e.g., funds from Cost-Sharing Agreements (CSAs), donor-funded projects, and other contributions). These systems are periodically audited and enhanced to meet fiduciary standards and donor requirements. Financial review and planning are also undertaken periodically for overall PEMSEA and for project-specific funds, and status or results are reported to the EAS PC, EC, as well as under specific project steering committees. However, as noted under Governance, agreements and support (in cash or in kind) from Country Partners and Non-Country Partners are still largely inconsistent, with most agreements with NCPs having short timeframes.

Since 2023, resource mobilization efforts have enabled the implementation of a diverse portfolio of projects and initiatives—some completed, others ongoing, and additional ones under development. These projects are primarily financed through bilateral and multilateral donor mechanisms, and support from some Non-Country Partners. Country Partners have also contributed financial and in-kind support, helping sustain PRF operations and various aspects of SDS-SEA implementation. In line with the PEMSEA Sustainability initiative, business models and a long-term financial plan are envisioned to be developed to further strengthen PEMSEA's efforts in securing continuous funding for its operations and SDS-SEA initiatives.

At the country level, there is increasing alignment of PEMSEA Country Partners' financing priorities and policies with emerging national and regional frameworks on the blue economy, climate resilience, green growth, and post-COVID recovery. The integration of Blue Economy principles into national strategies and regional declarations—such as the 2024 Xiamen Declaration—reflects strong political support. Many CPs have also developed plans and policies for Blue Economy financing and public-private partnerships (PPPs), advancing their own sustainable investment agendas.

PEMSEA has made initial efforts to promote economic resilience through community-based livelihood initiatives under projects like ATSEA-2, which have demonstrated localized success. Moreover, PEMSEA has convened knowledge-sharing forums on Blue Economy and blue financing.

Development of PPP pilot projects is also underway specifically under the IRBM project. Within the year feasibility studies and financial solutions or templates are expected to be developed for key sites. While some potential project opportunities have already been identified in various ICM sites in relation to PEMSEA's Blue Carbon program. However, it was observed that private sector engagement remains to be limited.

## Pending Targets

- Develop and implement Recognition System for the corporate sector/ business community to support ICM and BE investments
- Identify livelihood management strategies and develop coastal sustainable livelihood index
- Develop and implement Recognition System for the corporate sector/ business community to support ICM and BE investments

## Areas for Strategic Actions/Considerations

- PEMSEA remains vulnerable to shifts in donor priorities. It's therefore crucial to institutionalize a comprehensive Financial Sustainability Strategy for PEMSEA. This should include clear targets for multi-year commitments from CPs, NCPs and development partners, diversified revenue streams (e.g., through blended finance or service-based models, etc.)
- Given that most efforts related to blue financing are implemented at the individual country level, PEMSEA would benefit from conducting an in-depth review of these national initiatives. Consolidating and analyzing this information at the regional

level can inform the development of future projects, promote the exchange of best practices, and enhance regional coherence and impact.

- To further strengthen the SDS-SEA IP's financial initiative, it would also be beneficial to leverage project-level results with long-term investment plans.
- As part of Financial Sustainability planning of PEMSEA and the PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program, develop a strategy or roadmap to further assess and strategically develop projects based on project opportunities identified as part of PEMSEA's Blue Carbon Assessment in ICM sites
- Organize more regular BE forums through the PNLG and PNLC and Ocean Roundtables/Leadership Forums of PEMSEA to facilitate awareness building, identification of potential projects, and engagement of various sectors (including private sector) on blue technologies, services, and financing

## Overall Observations on the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027

**Scope:** The scope of the current SDS-SEA IP is aligned with the SDS-SEA 2015 framework. As a strategic framework, the SDS-SEA is designed to complement the existing national, regional, and international commitments of PEMSEA Country Partners related to coastal and ocean sustainability. Accordingly, the scope of the Implementation Plan is broad, reflecting the diverse and cross-cutting nature of sustainable ocean governance. This is evident in the priorities and targets identified in the plan. Operationalizing the SDS-SEA IP entails inputs and collaboration from various levels including through country-led policies and programs, PRF-managed projects, as well as collaborative actions with the PNLG, PNLC, Non-Country Partners, and other collaborators. The implementation of the SDS-SEA IP therefore relies heavily on synergies across these actors and mechanisms.

**Structure:** The categorization of objectives, targets and actions are in line with the PEMSEA vision of Healthy Ocean, People, and Economies and enabling component of Effective Governance. This helps facilitate understanding of how different interventions contribute to the overarching vision. see linkages of the different targets and progress made in support of the overall vision. Closer review reveals some seemingly duplication of targeted actions, particularly where the integration of cross-cutting themes such as Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) and Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), owing possibly on the intention to emphasize the need for convergence of ICM and GESI across multiple program components. In terms of timelines, several targeted actions are associated with broad timeframes, which may reflect the complexity of these interventions or their continuing nature. Lastly, the list of partners for each priority program is generally indicative rather than definitive, with the expectation

that more specific partnerships will be established through further consultations and formal agreements.

**Supporting Monitoring and Reporting for the SDS-SEA IP:** During the SDS-SEA IP progress review, it was noted that the supporting monitoring and evaluation (M&E) template remains in the testing phase, with several partners requesting further refinement and simplification. Consequently, the availability of progress reports—essential to the mid-term review—was limited. In addition, some elements of the IP’s scope and structure required supplementary research, particularly where targets refer to broad, country-level policies and programs. The use of broad timeframes for several targets also posed challenges in identifying concrete actions expected to be achieved by the mid-point of the implementation period.

## Proposed Way Forward

To ensure the accuracy of the progress outlined in this report, further validation will be conducted. Building on the findings and recommendations of the SDS-SEA IP 2023–2027 Mid-Term Progress Review, and aligned with the broader PEMSEA Sustainability Initiative, the following next steps are proposed:

- **Prioritization and Streamlining:** Identify key ongoing and pending actions from the current SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 that require prioritization, and assess aspects that can be merged or simplified in the updated/refined SDS-SEA IP 2023-2030
- **Strengthen Inclusion of Institutional and Financial Sustainability:** Noting that PEMSEA’s sustainability will need to consider institutional capacity of the different PEMSEA governance mechanisms as well as financial sustainability, there is a need to assess how such aspects can be considered or integrated in the updated SDS-SEA IP. This will enable more coherent monitoring and reporting of PEMSEA’s internal and external strategic objectives.
- **Strategic Alignment:** In line with the above points and to support a more unified and high-level strategic direction of the overall PEMSEA strategy in the next five years, a Balanced Scorecard framework and methodology will be adopted. This will be operationalized through the development of a concise and results-focused Strategy Map and Scorecard in support of the updated SDS-SEA IP 2023-2030.
- **Partner Engagement:** These proposed steps will be further consulted with various PEMSEA Partners, Networks, and Advisors to foster shared understanding, commitment, and alignment moving forward.



## 6

## Per Component Summary of Progress and Assessment



### COMPONENT 1

### EFFECTIVE GOVERNANCE

**Goal:** To strengthen ocean and coastal governance at regional, national, and local levels while integrating scientific knowledge, capacity-building, gender equality, and sustainability measures into policy and management frameworks.

Priority Program: 5	Regional Mechanism			Policies		Capacity Development		Knowledge Management		GESI	
Target Outcome: 10	I.A.1	I.A.2	I.A.3	I.B.1	I.B.2	I.C.1	I.C.2	I.D.1	I.D.2	I.E.1	I.E.2

Achieved
  On track
  In progress (w/ challenges)
  Delayed

Component I of the SDS-SEA IP 2023–2027 recognizes that effective governance is essential to achieving sustainable development. Building on three decades of regional cooperation, PEMSEA has transformed partnerships into an operational platform for advancing SDS-SEA targets mainly through Integrated Coastal Management (ICM). Informed by Ministerial Declarations and aligned with global commitments, the component focuses on five key enablers: partnership mechanisms, policies and institutions, capacity development, knowledge management, and gender equality and social inclusion (GESI). Reinforced by the 2021 East Asian Seas Congress and the GESI Action Plan, Component I provides the foundation for inclusive, science-based, and resilient ocean and coastal governance across the region.

Significant progress has been made in strengthening ocean and coastal governance at regional, national, and local levels through the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027, contributing to the overarching Component 1 objective. The regional governance mechanism has been reinforced with increased voluntary agreements, financial and in-kind contributions from Country Partners (CPs), continuing engagement with Non-Country Partners (NCPs), and multiple bilateral and multilateral donor-funded projects. National and regional policies have

advanced, with increasing number of policies in support of green growth and blue economy, Marine Spatial Planning, ocean management, and equality and inclusion. The East Asian Seas Congress (EASC) and Ministerial Forum (MF) 2024 was successfully conducted and resulted to the adoption of the Xiamen Declaration which includes a commitment to strengthen blue synergies through a whole of society approach and adopted 10 strategic actions, including actions specific to effective governance. ICM application and reach has expanded through the different PRF-managed projects or programs. The enhanced Seas of East Asia Knowledge Bank (SEAKB) now provides better access and digital tools for data-sharing and monitoring. Capacity-building initiatives have expanded at multiple levels with support from PEMSEA projects, with over 100 training sessions conducted benefiting thousands of participants, improving technical expertise and awareness, based on PEMSEA project data (Data generated from ATSEA 2019-2024, and other PEMSEA projects covering training activities for 2023-2024). Additionally, focus on Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) has strengthened, with the publication of a GESI Action Assessment and Action Plan, as well as provision of project-based targeted livelihood and awareness building programs promoting inclusivity in regional ocean governance.

Despite these achievements, gaps remain that could affect the full realization of Component 1's objective. Long-term financial sustainability remains uncertain with inconsistent partner engagement and multi-year funding agreements still limited, making PEMSEA vulnerable to shifts in donor priorities. Knowledge-sharing efforts have expanded, but stronger linkages with global knowledge platforms, enhanced media engagement, and comprehensive stakeholder outreach are needed to maximize regional impact. Monitoring and reporting gaps, particularly delays in the development of the 2nd National State of the Ocean and Coasts (NSOC) reports, as well as updated local SOC reports were noted. GESI mainstreaming remains uneven, requiring more structured policy integration, improved data collection, and targeted training programs. Moving forward, reinforcing financial sustainability, institutionalizing GESI, strengthening ICM mainstreaming, ensuring periodic SOC monitoring and updating, and expanding regional and global collaborations will be critical to ensuring effective and sustainable ocean governance under Component 1. Realizing these targets will also enable the PEMSEA CPs achieve key governance actions under the Xiamen Declaration.

## Priority Program I.A: Regional Mechanism

Target Outcome	Status
<b>I.A.1:</b> A self-sustaining and strengthened regional partnership coordinated by PEMSEA Resource Facility (PRF) with improved capacity of accessing funds from diverse sources to support the implementation of the regional strategy.	
<b>I.A.2:</b> A Regional and National State of Ocean and Coasts (SOC) reporting system to monitor, evaluate and report on the progress, impacts and benefits and continually guide the SDS-SEA to achieve blue economy growth and maintain ocean health.	
<b>I.A.3:</b> A platform for connecting people for a healthy ocean: science-policy-economy-society interface.	

Over the past two years, notable progress has been achieved, particularly with the following: approval and implementation of the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan (IP) 2023-2027; an increase in voluntary agreements and/or contributions from CPs; continued collaboration with Non- NCPs; demonstrated ability by the PRF in accessing project grants; application of various area-based monitoring and reporting tools apart from the SOC; and sustained support to the East Asian Seas Congress (EASC) and EAS Ministerial Forum (MF) as key platforms for fostering partnerships and advancing SDS-SEA objectives.

However, several challenges remain, including ensuring long-term financial sustainability, maintaining periodic SOC reporting, and fostering consistent engagement of partners, among others. The table below summarizes key areas of progress and aspects for further strengthening. Based on the understanding of current progress, an analysis of several challenges is presented, followed by insights and strategic recommendations for consideration.

