



## BACKGROUND OF SEAFDEC AND ASEAN



The Southeast Asian Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC) is an intergovernmental agency established in 1967. The members of SEAFDEC include Brunei Darussalam, Cambodia, Philippines, Malaysia, Indonesia, Singapore, Thailand, Myanmar, Lao PDR and Vietnam. Japan is also a member of SEAFDEC and acts as main donor. Its mandate is to promote fisheries development in Southeast Asia, and assist member countries to develop fisheries potential for the improvement of food supply in the region through training, research and dissemination of information.

SEAFDEC has four departments which assist member countries in accordance with their competence. The Training Department (TD) located in Bangkok, Thailand is concerned with fishing and fishing gear technology, and also conducts research on fishing gear. The second department is the Aquaculture Department (AQD) located in Iloilo, the Philippines. This department is concerned with aquaculture development, research, training and information concerning aquaculture. The third department, the Marine Fisheries Research Department (MFRD) is located in Singapore. This department deals with post-harvest technology and processing. The fourth department of SEAFDEC is in Malaysia, i.e., the Marine Fishery Resources Development and Management Department (MFRDMD). This department is concerned with marine resources and marine fisheries development and management in the ASEAN area. The activities of all these four Departments are coordinated and supported by SEAFDEC Secretariat based in Bangkok, Thailand.



Plate 1. SEAFDEC Departments and Secretariat

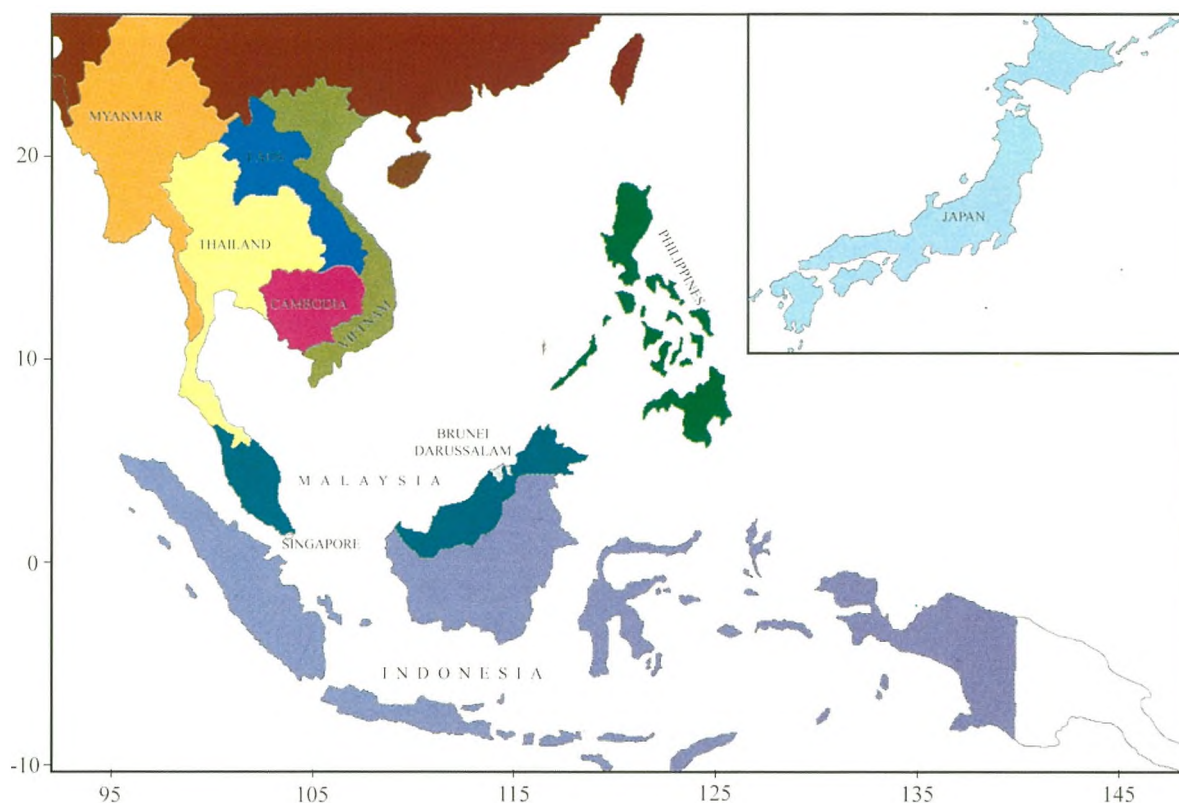


Figure 1. Map of ASEAN/SEAFDEC Member Countries

## ASEAN Sea Turtle Conservation and Enhancement Programs and Collaboration with SEAFDEC

Sea turtles are important marine animals, not only under CITES agreement but also as traditional living resources in the ASEAN region. Most of the ASEAN member countries have established national programs on the conservation and enhancement of sea turtles. However, information on research, conservation and enhancement of these animals in the region is rather fragmented. There is, therefore, a need for a regional approach to coordinate this information and data to provide a clear picture of the status of the programs and activities in the ASEAN region. There is also a need to look at legislative efforts at a regional level to conserve these species.

