

ABOUT ATSEA

The Arafura and Timor Seas (ATS) region is unique in terms of its ecology, geography and socio-political structure. Shared by Australia, Indonesia, Papua New Guinea and Timor-Leste, this fertile corridor of tropical water traverses the North Australian Shelf Large Marine Ecosystem (LME), connecting the Pacific and Indian Oceans with the Coral Triangle. This area provides the peoples of many nations with essential resources, while also stocking the world's oceans with biodiversity.



UNDER THREAT

Much of the marine life in ATS is under threat from a combination of overfishing, loss of habitat and the impacts of climate change. This underlines the urgent need for collective regional action and transboundary management of economically important fish species, critical habitats and marine megafauna.

5 PRIMARY ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS

Through a series of national and regional consultations during the first phase of the ATSEA Programme (ATSEA-1), we have identified five primary environmental concerns:

1. Unsustainable Fisheries
2. Habitat Degradation
3. Marine & Land-based Pollution
4. Loss of Biodiversity
5. Impacts of Climate Change

Urgent action is needed if we are to reverse these destructive trends and ensure the sustainable management of all living and non-living resources in the ATS region.

ATSEA-1

In 2006, the Arafura and Timor Seas Expert Forum (ATSEF) developed and submitted a bid to GEF, which came to be known as the Arafura and Timor Seas Ecosystem Action (ATSEA) Programme. This was approved in 2007. The initial phase of the ATSEA Programme was officially launched in 2010. It created a multinational, intergovernmental forum composed of local leaders, regional government representatives, experts and conservationists, tasked with creating sustainable solutions for problems affecting coastal and marine resources in the region. ATSEA-1 achieved the following results:

- Completion of a Trans-boundary Diagnostic Analysis (TDA)
- Development of a Strategic Action Programme (SAP)
- Implementation of an innovative demonstration project

By creating the initial forum, formulating and implementing a regional SAP and then ensuring intergovernmental adoption, the first phase of ATSEA laid essential groundwork for the project; a foundation on which the second phase is set to build.

ATSEA-2

The second iteration of the ATSEA Programme has been adapted to take regional collaboration and coordination in the ATS region a step further. This will be achieved through the endorsement and implementation of a 10-year vision for the Arafura-Timor Seas, known as the SAP. Combined outcomes expected of the ATSEA Programme are:

- A functioning regional governance mechanism, supported by a stakeholder partnership forum (SPF) and national inter-ministerial committees
- Approximately 125 km of coastline under Integrated Coastal Management (ICM)
- Climate change adaptation, livelihood diversification and improved resilience in local coastal communities
- Up to 25% of over-exploited fisheries in the ATS region returned to a more sustainable level
- Improved scientific knowledge regarding climate change impacts on ATS
- Improved management of red snapper, barramundi and shrimp fisheries
- Support establishment of new Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) and strengthen MPA management effectiveness
- A regional MPA network and action plan for the enhanced protection of marine turtles
- Financial mechanisms in place to support implementation
- Inclusion of oil spill response systems and procedures

GOALS & OBJECTIVE

ATSEA-2 sets out to achieve a variety of aims and objectives in the ATS region, oriented towards the conservation of ecosystem biodiversity and the integrated, sustainable management of resources. These objectives can be divided according to their environmental and governmental scope:

ENVIRONMENTAL OBJECTIVES:

- Support the recovery of sustainable fisheries and restore degraded habitats
- Create healthy and functioning natural ecosystems
- Protect key marine species
- Reduce land-based and marine pollution at source
- Mitigate the effects of climate change through adaptation

GOVERNANCE OBJECTIVES:

- Strengthen ATS regional governance
- Sustain the flow of ecosystem goods and services from the Arafura and Timor Seas
- Support transboundary governance strategies rooted in national development priorities

APPROACH

In order to achieve the conservation and sustainable management of marine/coastal ecosystems in the ATS region, the ATSEA-2 Programme is divided into three main components:

- COMPONENT 1: Regional, National and Local Governance for Large Marine Ecosystem Management
- COMPONENT 2: Improving LME Carrying Capacity to Sustain Provisioning, Regulating and Supporting Ecosystem Services
- COMPONENT 3: Knowledge Management