Key Areas of Progress Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.	Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 formally adopted (2023) and implementation is ongoing</li> <li>9 out of 11 CPs contribute financially and/or in-kind, demonstrating ownership of PEMSEA: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial support: China, Japan, RO Korea, Singapore, Timor-Leste, Indonesia and Viet Nam began contributing in 2024, while targeted financing support for EASC came from Cambodia.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>While it was noted that 17 out of 22 NCPs continue to engage in various PEMSEA meetings/activities, their level of participation has been inconsistent or fluctuating over time. In terms of agreements, only 7 out of 22 NCP long-term agreements remain valid up to 2025 and some are not actively implemented, while other NCPs engage on an ad-hoc basis through LOCs with short-term financial or technical commitments.</li> </ul>

<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o In-kind support: The Philippines through the hosting of the PRF Office; China on the hosting of EAS Congress, MF and PNLG Forum 2024, PNLG Secretariat and China-PEMSEA Center; Indonesia on the hosting of PNLC Secretariat since 2024; RO Korea on hosting of EAS Youth Forum 2024; and Viet Nam on hosting of 15<sup>th</sup> EAS Partnership Council Meeting</li> <li>• Increase in number of NCPs to 22, with the National Marine Hazard Mitigation Service (NMHMS) admitted in 2024</li> <li>• Several joint initiatives/projects conducted with NCP support</li> <li>• Increased external funding through multilateral and bilateral-funded projects:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o 5 Completed: ASEANO Project (completed in 2022); UNDP/GEF/IMO GloFouling Partnerships Project (completed in March 2025); GEF/UNDP/PEMSEA ATSEA-2 Project 2019-2024 (completed in Dec. 2024); MOU under East Asian Seas Initiative on Clean Oceans (EASICO) for 2022-2024; Ecological Solid Waste Management Project (completed in March 2023)</li> <li>o 6 Ongoing: ATSEA-2 Program; GEF/UNDP/ASEAN/PEMSEA IRBM Project (2023-2027); (ROK) MOF/PEMSEA ODA Marine Plastics Project (2023-2028); WB/UNOPS SEA-MaP Project (2022-2027); GEF/UNDP ASEAN ENMAPS Project (2024-2029); Agreement with DCCEEW Australia on ALDFG of ATS SAP (funding for 2024-2026)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Several projects or initiatives in the pipeline with NCPs and other Collaborators: Blue Carbon Capacity Building Workshop with NMHMS; ATSEA-3 Project; IKI/IMO/PEMSEA Blue Solutions Project; AI for Ocean Health Prediction: Democratizing Climate Change Adaptation; Philippine Rise Integrated Conservation for Enduring Legacies through Ecosystem Support Services (PRICELESS); and Follow-on Project on Biofouling Management in the East Asian Seas Region</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delay in the target initiation of the 2<sup>nd</sup> National SOC Reports, including development of Guidelines for incorporating GESI indicators into R/NSOCs, originally scheduled to commence in 2024.</li> <li>• Limited updated SOC reports from PNLG members with some cited data challenges, budget and personnel constraints.</li> <li>• Initiate planning and securing of host for EASC, MF, and Youth Forum 2027</li> </ul>

<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On SOC: established foundation on SOC system through the First Regional and National SOC (2018, updated RSOC in 2021) and its additional regional update in 2021 with a COVID-19 impact analysis on coastal and ocean health and blue economy; Development of 2<sup>nd</sup> NSOC in the Philippines (for final approval); and Updated SOC of Bataan, Philippines (published in 2024)</li> <li>• Application of other area and thematic-based monitoring tools, such as the State of River Basin (SORB) reporting (under the IRBM Project), Plastics Analysis and Characterization Study (PACS) and standardized beach monitoring (under the Marine Plastics Project); Management Effectiveness Tracking Tool (METT) (under ATSEA and ENMAPS Projects)</li> <li>• EAS Congress (EASC) 2024 successfully conducted with 44 Session conveners</li> <li>• Adoption of Xiamen Ministerial Declaration during the 8<sup>th</sup> EAS MF. In relation to ocean governance, the Declaration adopted 3 actions: Action 1-Promote vertical, horizontal and spatial integration and policy coherence; Action 2- Science-based data and information to support planning, policy development, investment decision-making, and monitoring; Action 3- Synergistic approaches, joint research, training and capacity development programs.</li> <li>• More targeted GESI mainstreaming efforts, including gender-responsive project monitoring, initiated and evident particularly in some PRF-managed projects (e.g., ATSEA-2; IRBM)</li> <li>• On engagement of other non-member countries, some opportunities are underway particularly involving Malaysia under the IRBM Project (project implementation yet to commence), and Thailand under the ENMAPS Project (implementation has just been initiated) and University of Burapha and University of Songkla for hosting of regional trainings and/or participation in PNLC activities.</li> </ul>	

## Insights and Recommendations

While PEMSEA has sustained progress in securing financial and/or in-kind contributions from CPs and NCPs, as well as funding from various projects (in varying scales), long-term financial sustainability remains uncertain. Noting that contributions from some partners are inconsistent, with some provided on an ad-hoc basis, and multi-year funding commitments or agreements remain limited, PEMSEA remains vulnerable to shifts in donor priorities. Changes in government or ministry structures and officials, particularly due to elections, in some cases have also affected the timely delivery of financial and in-kind commitments from CPs. Similar challenges exist in NCPs, where changes in leadership, organizational mandates, or contact persons have affected continuity of engagements with PEMSEA.

### Recommendations:

- Enhancing PEMSEA's financial sustainability and funding diversification would benefit from revisiting and reinforcing PEMSEA's existing Financial Sustainability Plan. This may include developing a long-term engagement strategy to guide multi-year funding agreements, integrating targeted joint initiatives, and establishing a dedicated expert or team to support donor engagement, fundraising, and project development. These efforts are already aligned with the upcoming Financial Sustainability Assessment to be undertaken as part of the PEMSEA Sustainability Planning to 2030.
- Regularize the assessment or review of NCP engagement and identify areas for action or improvement, with the aim of ensuring continuity and strengthened partnerships with NCPs.
- Proactive outreach to existing and new NCPs to expand technical, financial, and capacity-building support for SDS-SEA implementation. Engagement efforts particularly with NCPs may be expanded beyond the annual EASPC Technical Sessions and triennial EASC, through quarterly digital coordination meetings, regional or country-based learning activities centered on specific thematic areas during intersessional periods, to help long-term partnerships and deeper engagements.
- As part of strategic planning, annual PEMSEA Work Planning sessions or consultations may be institutionalized and organized ahead of annual EASPC meeting to identify and confirm targeted joint initiatives with CPs, NCPs, as well as with PEMSEA networks and collaborators.
- Create a formal onboarding process for new focal points when government transitions occur to ensure continuity of engagement
- Establish a dedicated capacity development program for National Focal Points to strengthen their ability to champion PEMSEA within their respective governments
- Through coordination with PEMSEA National Focal Points/Agencies, expand engagement with other key ministries—including finance, planning, and economic development—to build broader government support; organize annual country-specific briefings involving multiple agencies to foster whole-of-government awareness of PEMSEA initiatives; and conduct regular needs assessments to ensure that PEMSEA's services and programs remain responsive to the evolving priorities of Country Partners.



## Insights and Recommendations

Since the completion of the final phase of the GEF/UNDP SDS-SEA Project in 2021, discussions and dedicated support for ICM and local SOC reporting have been limited, and recently mostly confined to annual PNLG or PNLG-PNLC forums and select regional and project-based ICM-related forums.

### **Recommendations:**

- Develop a roadmap in collaboration with PNLG, PNLC and CPs to identify technical assistance needs and to establish clear timelines for updating SOC reports.
- Building on PEMSEA's and project-based GESI assessments and plans, and with support from a GESI expert, pursue the development of Guidelines on GESI integration in SOC and SORB reporting.

High-level engagement or representation remains inconsistent particularly at the triennial EAS Ministerial Forum. Building high-level support through intersessional activities will be beneficial in strengthening government support and long-term partnership. The 16<sup>th</sup> EAS Partnership Council (2024) also recommended engaging non-member countries - Brunei Darussalam, Malaysia, Myanmar, and Thailand but progress remains limited, though some targeted initiatives have started through PRF-managed projects

### **Recommendations:**

- Initiate early planning and consultations for the EASC, MF and Youth Forum 2027, as well as PNLG and PNLC General Assemblies in 2027, to ensure early engagement and high-impact events. Initial PRF options for country hosts subject to further consultations: Lao PDR for EASC and MF, and PNLC GA 2027; Japan for Youth Forum 2027; Cavite, Philippines for PNLG GA 2027; Some EASC technical sessions may be convened as part of PEMSEA events to be proposed for UNDOS Conference in Manila in 2027.
- Reinvigorate leadership forums (in between triennial EASC and MF) with support from CPs, NCPs and other collaborators, as a platform to reinforce high-level understanding and ownership from governments/ government leaders. Non-member countries may also be invited in some activities as part of partnership-building efforts.
- The MF 2027 may build on the result of assessments on the impacts and benefits of regional cooperation under PEMSEA (proposed governance and thematic assessments proposed in other Components and Priority Programs below), promote acceleration of national and regional ocean governance goals, and reinforcing/advancing commitments towards and beyond 2030.

Strengthening PEMSEA partnership and governance mechanisms also require continuing efforts to build the PEMSEA brand (linked to I.D.2).

## Insights and Recommendations

### Recommendations:

- Strategically plan PEMSEA events and engagements in various knowledge sharing events by ensuring alignment with the following:
  - o PEMSEA Communication and KM Strategy
  - o PEMSEA Training and Capacity Development Plan
  - o PNLG Strategic Action Plan (2022-2030)
  - o PNLC Operational Plan 2023-2027
  - o Knowledge sharing initiatives outlined under specific PRF-managed projects
  - o Knowledge sharing initiatives with NCPs
  - o Program to be developed for EASC 2027
- Strategically plan PEMSEA participation and contributions to key international and regional events (i.e., IW Conference, Ocean Conference, WOW in Xiamen, etc.) as part of annual work planning

## Priority Program I.B: National Ocean and Coastal Policies, Legislations and Institutional Arrangements

Target Outcome	Status
<b>I.B.1:</b> National ocean and coastal policies, supporting legislations and institutional arrangements set up and functional in PEMSEA Partner Countries.	
<b>I.B.2:</b> ICM programs for sustainable development of coastal and marine areas further scaled up from the 2020 coverage across the region's coastline and contiguous watersheds.	

Policy and legislative development across PEMSEA Country Partners (CPs) continues to advance, with recent years seeing the adoption and implementation of more framework strategies, plans, and programs focused on Green Growth, Marine Spatial Planning, the Blue Economy, and ocean management. Legislative progress includes amendments to key environmental laws in some countries. Institutional changes or developments were also noted, particularly within PEMSEA's National Focal Agencies in Indonesia and Viet Nam, largely due to elections and efforts to streamline government processes. While in the Philippines, an Ocean Environments Task Force was recently established and will be providing guidance in the formation of a dedicated Ocean Environments Bureau under the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR).

Regional and national policy forums have facilitated dialogue on important and emerging issues, including blue carbon, ocean-climate linkages, and the High Seas Treaty. ICM implementation and mainstreaming into national and local plans continue, guided by various coastal and ocean policies that promote integrated, whole-of-government, and cross-sectoral approaches to coastal, water resource, and ocean management. ICM implementation is also supported through the works of PNLC and PNLC, as well as under PRF-managed projects, such as ATSEA-2, which has established ICM sites in Indonesia and Timor-Leste.

The application of the ICM Code and ICM System Recognition remains active, with four sites achieving Level 2 certification and two sites achieving Level 1 certification in 2022 and 2023. Efforts to expand and mainstream ICM with GESI considerations are ongoing, primarily through PEMSEA-managed projects focused on thematic areas and specific sites in the region. Additionally, several regional and national ICM-related forums were conducted to further strengthen knowledge-sharing and policy integration.

Key remaining actions under this program include incorporating recent policy and legislative developments into the second Regional and National SOC reports, with a focus on highlighting key policies and legislations that support ICM mainstreaming. Additionally, the use of the ICM Performance Index in PEMSEA CPs was also targeted to assess the implementation, effectiveness, and impact of ICM at various sites. Expanding demonstrations of GESI mainstreaming in ICM implementation is also a priority.