### Memorandum of Understanding on ASEAN Sea Turtle Conservation and Protection

Countering the pressure by the US embargo on the import of wild shrimps from a number of ASEAN member countries in early 1997 and following the US's accusation that shrimp trawlers of these countries did not use the turtle excluder device (TED), the 19<sup>th</sup> Meeting of the ASEAN Ministers on Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF), held in September 1997 in Bangkok, endorsed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on ASEAN Sea Turtle Conservation and Protection. The objectives of the MoU are to promote the protection, conservation, replenishing and recovery of sea turtles and their habitats based on the best available scientific evidence, taking into account the environment, socio-economic and cultural characteristics of individual ASEAN member countries. The areas of

application of the MoU include the land territories and the maritime areas over which the participating ASEAN countries exercise sovereignty, sovereign rights or jurisdiction in accordance with international law as reflected in the United Nations Convention on Law of the Sea, which was concluded at Montego Bay, Jamaica on 10 December 1982 and came into force on 16 November 1994.

The MoU lays down the definitions of sea turtles as Leatherback turtle (*Dermochelys coriacea*), Green turtle (*Chelonia mydas*), Hawksbill turtle (*Eretmochelys imbricata*), Olive/Pacific Ridley (*Lepidochelys olivacea*), Loggerhead (*Caretta caretta*) and Flatback (*Natator depressus*). Sea turtles habitats refer to all aquatic and terrestrial environment where sea turtles live at any stage of their life-cycle.

Considering its long-term experience and strong efforts on sea turtle conservation, Malaysia has been designated as the Regional Coordinator to lead a Technical Experts Working Group in the implementing of MoU. This group comprises sea turtle and environmental experts from participating ASEAN member countries and reports directly to the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Fisheries (ASWGFi). The Technical Expert Group, at its meeting in December 1997 in Jakarta, prepared an ASEAN Sea Turtle Conservation and Protection program which was approved by Sixth Meeting of ASWGFi in March 1998 in Bandar Seri Bengawan and endorsed by the Senior Officials meeting (SOM) of AMAF and the 20<sup>th</sup> Meeting of AMAF held in September 1998 in Hanoi, Vietnam.

It also stipulated in the MoU that ASEAN member countries recognize the SEAFDEC as the competent technical regional organization on marine issues in the ASEAN region and agree to seek close cooperation and collaboration with SEAFDEC in undertaking its sea turtle conservation and protection program. As a matter of fact, the ASEAN Sea Turtle Conservation and Protection Program and Work Plan mentioned earlier were prepared with full cooperation and contribution of the SEAFDEC's Marine Fishery Resources Development and Management Department (MFRDMD) in Kuala Terengganu, Malaysia.

### ASEAN-SEAFDEC Project on Conservation and Management of Sea Turtles in Southeast Asian Countries

Along with the ASEAN movement, SEAFDEC also started to take its initiative in conservation and management of sea turtles in the Southeast Asian region as a project supported by the Japanese Trust Fund. At the first meeting on 4 March 1999 in Bangkok, the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Fisheries Consultative Group (FCG) agreed on a project of SEAFDEC on "Conservation and Management of Sea Turtles in Southeast Asian Countries". This project proposal was also approved by the 31<sup>st</sup> Meeting of the SEAFDEC Council and the ASWGFi and the SOM-AMAF.

The objectives of the project are (i) to coordinate and compile information on the status of research, conservation and management activities on sea turtles in ASEAN countries and (ii) to establish a mechanism for regional collaboration in research for sea turtle conservation and management.

Through implementation of this project, it was also expected that SEAFDEC would prepare an ASEAN-SEAFDEC publication on the status and results of research and conservation programs on sea turtles in ASEAN and an ASEAN-SEAFDEC network of national institutes involved in research on sea turtles.

The activities to achieve these objectives include the following;

- Nomination of one country coordinator by each ASEAN member country for the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Sea Turtle Research Network;
- Organization of workshops to establish a format for collecting information and data in each ASEAN country;
- Compilation of information into an ASEAN-SEAFDEC publication on sea turtle management and conservation in ASEAN; and
- Formulation of regional projects by ASEAN-SEAFDEC Network Coordinators. The Network will also be a forum for exchange of information on national programs and priorities on sea turtle research.

### Mechanism for Project Implementation

Malaysia and SEAFDEC/MFRDMD will serve as a contact point for the project for ASEAN and SEAFDEC, respectively. Figure 2 shows the implementation mechanism for ASEAN-SEAFDEC project on conservation and management of sea turtles in the Southeast Asian region.