<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PEMSEA CPs continue to make progress on national coastal and ocean policies and legislations. Some of the key recent developments include: <i>(NOTE: More comprehensive listing of recent coastal and ocean policies and legislation is provided in Annex 1, I.B.1, while thematic or issue-based policies and legislation are outlined in Annex 1, Component 2 programs)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Continuing implementation of various policies and plans related to green growth.</li> <li>o Policies, plans, strategies, programs: Cambodia's Environmental Protection Strategic Plan (2024-2028); Indonesia's Blue Economy Roadmap 2023-2045 and Regulation No.34 of 2022 concerning Marine Policy and Action Plan 2021-2025; Japan's 4<sup>th</sup> Basic Plan on Ocean Policy (2023); Philippines's Guidelines on Eligible Blue Projects and Activities for the Issuance of Blue Bonds (2023); Timor-Leste's Government Resolution No 27/2023 approving its National Ocean Policy; and Viet Nam's approval of the following in 2024- Decision 376/QĐ-TTg, adopting the Master Plan for the North Central and Central Coast Region for 2021-2030, and Resolution for National Marine Spatial Plan for 2021-2030, with a vision to 2050</li> <li>o Legislation: Ongoing review of Cambodia's Environment and Natural Resource Code; China's revised Marine Environmental Protection Law in 2023 (implemented from 2024); Indonesia's Law No.59 of 2024 concerning the National Long-Term Development Plan for 2025-2045; RA 12065 Philippine Archipelagic Sea Lanes Act approved in 2024, and R.A. No. 11995 Philippine Ecosystem and Natural Capital Accounting System (PENCAS) Act approved in 2024; and Viet Nam's Revised Law on Environmental Protection in May 2021 (in effect from 2022).</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Recent institutional changes/developments (PEMSEA Focal Agencies): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Indonesia: Former Ministry of Environment and Forestry (KLHK) split into the Ministry of Forestry and the Ministry of Environment.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Inclusion of updated list of national ocean policy, institutional arrangements and legislation in the 2<sup>nd</sup> NSOCs (development pending, except in the Philippines) and updated RSOC</li> <li>• Specific demonstration/documentation of ICM mainstreaming in national plans and legislative agenda lacking</li> <li>• Utilization of ICM performance index by the Country Partners to determine level of ICM implementation, effectiveness and impacts.</li> <li>• Development, approval and implementation of Guidelines on mainstreaming ICM with GESI components into the local government planning processes</li> <li>• Plan for scaling up ICM coverage (from 2020 status) (link to II.A)</li> </ul>



<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Viet Nam: Former Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MARD) merged under the Ministry of Agriculture and Environment (MAE)</li> <li>o Philippines: Special Order No. 2025-98 of DENR established the Ocean Environments Task Force (OETF) to guide the formation of an Ocean Environments Bureau and oversee the establishment of eight new marine research stations across the country.</li> <li>• Various regional policy forums conducted by PEMSEA</li> <li>• Expansion of ICM application and reach through the different PRF-managed projects or programs</li> <li>• On ICM Code and ICMS: Chinese ICM System Certification Audit Team established by the China-PEMSEA Center in 2023 to undertake ICM Effectiveness Assessment which can later be used as model for other ICM sites. In terms of certification, 6 ICM sites certified for ICMS Levels 1 and 2 in 2022 and 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Level 2 certified: Da Nang (Viet Nam), Guimaras (Philippines), Preah Sihanouk (Cambodia), Quanzhou (China)</li> <li>o Level 1 certified: Tangerang (Indonesia); Changyi (China)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Mainstreaming of GESI in ICM or ICM-related initiatives ongoing through various PRF-managed projects.</li> </ul>	

## Insights and Recommendations

While key developments on coastal and ocean policies have been noted, there is limited in-depth analysis on their impacts and lessons, making it difficult to assess their effectiveness.

### Recommendation:

- Although not a specific target under the current SDS-SEA IP, conducting an updated and in-depth study and policy analysis on ocean governance initiatives in the EAS region would provide valuable insights into lessons learned, opportunities for synergy and collaboration, as well as in assessing the extent of ICM mainstreaming in various government policies and plans. The PRF is already planning to update the 2016 publication on “Ocean Governance Initiatives in the East Asian Seas: Lessons and Recommendations”. This proposed initiative would also present an opportunity for collaboration with CPs and relevant NCPs in developing a comprehensive, updated report.

## Insights and Recommendations

ICM performance indexes are currently embedded within the ICM Code, ICMS and SOC reporting indicators, aligned with regional and international targets at the time of their development. However recent developments in various global and regional sustainable development frameworks may require updates or refinement to the ICM performance indexes to ensure continued relevance.

### Recommendations:

- Revisiting the ICM Code and ICMS, with support from PNLG, PNLC and relevant partners, would help ensure that performance indicators remain aligned with evolving regional and global targets. Through PNLC, PhD/Masters students may also be tapped to develop thesis on ICM implementation and progress assessment.
- Follow up results from CPC's ICM System Certification and Effectiveness Assessment, which can serve as reference/guide for other ICM sites.

The current PNLG SAP 2022-2030 does not explicitly reference GESI mainstreaming in ICM, though it should be noted that GESI principles are inherently built into the ICM framework. At present, GESI mainstreaming efforts are primarily implemented at specific sites under PRF-managed projects, but the process is not yet systematically applied in all ICM sites.

### Recommendation:

- The PEMSEA GESI Assessment and Framework Action Plan, along with GESI assessments and action plans from some PRF-managed projects, can serve as useful references for promoting and strengthening GESI mainstreaming in ICM implementation. Developing the Guidelines on GESI mainstreaming in ICM as targeted by the SDS-SEA IP, would help provide clearer guidance on gender-responsive planning and implementation, particularly to PNLG members and sites implementing ICM. Such effort may be linked to the work of PNLG and PNLC.

## Priority Program I.C: Capacity Development

Target Outcome	Status
<b>I.C.1:</b> ICM and specialized skills training programs, targeted research, joint learning events promoting science-policy interface, materials, case studies, advisory and mentoring services supporting scaling up of ICM programs and SDS-SEA implementation	
<b>I.C.2:</b> Global and regional capacity development programs provide opportunities for country participation facilitating partnership building and networking.	

Since 2003, significant progress has been made in capacity development. Following an internal review of the Capacity Development Plan (2021-2025), an interim Capacity Development Framework was put in place to provide a more structured plan to PEMSEA's capacity-building initiatives, including the training programs under various PRF-managed projects. To enhance coordination and knowledge consolidation, a CapDev database has been established within the SEAKnowledge Bank platform, serving as an internal repository for training sessions, workshops, and learning events.

Over 100 targeted trainings have been conducted under different PRF-managed projects, including PRF-led e-learning or webinars, benefiting close to 5,000 participants. The PNLC remains instrumental in providing technical assistance and expert advice to national and local governments, ICM sites, and local communities. By 2024, the PNLC membership has reached 25 with 8 new members admitted since 2023. Apart from the regional and national training programs, the PNLC-PNLC forums, EAS Congress International Conference, and regular PEMSEA participation to World Ocean Week (WOW) of Xiamen, have served as important platforms for capacity building and knowledge exchange. All these capacity and awareness building efforts are contributing to the objectives of the UN Decade of Ocean Science (UNDOS). PEMSEA also collaborated with the Global Ocean Forum and the High Seas Alliance through the conduct of their respective sessions during the EASC 2024.

To fully achieve the capacity development targets of the SDS-SEA IP, there is a need to have a comprehensive PEMSEA CapDev program as current efforts are largely project-driven. Moreover, the following actions remain to be addressed: further strengthening of PNLC and expert engagement in ICM seminars, forums, and publications to promote knowledge-sharing and best practices, and exploring the development of a regional action plan on ocean science or opportunities for collaboration on UNDOS-related trainings, including facilitating active participation of women scientists and experts.

<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Capacity Development and Training Plan/Capacity Development Framework carried out and linked to various training programs under the PEMSEA-projects</li> <li>CapDev database or repository of training information in place and updated regularly. Based on the database, there are 8 PEMSEA training courses available. Since 2023 to date, 11 E-Learning/Webinars have been offered, 111 thematic trainings conducted (3 PRF-led; 1 through PNLC; 6 under the Marine Plastics Project; 5 under the IRBM Project; 96 under the ATSEA-2 Project from 2019-2024), benefiting close to 5,000 participants</li> <li>PNLC Secretariat formally established and hosted by IPB University in Indonesia in 2023.</li> <li>PNLC membership has increased to 25, with 8 new members admitted since 2023: Ocean College, Zhejiang University, China (2023), Prince of Songkla University, Thailand (2023), Diponegoro University, Indonesia (2023), Center for Sustainable Development, Udayana University, Indonesia (2023), Mindanao State University at Naawan, Philippines (2024), National University of Laos (2024), Fujian Institute for Sustainable Oceans (FISO), Xiamen University, China, and Guangdong Ocean University, China (2024)</li> <li>PNLC continues to serve as an important capacity building arm/network of PEMSEA. In particular, PNLC has supported the development of the PEMSEA Capacity Development and Training Plan 2021-2025, enhancement of the SEAKB, development of Joint Proposal on Single Use Plastics to SEA-Map, and expert support during the EAS Congress 2024 technical sessions. The PNLC also serves as a working group member of the PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program and participated in its training, and some PNLC members from Timor-Leste serve as Beach Litter Monitoring Institutes for the MOF/PEMSEA Marine Plastics Litter Project.</li> <li>Since 2021, three PNLC-PNLC Science Policy/Joint Learning Sessions have been carried out.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the Capacity Development Plan</li> <li>Explore opportunities to develop a Regional Plan of Action in support of UNDOS and identify possible UNDOS trainings with IOC UNESCO and other programs, with consideration of participation of women scientists and expert, noting possible collaboration with IOC/WESTPAC on the 12th WESTPAC International Marine Science Conference and the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN Ocean Decade Regional Conference, scheduled to be held in the Philippines in 2027.</li> </ul>



<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• While there has been no direct training conducted under the UNDOS program, the different PEMSEA trainings are all aligned and contributing to the UNDOS goals.</li> <li>• A session from the Global Estuaries Monitoring (GEM) Programme under the UNDOS program delivered a Capacity Building Workshop on GEM Programme during the EAS Congress 2024 with support from the SKLMP, City University of Hong Kong.</li> <li>• With regard to Global Ocean Forum and Areas Beyond National Jurisdiction, the following workshops were co-organized during the EASC 2024: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o From EEZs to the High Seas: Leveraging the ocean-climate-biodiversity nexus in accelerating the implementation of ocean-climate action (co-convened by Global Ocean Forum and PML)</li> <li>o From Ratification to Implementation: Asia High-Level Dialogue on the High Seas Treaty (co-convened by High Seas Alliance)</li> <li>o From Ratification to Implementation: A Deep Dive on the High Seas Treaty (co-convened by High Seas, Part V Capacity Building and Transfer of Marine Technology (co-convened by High Seas Alliance)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	

## Insights and Recommendations

The PRF noted that with the transition from the last SDS-SEA Project to multiple projects, capacity/training activities are currently project-driven. Establishing a consolidated/comprehensive Capacity Development Program would also require further assessment, planning, budget as well as personnel support. The ongoing update of the SDS-SEA IP to 2030 and the plan to assess PEMSEA's organizational capacity present an opportunity to align with the SDS-SEA IP target to update the Capacity Development Plan. Optimizing PNLC support on capacity development would also require identification and road mapping of key technical assistance and capacity building support for various PEMSEA initiatives

### Recommendations:

- Instead of updating the Capacity Development Plan to 2027 as originally targeted in the SDS-SEA IP, consider extending the scope to 2030 to align with the updated SDS-SEA IP. This updating process would also provide an opportunity to include an assessment of budgetary and personnel requirements to enhance the management, coordination and monitoring of PEMSEA's capacity development programs.
- The separate organizational capacity and effectiveness assessment to be undertaken as part of this initiative on PEMSEA Sustainability to 2030 is also targeted to develop a Capacity Development Plan for PRF. This resulting plan will also need to be considered in updating the overall Capacity Development Plan.
- Building on the PNLC Operational Plan (2022-2027), specific technical support requirements from PNLC may be designed and mapped for better planning and alignment with PEMSEA's capacity development needs.
- Explore online certification programs for ICM practitioners, creating a professional development pathway

Despite alignment of various PEMSEA activities with UNDOS objectives, there has been no direct training conducted under PEMSEA's framework.

### Recommendation:

- Consider engaging with IOC WESTPAC (as a PEMSEA NCP) to co-organize PEMSEA session(s) at the 12<sup>th</sup> WESTPAC International Marine Science Conference and the 3<sup>rd</sup> UN Ocean Decade Regional Conference, scheduled to be held in the Philippines in 2027. Planning for this session could also be aligned with the preparations for EASC 2027 Technical Conference to maximize regional engagement and collaboration.

## Priority Program I.D: Knowledge Management

Target Outcome	Status
<b>I.D.1.</b> The Seas of East Asia Knowledge Bank (SEAKB) strengthened and operationalized.	
<b>I.D.2</b> Increased knowledge and widespread stakeholder participation in SDS-SEA implementation enhanced through communication planning and information-education and communication campaign.	

Considerable progress has been made in optimizing knowledge management and fostering stakeholder collaboration to support SDS-SEA implementation. The Seas of East Asia Knowledge Bank (SEAKB) has been further enhanced with improved functionalities, including improved access to various knowledge products. Project-specific portals have also been integrated, linking various PRF-managed projects. While content updates are ongoing, designated pages for key PEMSEA Networks (PNLG and PNLC) and key knowledge products (i.e., SOC reports and ICMS Certification database) are already accessible. Additionally, digital tools such as GIS mapping, data visualization, and real-time collaboration platforms have been utilized to improve data collection and knowledge sharing.