On the SEAFDEC side, SEAFDEC/MFRDMD serves as the SEAFDEC lead department for Japanese Trust Fund project to undertake the following activities in collaboration with SEAFDEC/TD;

- Collect and compile information on national activities on sea turtle research and conservation;
- Participate in workshop/seminars for formulation or regional research programs; and
- Conduct research based on regional projects as proposed under the ASEAN-SEAFDEC Sea Turtle Research Network.

SEAFDEC/MFRDMD and SEAFDEC/TD provide expertise to assist/advise on national/regional programs on sea turtle research and conservation.

In implementing this project, SEAFDEC/MFRDMD, SEAFDEC/TD and Malaysia will jointly report to the ASEAN-SEAFDEC FCG the progress of the project. In ASEAN, Malaysia will report to the ASWGFi and subsequently to the Annual Meeting of the ASEAN Minister of Agriculture and Forestry (AMAF), through SOM-AMAF. In SEAFDEC, SEAFDEC/MFRDMD will report to the SEAFDEC Council through the SEAFDEC Secretariat and seek guidance of the SEAFDEC Council if necessary.

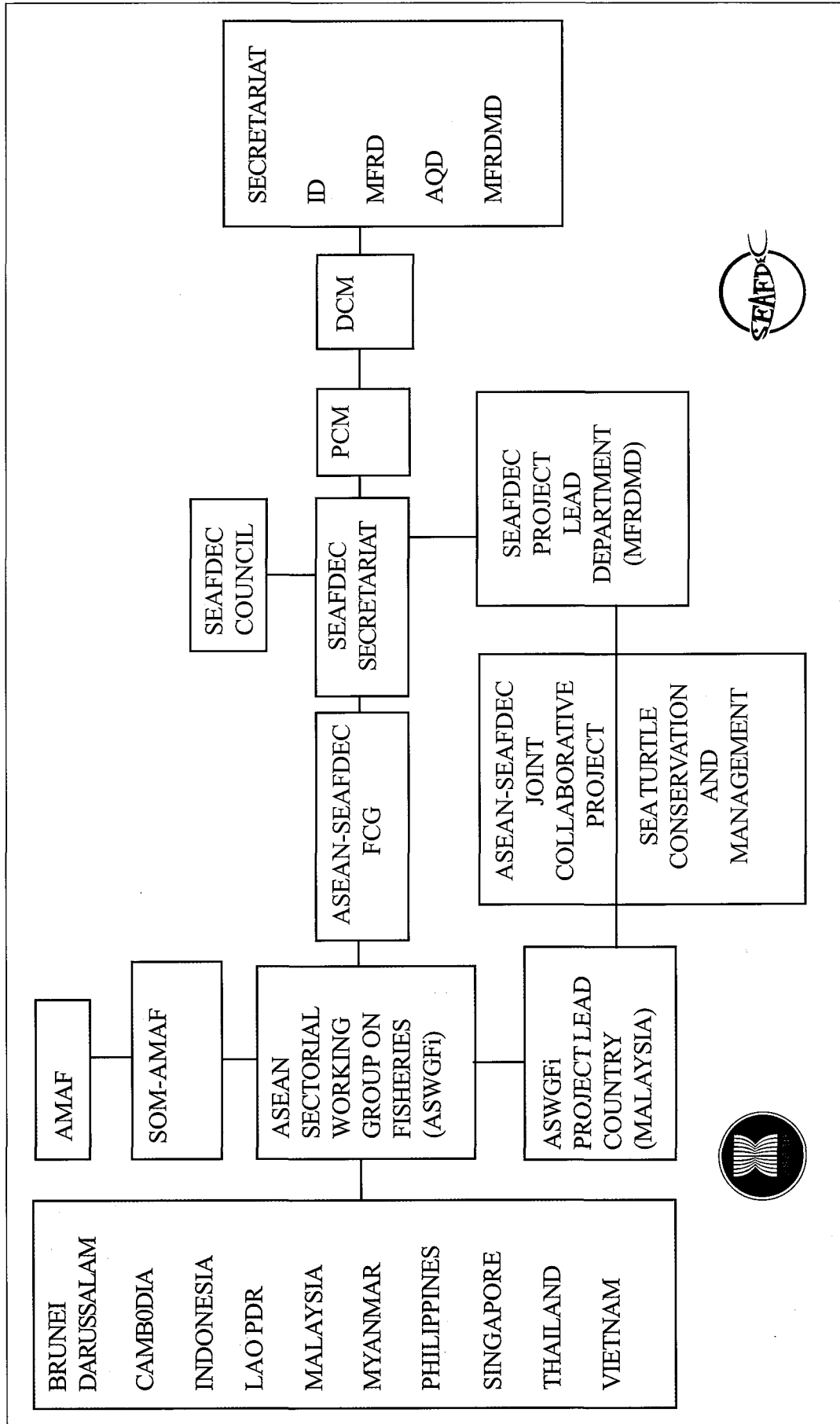


Figure 2. Implementation Mechanism for ASEAN-SEAFDEC Project on Conservation and Management of Sea Turtle in Southeast Asian/ASEAN Countries