On stakeholder engagement, PEMSEA launched its Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy in 2023, providing a framework for outreach, media engagement, and knowledge dissemination. In collaboration with host countries, major PEMSEA events (e.g., EAS Congress, PNLG-PNLC Forums, and the EAS Youth Forum) have been covered by various media channels, increasing public awareness and stakeholder participation. PEMSEA's strong collaboration with GEF IW:LEARN has also strengthened knowledge exchange on PRF-led and other PEMSEA-managed project initiatives, as well as expanded PEMSEA's visibility to a global audience.

As SAP IP implementation progresses, key areas for further development include revisiting of PEMSEA's Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy and supporting mechanisms within the PRF for its strengthened implementation, expanding strategic media engagement, strengthening SEAKB linkages with other regional and global knowledge sharing platforms, and integrating Knowledge-Attitude-Practices (KAP) surveys more systematically into PEMSEA initiatives, beyond the existing pre- and post-training surveys.

<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Improved functionalities of SEAKB, providing easier access to knowledge products posted in PEMSEA website, project microsites and affiliated organizations.</li> <li>Integration of specific PEMSEA-project portals to SEAKB, including ATSEA, ASEANO, MOF/PEMSEA Marine Plastics Project, and GEF/UNDP/ASEAN IRBM Project.</li> <li>Dedicated pages for SOC reports, Capacity Development database, ICM System Certification, Ocean Investment, Ocean Knowledge Partners, and directory of Ocean Experts developed.</li> <li>Utilization and integration of digital tools to optimize PEMSEA operations, such as websites and microsites, cloud-based technologies, virtual collaboration platforms and knowledge hubs. In support of data analytics and visualization various tools such as GIS mapping has been utilized in development of ATLAS reports, conduct of biophysical assessment and site profiling reports, among others.</li> <li>Apart from the SOC reports, application of new tools and methodologies for data collection and monitoring through PEMSEA projects, including IRBM State of the River Basin Reporting, Beach plastics monitoring tool, plastics analysis and classification systems (PACS), and Gender equality and social inclusion (GESI).</li> <li>Ongoing implementation of PEMSEA's Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy linked with communication and KM plans for various PEMSEA projects, guiding outreach and engagement</li> <li>Media engagement undertaken through support of host countries during key PEMSEA events, such as the EASC, PNLC and PNLC forums, and other key PEMSEA activities</li> <li>Pre- and post-training assessments conducted to help track progress in knowledge/ awareness and behavior change to some degree</li> <li>Active collaboration with GEF IW:LEARN, expanding PEMSEA's audience and platform for knowledge-sharing.</li> <li>GEF/UNDP/PEMSEA ATSEA-2 Project recognized as a standout case study at the 10<sup>th</sup> GEF International Waters Conference (IWC10), selected from over 100 GEF-supported projects worldwide</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthening of SEAKB's linkages with other national, regional and global KM platforms to improve data sharing and accessibility (e.g., International Waters Learning Exchange and Resource Network (IWLEARN), Asia-Pacific Climate Change Adaptation Information Platform, National Clearinghouse Mechanisms, ASEAN Center for Biodiversity Dashboard, etc.)</li> <li>Expanding PEMSEA's strategic media engagement efforts to further increase visibility, reach and impact</li> <li>Conduct of full-scale KAP surveys as part of monitoring and targeted communication strategies or efforts</li> </ul>

## Insights and Recommendations

While SEAKB continues to be improved, more effort and coordination is needed to expand its integration with other major KM platforms. In terms of GESI mainstreaming in SEAKB, gender-sensitive data collection and reporting mechanisms within SEAKB is currently dependent on GESI-related reports from key projects. Further assessment is still lacking on how GESI can be further mainstreamed in SEAKB.

### **Recommendations:**

- Establish formal partnerships with other national, regional and global KM platforms to enhance data exchange and resource-sharing
- Continue and expand use of digital technologies for enhanced knowledge-sharing with support from non-country partners
- As initially targeted in the SDS-SEA IP, consider establishing Community of Practice for GESI within SEAKB to ensure inclusivity in knowledge-sharing initiatives.
- Strengthen SEAKB's data visualization capabilities to make complex scientific data more accessible to policy-makers

Currently, majority of PEMSEA's media engagement is still event-driven and requires more sustained strategy for continuous and wider visibility in the EAS countries

### **Recommendation:**

- Revisit PEMSEA's Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy and supporting mechanisms within the PRF to facilitate enhanced implementation. This may include developing a media (including social media) engagement strategy and roadmap, in collaboration with other PEMSEA projects with its own communications plans, to ensure sustained coverage of PEMSEA's initiatives beyond major events, and tailoring information for targeted audiences.

Most PEMSEA activity surveys are primarily geared towards training evaluations, with limited focus on broader stakeholder perceptions and behavioral trends

### **Recommendation:**

- Implement structured KAP surveys, as part of Capacity Development and Training Plans, to assess knowledge gaps, inform communication planning, and inform outreach strategies.



## Priority Program I.E: Gender Equality and Social Inclusion

Target Outcome	Status
<b>I.E.1.</b> Evidence-based gender policies and interventions facilitate mainstreaming of gender perspective in SDS-SEA implementation.	
<b>I.E.2</b> Gender equality mainstreamed throughout the relevant policy and planning cycle for governance and management programs in support of SDS-SEA.	

Under the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027, proactive approach and efforts to mainstream GESI across PEMSEA initiatives have been significantly strengthened. A comprehensive GESI assessment was completed in 2023 to inform the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027, providing important insights into gender dynamics, the role and contributions of women and marginalized groups, and various country policies and programs related to GESI. Based on the findings, a GESI Action Plan was developed and published along with the Assessment, outlining a framework for integrating GESI principles into PEMSEA initiatives, along with recommendations for gender-responsive policies, disaggregated indicators, inclusive financing, and capacity-building programs. In addition, various PEMSEA-managed projects, including ATSEA-2 and the IRBM project, have developed and implemented their own GESI assessments and action plans. Practical implementation efforts have also been undertaken, such as updating PEMSEA's Sexual Harassment Policy and conduct of PRF Sexual Harassment/GESI Seminar, as well as organizing awareness campaigns and conducting livelihood programs targeting women and marginalized groups in coastal communities through the PEMSEA projects.

While progress has been achieved, further efforts are needed to fully integrate GESI considerations across all PEMSEA initiatives. This includes further planning to incorporate GESI elements into the updated Regional and National State of the Ocean and Coasts (R/NSOC) reports, expanding GESI-focused livelihood and training programs, and strengthening policy dialogues on gender-sensitive ocean governance. Additionally, enhancing systematic data collection and monitoring of GESI implementation, as well as improving collaboration with multilateral and regional organizations on gender-responsive ocean and coastal management, remain critical areas for further development.

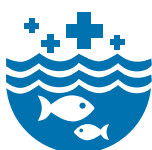
<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Guidance in place to mainstream GESI in PEMSEA initiatives through the GESI Assessment and Action Plan, along with specific GESI assessments and action plans under various PRF-managed projects</li> <li>• Thousands of women benefited from GESI programs under specific projects, such as:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o ATSEA-2 project: From 2019-2024, ATSEA-2 has engaged more than 52,000 women in various initiatives, wherein more than 4,000 women benefited from trainings, and more than 2,300 benefited from alternative livelihoods. Under the new ATSEA program (ATS SAP 2024-2033), GESI has been highlighted as a key cross-cutting objective and action.</li> <li>o IRBM project: Focus Group Discussions on GESI conducted in target watershed and basin sites in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and the Philippines in 2023 and 2024. Various workshops conducted to mainstream GESI in IRBM implementation, including: Regional GESI and Stakeholder Engagement Workshop; Stakeholder Analysis Workshop: Regional Workshop on Engaging Stakeholders on River Basin Planning and Risk Management.</li> <li>o Biofouling project: Asia-Pacific Women in Maritime Workshop and Biofouling Management Workshop was conducted in March 2025, as part of efforts GESI in maritime industries.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Strengthening of internal GESI policies within PRF, through the conduct of Sexual Harassment/GESI seminar, updating of PEMSEA's Sexual Harassment Policy, and inclusion of features on Women as part of PEMSEA communications efforts.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Integration of GESI components in the development of the Second NSOC reports and updated RSOC.</li> <li>• In collaboration with PEMSEA CPs, promote more national policy reforms incorporating GESI considerations into ocean governance strategies.</li> <li>• Identification of other collaborative projects on use of gender-based methodologies and tools.</li> <li>• Establishment of systematic tracking of GESI mainstreaming across PEMSEA initiatives and projects.</li> </ul>

## Insights and Recommendations

Current progress showed varying levels of GESI integration across PEMSEA partners and projects. Moreover, existing national policies, plans and legislation mostly have broad GESI coverage spanning from promoting equality in labor, education, and healthcare, among others, while more specific GESI-policies and plans pertaining to coastal, water and environmental management remain limited. Linked to priority targets on mainstreaming GESI to various data collection and monitoring tools, identification of standardized indicators and methodologies will be needed. Support from GESI expert to undertake some of the key GESI initiatives under the SDS-SEA IP will also be needed to ensure more gender-focused plans, data collection, and analysis.

### **Recommendations:**

- Building on the experience in implementing GESI action plans, work with CPs and PNL- guided by a GESI expert- to integrate gender considerations into relevant policies and plans on coastal, water and ocean management, including through the development of sector-specific GESI toolkits (e.g., for fisheries, coastal tourism, port management) that address unique challenges within various blue economy sectors
- Linked to PEMSEA Capacity and Training Program as well as the PEMSEA Communications and KM Plan, expand GESI-focused training programs and awareness-raising campaigns
- Consider inclusion of GESI programs as part of the development of Financial Sustainability Plan and funding opportunities for PEMSEA.
- Establish quantitative targets for women's leadership in ICM programs to drive more intentional inclusion



## COMPONENT 2 HEALTHY OCEAN

**Goal:** To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of coastal and ocean governance at regional, national and local levels to achieve healthy and resilient marine and coastal ecosystems in priority coastal and marine and watershed areas.

Priority Program: 4	ICM Scaling Up		Biodiversity and Fisheries		Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction			Pollution, Waste, and Water Use	
Target Outcome: 9	II.A.1	II.A.2	II.B.1	II.B.2	II.C.1	II.C.2	II.C.3	II.D.1	II.D.2

■ Achieved
 ■ On track
 ■ In progress (w/ challenges)
 ■ Delayed

The Healthy Ocean component was designed to reevaluate and enhance biodiversity conservation and fisheries management, climate change adaptation and disaster risk reduction, and pollution reduction, waste management, and water use management to address both continuing and emerging environmental threats in the region. This component also aims to support the PEMSEA member countries in their efforts to contribute in the achievement of commitments to key relevant international sustainable development instruments.

ICM continues to be a key driver for integrating biodiversity conservation, fisheries management, climate resilience, and pollution reduction into national and local governance frameworks. The PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG), which now has 59 members, continues to promote ICM implementation through the PNLG SAP 2022-2023, aligning with SDG 6 (water resources management), SDG 11 (marine debris and solid waste management), SDG 13 (climate resilience), and SDG 14 (healthy oceans). While engagement on ICM audit and recognition seemed to have reduced since 2021, application of ICM Code and recognition system continues with six sites awarded with ICM certification for levels 1 and 2 in 2022 and 2023. The China-PEMSEA Center (CPC) has also initiated ICM Effectiveness Assessment, which could have broader regional applications in the coming years and could further strengthen ICM certification trainings and audits.

Since the completion of the final phase of the GEF/UNDP SDS-SEA Project in 2021, application of ICM has expanded, complementing with other area and thematic-based approaches,

as demonstrated in the projects managed by PEMSEA, such as the ASEAN-Norwegian Cooperation ASEANO Project (2020-2023), the GEF/UNDP ATSEA-2 Project (2019-2024), the GEF/UNDP IRBM Project (2023-2027), the MOF/PEMSEA Marine Plastics Reduction Project (2023-2028), and the GEF/UNDP ENMAPS Project (2024 to 2029).

This expansion has facilitated increased aerial coverage or efforts for healthy and resilient habitats, for instance MPA initiatives under the recently completed ATSEA-2 Project and the newly launched ENMAPS Project show a coverage of more than 3.4 million hectares of MPAs, with further target by ENMAPS to cover more than 13.3m hectares of marine corridors, directly contributing to 30x30 global biodiversity targets. In support of enhancing coastal and marine conservation efforts, four EAS countries (China, Indonesia, Japan and RO Korea) have completed their updated National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans (NBSAPs), while consultations and updating are still ongoing in other countries. Notable developments in national and regional fisheries management policies have also been recorded, focusing primarily on combating IUU fishing, advancing the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM), promoting fisheries and aquaculture innovations, and improving food security and livelihoods, among others. Efforts to manage invasive aquatic species have also progressed through PEMSEA's partnership in the Glofouling Partnerships Project, which led to the endorsement of the Regional Strategy and Action Plan on Biofouling Management in the EAS region. The same strategy and action plan was also approved by the ASEAN Transport Ministers in November 2024.

In CCA and DRR, several recent climate change-related plans and strategies have been noted in EAS countries in alignment with the Paris Agreement, Glasgow Climate Pact, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Sharm El-Sheikh Implementation Plan. Within the PEMSEA framework and projects, significant efforts have been undertaken in support of CCA, mainly through the ICM with CCA and alternative livelihood initiatives of the ATSEA-2 Project. Support to CCA is also integrated in the PNLG SAP 2022-2030, as well as in various assessments and plans being undertaken under the IRBM and ENMAPS project. Additionally, the PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program was launched in 2024 and have already facilitated completion of several studies assessing the supply side of Blue Carbon in ICM and harmonization of Blue Carbon accounting protocols for coastal ecosystems. A step wise approach leading to the creation of regional carbon credit system is currently under development

Progress has also been made on pollution reduction, waste management, and water management. Several advancements on marine litter and plastic reduction were made as a result of initiatives under the Marine Plastic Reduction Project and ASEANO Project. Related to oil spill, Cambodia, Thailand, and Viet Nam have adopted the Strategic Action Plan for Oil



Spill Readiness and Response in the Gulf of Thailand 2022-2027, and the Guidelines for the use of Chemical Dispersants in Responding to Oil Spills in 2024. While, ATSEA-2 Project has enhanced oil spill preparedness and response in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia and Covalima, Timor-Leste through trainings and support in developing Early Warning Systems and Oil Spill Response System and Guidelines. On water use management, the ongoing GEF/UNDP IRBM project is assisting 7 target river basin and watershed sites in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Malaysia and Viet Nam in conducting biophysical, socioeconomic, and governance assessments, leading to the development of State of River Basin (SORB) reports, as well as establishment of River Basin Coordinating Committees.

While significant progress has been made, improving ICM implementation monitoring and reporting of impacts using the PNLG Tracking Tool, as well as integration of GESI-related indicators to enhance SOC reporting to standardize regional monitoring systems to track progress on these priority areas of healthy oceans, remains a challenge. To strengthen regional coordination and facilitate more strategic partnerships and planning, conducting in-depth thematic regional reviews through PEMSEA-supported collaborations would also be highly beneficial. These reviews would provide deeper insights into emerging trends, policy gaps, and notable contributions of EAS countries toward international targets on coastal and ocean management, pollution reduction, CCA/DRR, biodiversity and fisheries management, and water use management.

The adopted Xiamen Declaration in 2024, Actions 4 to 6, reinforced the call for PEMSEA Countries in collaboration with various PEMSEA partners/collaborators to further strengthen efforts on scaling-up of ICM-linked ocean-based climate solutions, integration of ecosystem-based disaster risk reduction (Eco-DRR) into local planning and community engagement, and operationalization of blue carbon financing mechanisms, as targeted under Component II and IV of the SDS-SEA IP.

## Priority Program II.A: ICM Scaling Up

Target Outcome	Status
<b>II.A.1.</b> Local governments across the EAS Region facilitate ICM scaling up covering priority coastlines and watersheds that support critical habitats and ecosystems.	
<b>II.A.2.</b> Areal extent of healthy and resilient habitats increased resulting in ecological, social and economic benefits to coastal communities	

The PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG) continues to expand, welcoming its 54<sup>th</sup> local government (Yancheng City, China) and its 5<sup>th</sup> associate member (Dongying Huanhai Institute of Marine Conservation and Development) in 2024, bringing the total to 59 members. With guidance from the PNLG Executive Committee and General Assembly, the PNLG has adopted and is currently implementing its Strategic Action Programme (SAP) 2022-2030. To further strengthen the network's operations, PNLG signed a Letter of Cooperation with the PNLC in 2024 as well as Letter of Intent between PNLC and PNLG member Tangerang Regency of Indonesia in 2023. As part of its continuing support to ICM, the China-PEMSEA Center (CPC) has piloted ICM Effectiveness Assessment, supporting the expansion of ICM certification training and audits, which is envisioned to have broader regional applications in the coming years. Additionally, in 2022 and 2023, four level 2 ICM certifications and two level 1 ICM certifications were awarded, reflecting continued progress in local ICM implementation.

Since the conclusion of the final phase of GEF/UNDP SDS-SEA Project in 2021, ICM application has expanded across the EAS region through other integrated area-based and thematic management approaches under various PRF-managed projects. This expansion facilitated increased aerial coverage or efforts for healthy and resilient habitats, for instance MPA initiatives under the recently completed ATSEA-2 Project and the newly launched ENMAPS Project show a coverage of more than 3.4 million hectares of MPAs, with further target to cover more than 13.3M hectares of marine corridors. Further contributions were also noted on EAFM and ICM under ATSEA-2, as well river basin/watershed initiatives in specific sites under the IRBM project. Several regional events or knowledge-sharing forums have also been carried out to further promote ICM good practices and facilitate discussions on GESI mainstreaming in various PEMSEA projects.

Key remaining actions include the need to improve ICM implementation monitoring and reporting of impacts using the PNLG Tracking Tool, as well as integration of GESI-related indicators to enhance SOC reporting. Reinforcing ICM certification and recognition is also crucial, along with improving knowledge-sharing mechanisms in order to sustain ICM implementation and scaling up.

<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expansion of PNLG membership, with 59 members (54 local governments and 5 associate members) as of 2024.</li> <li>• Implementation of the PNLG SAP 2022-2030 and reporting of progress at the annual PNLG Forum (General Assembly)</li> <li>• Letter of Cooperation signed between PNLG and PNLC in 2024 to enhance capacity-building, promote ICM implementation, and establish a knowledge-sharing platform.</li> <li>• Letter of Intent signed between Tangerang Regency, Indonesia (PNLG member) and PNLC, leveraging the Tangerang Mangrove Research Center for joint capacity-building initiatives.</li> <li>• Certification of the following sites in 2022 and 2023: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>o Level 2 certified: Da Nang (Viet Nam); Guimaras (Philippines); Preah Sihanouk (Cambodia); and Quanzhou (China)</li> <li>o Level 1 certified: Tangerang, (Indonesia); and Changyi (China)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• China-PEMSEA Center's efforts on ICM Effectiveness Assessment in line with ICM certification training and audits</li> <li>• Continuing knowledge-exchange efforts through PNLG Forum, the EAS Congress and other ICM forums</li> <li>• Expansion of ICM application through various PEMSEA-managed projects to support healthy and resilient habitats and ecosystems</li> <li>• Initial efforts showcasing practical GESI mainstreaming through various PEMSEA capacity and awareness building initiatives.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activation of PNLG Tracking Tool in the SEAKB on PNLG SAP implementation by PNLG members</li> <li>• Promotion of ICM Code and Recognition System</li> <li>• Initiation of PNLG sister-city programs</li> <li>• Continue implementation, monitoring, and documentation of progress and results of ICM alignment with area-based management approaches in targeted project sites.</li> <li>• ICM effectiveness assessments with support from PNLG and PNLC</li> <li>• Review of SOC indicators with PNLG and PNLC and possible enhancement to enhance GESI-related indicators</li> <li>• Publication of (updated) local SOC reports</li> <li>• Continue/strengthen documentation, packaging and dissemination of good practices on ICM and GESI mainstreaming</li> </ul>

## Insights and Recommendations

Based on 2023 submissions, there has been limited reporting from PNLG members in line with the PNLG SAP implementation, noting that only 20 out of 53 members (38%) submitted reports, while no reports were submitted in 2024 due to different program focus as part of the EASC 2024. Also, the PNLG Tracking Tool in SEAKB has yet to be operationalized.

### **Recommendation:**

- Through the PNLG EC and GA, identify steps to improve reporting for the PNLG SAP and its integration or conversion into a functional and accessible PNLG Tracking Tool within the SEAKB platform. This may include conducting workshops for PNLG member focal points/technical staff on PNLG SAP reporting.

There seems to be a reduced engagement in ICM certifications with limited applications or requests for ICM audit and recognition since 2021.

### **Recommendations:**

- Through PNLG and PNLC support, reinvigorate efforts to expand ICM certification through targeted technical support and targeted promotions. Additionally, leverage on the ongoing ICM Effectiveness Assessment by CPC to further promote ICM certification trainings and audits.
- Leverage on the LOC between PNLG and PNLC to promote capacity-building initiatives, including peer learning among PNLG and PNLC members, and training programs and leadership development for ICM practitioners.

Since the completion of the last SDS-SEA project, there has been limited local SOC reporting or updates. GESI integration in the PNLG SAP is also not explicitly defined, with current efforts primarily embedded in site-specific PEMSEA project implementations. Additionally, the SAP IP target to include GESI-related indicators will also need to be linked to target action under I.B.2 on development of Guidelines on ICM mainstreaming ICM with GESI and under I.A.2 on development of Guidelines for integration of GESI indicators in R/NSOC.

### **Recommendation:**

- Linked with regional effort on the updating of R/NSOCs, collaborate with partners, networks and collaborators to secure inputs in the development of guidelines for integrating GESI indicators. This initiative may also be considered as an option for a joint project with other regional organizations.

## Priority Program II.B: Biodiversity Conservation and Fisheries Management

Target Outcome	Status
<p><b>II.B.1.</b> National Biodiversity Strategic Action Plans (NBSAPs) incorporate post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) targets on ocean and coastal and marine management.</p> <p>Fisheries management enhancement programs incorporate policies and priorities in ecosystem approach to fisheries management.</p>	
<p><b>II.B.2.</b> NBSAP implementation, monitoring and reporting scaled up across the EAS region enhancing the protection and conservation of marine biodiversity and threatened migratory marine species, alien and invasive species and fishery resources.</p>	

Several PEMSEA Country Partners (CPs), including China, Indonesia, Japan, and RO Korea, have updated their NBSAPs to incorporate ocean and coastal conservation targets, aligning with the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) and SDG targets. Others CPs are still undergoing consultations and revisions. At the same time, notable developments in national and regional fisheries management policies have been noted, focusing primarily on combating IUU fishing, advancing the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management (EAFM), promoting fisheries and aquaculture innovations, and improving food security and livelihoods, among others. Subregional initiatives, including the ATSEA-2 Project, ASEAN ENMAPS, as well as the Coral Triangle Initiative (CTI) RPOA 2.0, are also advancing efforts to protect and sustainably manage coastal and marine ecosystems.

Progress has also been made on MPA expansion and EAFM implementation through the ATSEA-2 project, managed by PEMSEA. The ongoing ENMAPS Project is expected to further strengthen and expand MPA networks and marine corridors particularly in Indonesia, the Philippines, and Thailand. PEMSEA has also played an active role in regional dialogues and forums in support of the High Seas Treaty, 30x30 Global Biodiversity targets, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and Marine Ecosystem Protection and Restoration. Related to addressing invasive aquatic species, PEMSEA has been a key partner in the GEF/UNDP/IMO Glofouling Partnerships Project, leading to the endorsement of the Regional Strategy and Action Plan on Biofouling Management at the EAS Partnership Council and adoption at ASEAN levels.

To further support country initiatives on biodiversity conservation and fisheries management, it is important to further identify specific areas whereby PEMSEA platform and partnerships can play stronger role in: supporting EAS countries' efforts in updating their respective NBSAPs, consolidating existing fisheries plans and programs, and enhancing monitoring frameworks. There is also a need to link these monitoring efforts with the ongoing updates of Regional and National SOC reports, ensuring a more cohesive approach to tracking biodiversity and fisheries management progress.



<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Four PEMSEA CPs submitted updated NBSAPs, aligning with the 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) targets and SDGs:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>China NBSAP 2023-2030 (submitted in 2024)</li> <li>Indonesia IBSAP 2025-2045 (launched in 2024)</li> <li>Japan NBSAP 2023-2030 (adopted in 2023)</li> <li>RO Korea NBSAP 2024-2028 (Cabinet-approved in 2023)</li> </ul> </li> <li>Implementation of existing and parallel consultations to update/develop new NBSAPs ongoing in other PEMSEA CPs</li> <li>Recent developments on fisheries policies and legislation in PEMSEA CPs include revision of fisheries laws (i.e., Cambodia; China; RO Korea), updating and development of NPOA on IUU fishing (i.e., Indonesia; Timor-Leste; Viet Nam's Directive No. 32-CT/TW of April 10, 2024 enhancing leadership to combat IUUF), adoption of fisheries-related plans (i.e., Japan Basic Plan for Fisheries; Singapore Aquaculture Plan; RO Korea 5<sup>th</sup> Master Plan to Support Female Fishers), adoption of EAFM Plans (i.e., Indonesia and Timor-Leste under ATSEA-2). among others.</li> <li>Through PRF-managed projects, priority locations have already begun or are preparing to implement programs for biodiversity and habitat management:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ATSEA-2 Project (2019-2024): Strengthening MPA management: MPAs in SE Aru, Indonesia and Nino-Konis Santana National Park, Timor-Leste; Establishment of new MPAs: Kolepom, Indonesia; Manufahi-Manatuto, Timor-Leste</li> <li>ATSEA Program (SAP 2024-2033): Aims to cover 70,000km<sup>2</sup> of new MPAs, and to create 10,000km<sup>2</sup> of Other Effective (area-based) Conservation Measures (OECM) in ATS</li> <li>ENMAPS Project (2025-2029): Aims to have 9 MPA networks and associated marine corridors endorsed and incorporated in national fisheries management plans and national 30x30 roadmaps by 2029 (2 in Indonesia, 5 in Philippines, and 2 in Thailand).</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Completion of consultations and updating of NBSAPs in Cambodia, DPRK, Lao PDR, Philippines, Singapore, Timor-Leste, and Viet Nam</li> <li>Conduct of consultations to consolidate existing and planned initiatives at regional (e.g., CTI RPOA, ATSEA2), national (CTI NPOA, etc.) and bay-wide level with EAFM plans and fisheries management programs.</li> <li>Identification of more priority locations for biodiversity conservation and fisheries management for convergence with sub-national ICM programs.</li> <li>CPs continue implementation, monitoring and reporting of NBSAPs</li> <li>Establishment of standardized monitoring programs or enhancement of existing monitoring programs to track changes and improvements, including linking to updating of R/NSOC and local SOC</li> </ul>

<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Through PRF-managed projects, priority locations have already begun or are preparing to implement programs for fisheries management: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ATSEA-2 Project (2019-2024): EAFM implementation: Aru and Merauke, Indonesia; South Coast municipalities, Timor-Leste; and South Fly, PNG</li> <li>ATSEA Program (SAP 2024-2033): Aims to secure at least 3 new transboundary agreements (Fisheries Improvement projects) or sites for small-scale fisheries; 25-50% reduction in IUU fishing in these sites.</li> <li>ENMAPS Project (2025-2029): Aims to involve 1,750 people on conduct of community Monitoring, Control and Surveillance (MCS) to reduce the threat of IUU and destructive fishing by 2029 in Indonesia, Philippines, and Thailand.</li> </ul> </li> <li>Relevant PEMSEA partnership or project contributing/linked to NBSAP implementation: MOA between the ASEAN Centre for Biodiversity (ACB) and PEMSEA for the implementation of the ASEAN ENMAPS project; and development and endorsement of the ATS MPA Network design under the ATSEA-2 Project, with some areas incorporated in Indonesia's national MPA network plan and one is in a new MPA currently being developed in Timor-Leste.</li> <li>Various knowledge-sharing sessions convened during the EASC 2024 related to the High Seas Treaty, MPA management and 30x30 actions, Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and Marine Ecosystem Protection and Restoration (with support from various partners and collaborators)</li> <li>Key accomplishments made under the GEF/UNDP/IMO Biofouling Partnership Project wherein PEMSEA served as Regional Coordinating Organization for the Southeast Asian region. Major accomplishment is the completion and adoption of the Regional Strategy and Action Plan in Biofouling Management in the EAS Region in 2024 by the 58<sup>th</sup> Senior Transport Officials Meeting (STOM) of ASEAN in November 2024.</li> </ul>	

## Insights and Recommendations

Several challenges were identified during the Subregional Dialogue on NBSAPs for member states of ASEAN and Timor-Leste in 2023 in relation to updating of NBSAPs, including funding constraints, data collection and management, weak institutional coordination, capacity gaps, policy and regulatory gaps, lack of awareness and technology.

Discussions under the PEMSEA platform on the establishment of standardized monitoring programs or enhancement of existing monitoring programs to track changes and improvements on biodiversity conservation and fisheries management, (including linking to updating of R/NSOC and local SOC) are still limited. Moreover, consultations to consolidate existing and planned initiatives at regional, national and bay-wide level with EAFM plans and fisheries management programs under the PEMSEA platform is still limited.

### **Recommendations:**

- Building on efforts under the ongoing ENMAPS Project as well as ATSEA program, and with possible support from relevant NCPs and the PNLC:
  - o Explore/foster learning forums and studies to further assist PEMSEA CPs in addressing NBSAP updating challenges.
  - o Support assessment and development of standardized monitoring programs or enhancement of existing monitoring programs for biodiversity conservation and fisheries management, while ensuring alignment with R/NSOC and local SOC.

## Priority Program II.C: Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction

Target Outcome	Status
<b>II.C.1.</b> Climate Change National Action Plans (NAPs) incorporate the Country Partner commitments to COP 21 Paris Agreement towards net-zero emissions and the decisions from COP 26 Glasgow Climate Pact and COP 27 Sharm El-Sheikh Implementation Plan in relation to oceans.	
<b>II.C.2.</b> NAPs implementation and reporting, including regional programs with CCA/DRR components.	
<b>II.C.3.</b> National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Plans incorporate the targets in the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction.	

In alignment with the Paris Agreement, Glasgow Climate Pact, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, and the Sharm El-Sheikh Implementation Plan, recent policies, frameworks, strategies and plans on Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) as well as Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) were noted in the EAS countries. Under the PEMSEA framework and projects, significant efforts have been undertaken in support of CCA, including: (a) the inclusion of the development, implementation and tracking of local CCA/DRR plans by ICM sites as one of the priority programs in the PNLG SAP 2022-2023 in support of SDG 13; (b) the establishment of ICM programs under the ATSEA-2 Project in Rote Ndao, Indonesia, and PA Barique, Timor-Leste, incorporating CCA, EbA, and alternative livelihood initiatives to enhance community resilience; (c) Publication of Regional Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) for the Arafura and Timor Seas and endorsement of Guidance Toolkit for Decisionmakers and Facilitators on local CCA under the ATSEA-2 Project; and (d) the launching of PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program, which supported the completion of several studies, such as the “Assessing the Supply Side of Blue Carbon in ICM and other local sites in the EAS Region” and “Harmonizing Blue Carbon Accounting Protocols for Coastal Ecosystems in the EAS Region”. Key discussions on blue carbon were also held during regional dialogues, the EAS Congress 2024, and the Blue Carbon Regional Forum to promote harmonized accounting protocols and policy frameworks. Additionally, the ENMAPS project, recently initiated, aims to enhance the resilience of marine ecosystems through MPA and fisheries management, while the ongoing IRBM Project considers the integration of climate-related risk assessments into the development of State of River Basin and other biophysical, governance and socio-economic assessments in target countries and sites.

Building on these advancements, further efforts are needed to strengthen the integration of CCA and DRR at the local level, particularly within ICM programs, and to enhance monitoring and reporting mechanisms to effectively track progress and assess impacts, as targeted in the SDS-SEA IP.

<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recent climate change-related plans and strategies in EAS countries (some examples, note that more detailed list is provided in Annex 1): Cambodia's Climate Change Strategic Plan 2024-2033; China's National Climate Change Adaptation Strategy to 2035; Japan's revised Plan for Global Warming Prevention; Lao PDR's National Strategy on Climate Change; Philippines' National Adaptation Plan 2023-2050; RO Korea: Third NAP (for 2021–2025); Timor-Leste's First National Adaptation Plan (NAP); Viet Nam's National Adaptation Plan (NAP) for the period 2021-2030, with a vision to 2050.</li> <li>Other recent policy developments in EAS countries related to CCA: Cambodia's Code on Environment and Natural Resources adopted in 2023 through Royal Kram no. 0623/007, which includes Section 6 on climate change; Japan's GX (green transformation) Promotion Act enacted and GX Promotion Strategy adopted in 2023; RO Korea's First Basic Plan for Carbon Neutrality and Green Growth established in 2023; and Timor-Leste's Government Resolution No. 8/2022 National Climate Change Policy approved.</li> <li>In terms of reporting on NDCs, the following submissions were noted: Cambodia report (2020); China's 2024 Biennial Transparency Report (BTR1), and Fourth National Communication on Climate Change (2023) ; Indonesia report (2022); Japan's 8<sup>th</sup> National Communication and 5th Biennial Report (2022); Singapore's 2035 NDC report (2025).</li> <li>On DRR, recent policies, plans and strategies noted in the countries, include: Cambodia's National Action Plan for Disaster Risk Reduction (2024-2028); DPR Korea's National Strategy for Disaster Risk Reduction 2019 – 2030 for implementation in three stages every four years; Japan's revised Basic Disaster Management Plan; Lao PDR's National Strategy on DRR (NSDRR) 2021-2030; Philippines' National DRR and Management Plan 2020-2030; RO Korea's revised National Safety Management Plan; and Viet Nam's National Strategy on Natural Disaster Prevention, Response and Mitigation to 2030, with vision to 2050.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strengthening of convergence between CCA, DRR, and ICM initiatives, particularly at the subnational level, including conduct of consultations to identify priority locations for convergence</li> <li>Establish national platform for assessment utilizing standardized protocols for sampling and analyzing blue carbon stocks and fluxes in other EAS countries that have yet to develop national systems</li> <li>Demonstrate engagement of communities in the conservation and rehabilitation of blue carbon ecosystems.</li> <li>Monitoring and reporting of progress in NAP implementation in connection with Climate Change NAP reporting in the countries</li> </ul>



<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Blue Carbon assessments, guidelines and accounting protocols/ frameworks for measuring and reporting, noted in majority of the EAS countries</li> <li>• PEMSEA Blue Carbon (BC) Program approved by 15<sup>th</sup> EAS PC Meeting in 2024.</li> <li>• Studies completed in line with the BC Program: Assessing the Supply Side of Blue Carbon in ICM and other local sites in the EAS Region, and Harmonizing Blue Carbon Accounting Protocols for Coastal Ecosystems in the EAS Region.</li> <li>• BC Forums conducted by PEMSEA in collaboration with Partners: Blue Carbon Regional Forum (June 2023); Seminar on Blue Carbon Policy, Regulation and Technology (during EASC 2024)</li> <li>• Initiatives from PEMSEA Projects contributing to CCA: ICM integrated with CCA, EbA and alternative livelihoods in Rote Ndao, Indonesia, and PA Barique, Timor-Leste under the ATSEA-2 Project; Publication of Regional Climate Change Vulnerability Assessment (CCVA) for the Arafura and Timor Seas and endorsement of Guidance Toolkit for Decisionmakers and Facilitators on local CCA under the ATSEA-2 Project; integration of climate change hazards in various assessments under the IRBM project; and improving marine ecosystem resilience through management of ecological networks of MPAs and fisheries to be pursued under the newly-launched ENMAPS Project.</li> <li>• Inclusion of the development/implementation of local CCA/ DRR plans by ICM sites as one of the priority programs/targeted actions the Under the PNLG SAP 2022-2030 (covering 54 PNLG local government members) in support of SDG 13.</li> </ul>	

## Insights and Recommendations

While progress has been made at the policy level, demonstration of actual integration of CCA and DRR within ICM remains fragmented, with limited documentation and reporting within PEMSEA. The PNLG and PNLC can serve as integral platforms to strengthen the convergence of CCA and DRR into ICM implementation, monitoring and reporting.

### **Recommendation:**

- Consider organizing knowledge-sharing events on ICM, CCA, DRR convergence as part of PNLG and PNLC forums.

EAS countries have shown strong interest in Blue Carbon (BC) initiatives, including PEMSEA's Blue Carbon program. However, more support will be needed to facilitate and advance the BC roadmap, including the development of harmonized accounting system, enhancing community engagement in BC efforts, as well as promotion of climate-smart policies, legislation, and GESI considerations into comprehensive development plans to help reduce vulnerability and strengthening coastal and marine resilience to climate change.

### **Recommendations:**

- Complementing the PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program, and marine plastics pollution project, consider conducting review on CCA and DRR policies, plans, programs, and monitoring mechanisms can help identify best practices, gaps, and recommendations to enhance policy integration and improve monitoring and evaluation systems. and develop a concept proposal for GCF and other funding considerations.
- Develop case studies and knowledge products on CCA and DRR integration with ICM (and possibly impacts on/ connectivity with marine pollution and biodiversity loss).

## Priority Program II.D: Pollution Reduction, Waste Management, and Water Use Management

Target Outcome	Status
<b>II.D.1.</b> NAPs on Global Programme of Action from Land-based Sources of Pollution (GPA) and NAPs on marine litter/marine plastics lay out actions to combat pollution from land-based sources, including marine plastics in support of SDS-SEA.	
<b>II.D.2.</b> NAPs implementation and reporting.	

PEMSEA Countries continue to advance policies, plans and programs to address marine litter, plastic pollution, waste management and water use management. In terms of marine litter and marine plastics, Ten EAS countries (Cambodia, China, Indonesia, Japan, Lao PDR, Philippines, RO Korea, Singapore, and Viet Nam) have developed specific national policies, strategies and plans specific to marine litter and plastic pollution. In DPRK, information was not available/accessible, while in Timor-Leste a dedicated policy or plan on marine litter has yet to be established, though pollution reduction is integrated in existing environmental policies, including the Zero Plastics Campaign. In terms of water use management, most recent policies were noted in Timor-Leste and Viet Nam.

Key PRF-managed projects have been instrumental in supporting the countries and specific local governments/sites to improve governance, monitoring and reporting, and capacity and awareness building on marine litter/plastics and water use management. The assessments developed by the ASEAN-Norwegian Cooperation Project on Local Capacity Building for Reducing Plastic Pollution (ASEANO) have served as useful reference to other pollution reduction initiatives. The MOF/PEMSEA Marine Plastic Reduction Project with 10 target sites across the Philippines and Timor-Leste, has initiated baseline assessments, plastic waste characterization studies (PACS), Marine Environment Protector (MEP) program, and community engagement initiatives. The GEF/UNDP IRBM Project is assisting 10 target river basin and watershed sites in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Malaysia and Viet Nam in conducting biophysical, socioeconomic, and governance assessments, leading to the development of State of River Basin (SORB) reports. The recently concluded ATSEA-2 Project has enhanced oil spill preparedness and response in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia and Covalima, Timor-Leste through trainings and support in developing Early Warning Systems and Oil Spill Response System and Guidelines. Further, the Strategic Action Plan for Oil Spill Readiness and Response in the Gulf of Thailand (2022-2027) has been adopted, advancing regional cooperation between Cambodia, Thailand, and Viet Nam.

Moving forward, the PEMSEA platform will play a crucial role in consolidating outputs, lessons learned, and best practices from government programs and regional donor-funded initiatives. Strengthening knowledge-sharing, documentation, and dissemination will be essential in enhancing understanding and advancing pollution reduction, waste management, and sustainable water use across the region.

<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NAPs or equivalent plans on marine litter and plastics management in effect in 10 EAS countries: China's Plastic Pollution Control Action Plan (2021-2025); Indonesia NAP on Marine Debris Management (2018); Japan's National Action Plan for Marine Plastic Litter (2019); Lao PDR's National Plastics Action Plan for 2022–2030; Philippines' National Plan of Action for the Prevention, Reduction, and Management of Marine Litter (2021); Singapore's National Action Strategy on Marine Litter (2022); Viet Nam's National Action Plan for Management of Marine Plastic Litter by 2030 (2019).</li> <li>Apart from dedicated plans on marine litter and plastics reduction, several recent policies supporting pollution reduction and waste management were also noted in EAS countries, except DPRK (see Annex 1 for detailed list).</li> <li>Priority areas identified and supported through PEMSEA-managed projects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pollution Reduction/Plastics Reduction: 2 sites under ATSEA-2 Project: East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia and Covalima, Timor-Leste; 2 sites under ASEANO Project: Imus River, Philippines, and Citarum River, Indonesia; and 10 sites under the Marine Plastics Project: Philippines Bulan, Sorsogon; Puerto Princesa City, Calbayog City, Samar; Daanbantay, Cebu; Dipolog City, Zamboanga del Norte; Tandag City, Surigao del Sur; and Timor-Leste: Dili, Manatuto, Liquica, Atauro</li> <li>Integrated River Basin and Watershed Management: 7 sites under the IRBM Project: Kampong Bay, Cambodia; Ciliwung River Basin, Indonesia; Nam Tha River Basin, Lao PDR; Imus-Ylang Ylang River Basin and Pasac-Guagua Watershed, Philippines; Kedah River Basin, Malaysia; and Vu Gia Thua Bon River Basin, Viet Nam</li> </ul> </li> <li>Under the completed ASEANO Project, mapping studies, LGU toolkit, policy best practices handbook, and monitoring tools for plastic management have been completed.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue implementation of target actions as planned, particularly through the relevant PEMSEA projects.</li> <li>Support PEMSEA CPs in documenting, consolidating outputs, and disseminating knowledge from government programs, regional programs with national/ sub-national components and other donor-funded programs.</li> </ul>

<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Under the completed ATSEA-2 Project, the following have been accomplished: Regional Pollution Hotspot Analysis and National Pollution Assessments for Indonesia and Timor-Leste. Pollution Task Force established in East Nusa Tenggara, Indonesia along with the development of an Oil Spill Response System &amp; Guidelines with Early Warning System (EWS). Oil Spill Response Guidelines published and oil spill preparedness trainings conducted in Betanu and Suai, Timor-Leste. ATS SAP 2024-2033 adopted in December 2024 which includes a new focus on marine and coastal plastic pollution and Abandoned, Lost and otherwise Discarded Fishing Gears (ALDFG). DCCEEW of Australia partnered with PEMSEA to fund and support the SAP's ALDFG component from 2024 to July 2026.</li> <li>• Under the ongoing MOF/PEMSEA Marine Plastics Project: Plastics Analysis and Characterization Study (PACS) completed in six sites in the Philippines and ongoing in Timor-Leste. National Baseline Assessment Report completed in the Philippines and ongoing in Timor-Leste. Nine local universities and an NGO have been identified and engaged to conduct quarterly beach monitoring. Development of pilot projects initiated. Marine Plastic Data Center under the SEAKnowledge Bank has been in operation since 2024 to house data collected from quarterly beach monitoring. Marine Environment Protector (MEP) program initiated in 2024 followed by several MEP consultation workshops.</li> <li>• Under the GEF/UNDP IRBM Project: River Basin Coordinating Committees in established in Cambodia, Lao PDR, and the Philippines. Draft State of River Basin (SORB) Reports developed for sites in Cambodia, Lao, and two sites in the Philippines. Regional assessments and guidelines, including the (a) Review of Governance and Management Indicators for SORB Reporting in ASEAN countries, and (b) Guidebook for SORB reporting developed. Various consultations and learning events conducted related to SORB reporting and stakeholder engagement. The Project was also represented in key global events such as the 6th Geo Blue Planet Symposium on Digital Solution (203), 16<sup>th</sup> Regional Action on Climate Change Symposium and 21<sup>st</sup> Annual Meeting of the Science and Technology in Society Forum in Japan (2024), and 10<sup>th</sup> GEF IW Conference.</li> <li>• Strategic Action Plan for Oil Spill Readiness and Response in the Gulf of Thailand 2022-2027 adopted. In line with the Strategic Action Plan, the Guidelines for the use of Chemical Dispersants in Responding to Oil Spills was also finalized in 2024.</li> </ul>	

## Insights and Recommendations

While policies, plans, strategies and legislation continue to be developed in the EAS countries in support of pollution reduction, waste management, and water use management, review/document of the extent of their impacts and best practices remains limited. It would be beneficial to have a regional picture of progress. In the same manner, key results coming from relevant PEMSEA projects are often reported individually.

### **Recommendation:**

- Consider conducting an in-depth regional review of country-led initiatives and results from PEMSEA projects to provide a clearer picture of lessons learned, best practices, and their overall impact on pollution reduction, waste management, and water use management. The regional review can leverage from the different assessments, studies and reports generated from the relevant PEMSEA projects, and may be linked/may feed into the development of the updated RSOC for 2027. This review would help identify strategic actions to further enhance regional efforts and contribute valuable insights and data to evidence-based policymaking and improved program implementation. This could also serve as an opportunity for collaboration with PEMSEA partners and other key stakeholders.





## COMPONENT 3

## HEALTHY PEOPLE

**Goal:** To increase the efficiency and effectiveness of coastal and ocean governance at regional, national and local levels to achieve healthy and resilient marine and coastal ecosystems in priority coastal and marine and watershed areas.

**Target Outcome: 2**

III.1

III.2



**Achieved**



**On track**



**In progress  
(w/ challenges)**



**Delayed**

Component III of the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 was designed to enhance stakeholder participation in the sustainable use and management of coastal, ocean, and water resources, while also improving understanding of the benefits of a healthy ocean for food security, nutrition, and livelihoods. This component focuses on two key outcomes: (1) inclusive stakeholder engagement in SDS-SEA implementation and (2) sustainable livelihood and enterprise development.

Progress in stakeholder engagement has been notable, with the GESI Assessment and Action Plan for the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 serving as a key reference for inclusive participation. Informed by stakeholder consultations, this plan provides a structured approach to ensuring equitable involvement of various stakeholders with emphasis to strengthen engagement of women and other marginalized groups in governance and management efforts. Additionally, the PEMSEA Communications and Knowledge Management Strategy has been developed to further categorize and engage stakeholders. Various PEMSEA-led projects have also incorporated stakeholder assessments and engagement strategies (e.g., ATSEA-2 and IRBM Projects). However, while stakeholder engagement mechanisms are in place, continued implementation and potential updates to these engagement plans will be essential to align with evolving priorities and partnerships under the SDS-SEA IP.

The sustainable livelihood and enterprise development component has primarily been delivered through project-based initiatives, particularly under ATSEA-2, which integrated alternative livelihoods into ICM and EAFM strategies. These initiatives have demonstrated success on income generation and community resilience. However, beyond ATSEA-2 examples, no other reports on livelihood and enterprise development initiatives were noted. Moreover, PEMSEA does not yet have a comprehensive sustainable livelihood strategy, and no standardized coastal sustainable livelihood index has been developed for ICM sites. While documentation and knowledge-sharing on ATSEA-2's livelihood efforts have been widely disseminated, there

remains a gap in scaling and replicating sustainable livelihood programs across other PEMSEA initiatives. In line with Action 10 of the Xiamen Declaration 2024, the updated SDS-SEA IP will also need to consider integration of blue food and health in the ICM framework as pathway to blue economy.

Target Outcome	Status
III.1. Inclusivity and stakeholder/ community engagement in SDS-SEA implementation.	
III.2. Sustainable livelihood and enterprise development built and sustained.	

Key Areas of Progress Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.	Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Informed by a Stakeholder consultations and inputs, the GESI Assessment and Action Plan for the SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 has been developed, serving both as a stakeholder analysis and engagement plan.</li> <li>• The PEMSEA Communications and Knowledge Management Framework and Strategy also categorizes key stakeholders relevant to the SDS-SEA.</li> <li>• PRF-managed projects also carried out/developed specific Stakeholder Assessments and Plans to support gender-responsive and inclusive implementation, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ATSEA-2 Project Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Plan; ATSEA GESI Analysis and Action Plan</li> <li>- IRBM Project Stakeholder Engagement Plan; IRBM GESI Analysis Report; Framework for Mainstreaming GESI in IRBM</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Efforts on sustainable livelihood and enterprise development are primarily linked or undertaken through project-specific initiatives to ensure that they are context specific. Key examples noted are from the ATSEA-2 Project, with the following key achievements: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Targeted skills training and material support were provided to women in fishing communities in Rote Ndao, Indonesia, and PA Barique, Timor-Leste.</li> <li>- In Rote Ndao, four women's groups were engaged and trained on women-led livelihood initiatives on: Seaweed soap production, Massage oil production, Mangrove-based drinks and syrups, and Ready-to-eat seaweed products. Zero-interest loans were also provided by Bank NTT to support the initiatives.</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue implementation of Stakeholder Engagement and Communication Plans (PEMSEA-wide and per project)</li> <li>• Possible updating of Stakeholder Engagement plan needed (for consideration in the identification of potential partners and stakeholders for the updated SDS-SEA IP 2030)</li> <li>• Identification of livelihood management strategies</li> <li>• Development of coastal sustainable livelihood index</li> </ul>

Key Areas of Progress Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.	Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- In Southeast Aru Conservation Area, Indonesia, alternative livelihoods have generated additional income ranging from IDR 2,816,000 – 13,060,000 net/month per group.</li> <li>- In PA Barique, Timor-Leste, diversified livelihoods were introduced through resilient home gardens, agriculture, aquaculture, and livestock rearing. A women's cooperative and center was also established.</li> <li>- Alternative livelihood initiatives under the ATSEA-2 project were well-documented and distributed through various media channels.</li> </ul>	

Insights and Recommendations
<p>While progress has been made in stakeholder engagement and localized livelihood programs, current efforts are limited and remain project-specific. There is a need for a more structured approach or guide(s) to sustainable livelihood development within the SDS-SEA IP framework to further expand efforts under this component and help guide ICM sites or coastal communities. Moreover, the SDS-SEA IP target to develop a coastal sustainable livelihood index for ICM sites is still pending.</p> <p><b>Recommendations:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A number of Sustainable Livelihoods Approach (SLA) guides or handbooks are available and may serve as useful reference for PEMSEA. Key results from the alternative livelihood initiatives under the ATSEA-2 Project may also serve as examples or case studies for other ICM sites or local governments.</li> <li>• Establish a coastal sustainable livelihood index to help improve monitoring and evaluation of livelihood outcomes within ICM implementation. Support from PNLC, PNLG and relevant NCPs may be tapped for this purpose.</li> </ul> <p>The continued implementation and potential updating of stakeholder engagement and communication plans will be necessary to strengthen multi-stakeholder participation and integrate new partners and priority groups into ongoing efforts to strengthen PEMSEA's sustainability and extend the SDS-SEA IP to 2030.</p> <p><b>Recommendation:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This may be considered in the separate assessment to be undertaken related to PEMSEA's organizational effectiveness and capacity.</li> </ul>



## COMPONENT 4

## HEALTHY ECONOMIES

**Goal:** To accelerate blue investments and ensure sustainable and efficient utilization of coastal and ocean ecosystems, and related resources, to support green recovery initiatives that will generate jobs, livelihood and enterprises within ecological limits, towards contributing to sustainable economic development.

**Target Outcome:** 2

IV.1

IV.2



Achieved



On track



In progress  
(w/ challenges)



Delayed

Guided by the Changwon Declaration (2012), which recognized the SDS-SEA as a crucial regional platform and framework for advancing sustainable development and building an ocean-based blue economy in the EAS region, PEMSEA has undertaken foundational assessments on ocean economy sectors, ecosystem services, and investment opportunities. These efforts provided references and key insights on business models, local engagement, and impact investment. Building upon these earlier initiatives, and informed by the Mid-Term Review of the SDS-SEA IP 2018–2022 and the findings of the 2018 National SOC Reports and 2021 Regional SOC (including its supplemental report on COVID-19 impacts), Component IV was designed to re-evaluate and update blue economy strategies. Component IV seeks to promote a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient blue economy that secures food, water, energy, and livelihoods while preserving ocean health. It also aims to integrate insights from key global studies and forums to sharpen its focus. In particular, Component IV targets two outcomes: (1) Resilient economic recovery policies that trigger blue investments and green recovery, and (2) Promotion of Public and Private financing mechanisms.

In support of Outcome 1, the review found that while majority of EAS countries do not have dedicated Blue Economy (BE) policies, there is increasing integration of BE principles and objectives in various national policies, plans and strategies related to green growth, climate, and post-COVID recovery frameworks. PEMSEA CPs have also consistently promoted strengthening of BE synergies in the EAS Ministerial Declarations including in the recent Xiamen Declaration (2024). PEMSEA partners, network members, collaborators and stakeholders have also continued to participate in various PEMSEA knowledge sharing initiatives on Blue Economy (e.g., EAS Congress 2024, 8<sup>th</sup> EAS Ministerial Forum, PNLG Blue Partnership Forum 2023, 4<sup>th</sup> ICMMBT Conference). Progress on nature-based job programs, sustainability upgrades, low

carbon footprint industries, and marine biotechnology and digitalization varies and are mainly country-led, with more advanced economies generally having more established initiatives (especially on marine biotechnology and digitalization). While PEMSEA's initiative focused primarily on Blue Carbon, with complementary BE-related efforts under the different PEMSEA-managed projects (i.e., ATSEA-2, IRBM, ENMAPS, Marine Plastics).

Monitoring and assessing BE implementation and impacts under PEMSEA is mainly conducted through the SOC reporting system. However, apart from the 2021 SOC reports, few updated SOC reports have been produced at local and national levels. Notably, some studies were found applying the Blue Economy Development Index (BEDI or BEI) in assessing BE in some countries. Noting the complementarity of BEDI/BEI and SOC, there is value in considering the integration of BEDI or BEI in subsequent updating of the SOC reports to further strengthen assessment and monitoring of BE performance at country and regional levels.

Regarding Outcome 2 on PPP, the review observed a diverse range of country-led blue investment and PPP initiatives, but noted limited consolidation at the regional level. PEMSEA's Sustainable Blue Financing initiative has largely focused on organizing knowledge-sharing events, with limited on-the-ground documentation of PPP arrangements at ICM sites or structured engagement with PNLG and PNLC networks. The target establishment of a formal recognition system for private sector engagement in blue economy and ICM activities has yet to be achieved. Developing such a mechanism could help incentivize broader business sector participation in sustainable ocean investments as targeted in the current SDS-SEA IP.

Overall, the growing initiatives on BE in the different EAS countries signify continuing movement towards achieving the SDS-SEA objective on establishing healthy economies. However, to fully achieve Component IV objectives, strategic scaling and integration of BE initiatives in PEMSEA planning, particularly in PEMSEA's Sustainable Financing Plan or strategy, is needed. Establishing clearer BE synergies with PNLC and PNLC plans will also promote stronger linkages with ICM initiatives. The groundwork that has been established under Component IV is integral in anchoring future actions to the commitments in the Xiamen Declaration (2024) and leveraging tools like the SOC (including BEDI), ICM, and Blue Carbon Program to ensure that blue economy strategies deliver both economic prosperity and ocean health in an integrated manner.

Target Outcome	Status
IV.1. Resilient economic recovery policies that trigger blue investments and green recovery.	
IV.2. Public and Private financing	

Key Areas of Progress Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.	Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Xiamen Declaration adopted in 2024 included three strategic actions in support of sustainable, inclusive and resilient blue economy: Action 7- Apply Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) and Sustainable Blue Financing Frameworks; Action 8- Refine and update R/NSOCs every 5 years to demonstrate value add of BE; Action 9- Strengthen ICM by incorporating ridge-to-reef framework, climate-smart and inclusive planning approach.</li> <li>• Regional PEMSEA BE initiatives: Blue Carbon Program; BE Forums/Knowledge Sharing Events linked to BE (EASC 2024 Blue Financing and Investment sessions, MF 2024, PNLG Blue Partnership Forum 2023, 4<sup>th</sup> Integrated Coastal Management and Marine Biotechnology Conference); PNLG SAP 2022-2030; ATS SAP 2024-2033 supports BE in the ATS region.</li> <li>• BE-related policies, plans and programs in EAS countries: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A. BE-specific: China's 14<sup>th</sup> Five Year Plan for Ecological and Environmental Protection with BE section; Indonesia's Blue Economy Development Framework, Blue Economy Roadmap, Blue Economy Index, and Blue Finance Accelerator Program; Philippines' Blue Economy Bill currently under bicameral discussions; Timor-Leste's My Sea, My Timor Blue Economy Program and ongoing development of BE Policy and Action Plan; and Viet Nam's Strategy for Sustainable Development of Viet Nam's Ocean Economy by 2030 with Vision towards 2045.</li> <li>B. BE-related/integrated: Cambodia's National Policy and Strategic Plan for Green Growth; Japan's Fourth Master Plan on Ocean Policy; Lao's policies on water resources management; RO Korea's Ocean Korea 21 and Master Plan for Ocean and Fisheries Development; Singapore Green Plan 2030</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measuring emerging sustainable blue economy through instruments such as Blue Economy Development Index</li> <li>• Continue strengthening of GESI integration in BE sectors</li> <li>• Conduct of awareness raising activities and BE Business Forums/ BE investment promotion engaging public and private sector</li> <li>• Development and implementation of Recognition System for the corporate sector/ business community to support ICM and BE investments</li> <li>• Pursue BE partnership opportunities with PNLG and PNLC</li> </ul>



<b>Key Areas of Progress</b> <b>Note: Comprehensive details on updates are provided in Annex 1.</b>	<b>Targets Needing Strategic Reinforcement</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Philippines' 2<sup>nd</sup> SOC Report (ongoing finalization) promotes ocean industries for the 21<sup>st</sup> century and aligned with ESG goals</li> <li>Nature-based job programs and solutions for carbon sequestration noted in the EAS countries; mostly country-led with support from various agencies and donors</li> <li>PEMSEA Blue Carbon Program: Site survey tool developed and applied; Study Assessing the Supply Side of Blue Carbon in ICM and other Local Sites in the EAS Region completed with initial list of potential BE projects identified; Harmonized protocol for blue carbon accounting being developed for the EAS region, with the aim to establish a regional certification system for blue carbon initiatives</li> <li>Marine biotechnology and digitalization initiatives and advancements noted in various countries, with increasing use of cutting-edge technologies, as well as AI, IoT, etc.</li> <li>Blue financing/investment and PPP initiatives in EAS countries (some examples): Cambodia's Investment Support Facility, Master Plan in Maritime Projects; China Bank's Blue Bonds and China's first Gross Ecosystem Product insurance programme; Indonesia's BE financing instruments being developed such as debt-based finance, Sharia financing, debt-for-nature swaps, etc.; Japan's Hakata Blue Bay Carbon Offset Programme; Philippine Guidelines on Eligible Blue Projects and Activities for the issuance of Blue Bonds; RO Korea's Green Marine Fuel Infrastructure Fund; Viet Nam's Law on Public-Private Partnership</li> <li>PEMSEA projects promoting PPP: IRBM project will facilitate pro-active participation of the private sector, the government and the community in the financing, ownership and operation of the pilot projects; ASEAN ENMAPS project will leverage on other regional conservation investments including PPP programs</li> </ul>	

## Insights and Recommendations

Noting the remaining targets or actions under Component IV and the strategic BE actions outlined in the Xiamen Declaration, the following insights and recommendations are proposed:

While several EAS countries have made progress in areas such as nature-based solutions, decarbonization, marine biotechnology and digitalization, there's currently limited documentation of their linkage with ICM, as well as limited consolidation of these initiatives and innovations at the regional level. Similarly, although there's growing interest on BE investments/financing and PPPs across the region, a consolidated and updated regional study on these mechanisms and initiatives is lacking.

### Recommendations:

- Building on previous PEMSEA assessments/studies including the SOC's, consider undertaking an updated in-depth regional studies to consolidate emerging initiatives and innovations in blue economy financing and partnerships in the EAS region. These studies could support the identification of new opportunities and inform the development of blue business models, investment pipelines and collaborative initiatives with PEMSEA Partners and Networks.
- In collaboration with PNLG and CPs, pursue the updating of the local, national and regional SOC's, taking into consideration instruments like the Blue Economy Development Index, as well as GESI framework. Updating of the SOC's will support Action 8 of the Xiamen Declaration to track progress in reducing pollution, GHG emissions and biodiversity loss while strengthening inclusive growth.
- Convene more forums that link BE with ICM implementation to further reinforce ICM as a platform for implementing ridge-to-reef, inclusive and climate-smart planning approaches in line with Action 9 of the Xiamen Declaration. These efforts could build on existing key initiatives such as the PNLG SAP 2022-2030, and the ongoing GEF/UNDP IRBM project, among others.

The varying BE investment/financing initiatives and plans in the countries highlighted the importance of pursuing innovative financial instruments, blended platforms and multistakeholder collaboration to scale up investments. At the same time, several country policies and plans have also emphasized the need to support small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in BE sectors, which often face challenges in accessing capital due to limited financial connections and tailored financial products. The Xiamen Declaration reinforced this by calling for a "systematic review of the pathways, taxonomy and criteria for ocean-based economic activities that contribute to sustainable, inclusive and resilient blue economy".

### Recommendations:

- For PEMSEA, this presents a strategic opportunity to work with relevant partners or collaborators to undertake an updated review of the ocean-based and financing mechanisms in the region. Findings from this review can be considered for consideration in the development of PEMSEA's Sustainable Financing Plan and Strategy for the next five years.

## Insights and Recommendations

These initiatives can provide further guidance or reference to PEMSEA partners and networks in embedding BE objectives into development planning, ICM implementation, and in identifying and developing investment pipelines across the region. Doing so would support the achievement of Action 7 of the Xiamen Declaration, supporting countries in developing or applying sustainable blue financing frameworks.

- One of PEMSEA's key values lie in its strong regional networks and grounded implementation experience particularly on ICM. By leveraging its ongoing projects and initiatives, PEMSEA can support identification and packaging of business models and best practices into knowledge products for other ICM sites. Some areas of opportunities are already available, including: (a) promoting and building on PPP-related initiatives under PRF-managed projects such as the IRBM project; (b) assessing and developing blue-carbon based project pipelines at ICM sites based on the project opportunities identified as part of PEMSEA's Blue Carbon Program; (c) building on initial experience and success from the ICM with alternative livelihood projects established from the ATSEA-2 project.
- Apart from designing more regular BE forums involving public and private sectors, pursue the development of guidance and establishment of a system for the corporate/business sector engagement in ICM and BE investments, in line with the targets of the current SDS-SEA IP.

## **Annex 1: SDS-SEA IP 2023-2027 Progress Towards Target Outcomes**

The detailed report of the SDS-SEA Implementation Plan 2023-2027 can be accessed [here](#).



