

# Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management

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STRATEGY 2021–2025

## Letter from the Chair

Our oceans are dying. Biodiversity is vanishing. Earth's ability to support human life is faltering. Human activities on land, in freshwater, along the coasts all compound, leaving no marine area unaffected. Impacts of climate change add to the challenge. A holistic perspective from source to sea, coordinating the implementation of the freshwater SDG 6 and the ocean SDG 14 along with the land SDG 15, is a pre-condition for healthy land-freshwater-marine ecosystems, and hence for a sustainable future.

Yet these communities live separate lives, siloed, and remain uncoordinated and fragmented. In a world faced by climate change, and serious and recurrent crises and pandemics, we must understand each other and act together.

The Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management (S2S Platform) was formed in 2014, at the initiative of a core group of committed partners. Over the years we have successfully influenced policy dialogues as well as operational and financing strategies to better reflect the need for source-to-sea action, while raising awareness and political attention to source-to-sea issues. In the process we have brought the freshwater and ocean communities together at major occasions, and supported policy makers and practitioners through the development and dissemination of knowledge materials, policy briefs and practical tools.

At the end of the current 2017–2020 Strategy period our Platform can demonstrate notable achievements, but there is still a long way to go. With this document we launch our Strategy 2021–2025 to achieve our vision: “A world in which land, freshwater, coastal and marine resources are managed holistically, balancing benefits for the environment, communities and economy from source to sea”. We do so with focus on key strategic aims and clear ambitions for where we want to be by 2025.

This is a Strategy by our partners! We have developed it in close dialogue between partners and our active Steering Committee members, strongly supported by our dedicated and active Platform secretariat at SIWI. Financial support by the Swedish government and UNDP has made it possible.

I wish to express a warm thanks to all for this effort. I feel confident that this Strategy will guide us towards joint efforts and concrete results; together we will have a sustainable future, from source to sea.



Torkil Jønch Clausen  
Chair, Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management

# Addressing development challenges from source-to-sea

Applying a source-to-sea perspective in addressing the world's growing development challenges increases the opportunity for truly sustainable change. The source-to-sea approach builds upon existing management frameworks but broadens their scope beyond traditional, independent management of land, river basins, coasts and the ocean, to acknowledge their interconnections and break through silos to work across sectors and administrative boundaries. Reaching across these silos to build concerted action is urgently needed as many development challenges are source to sea in nature.

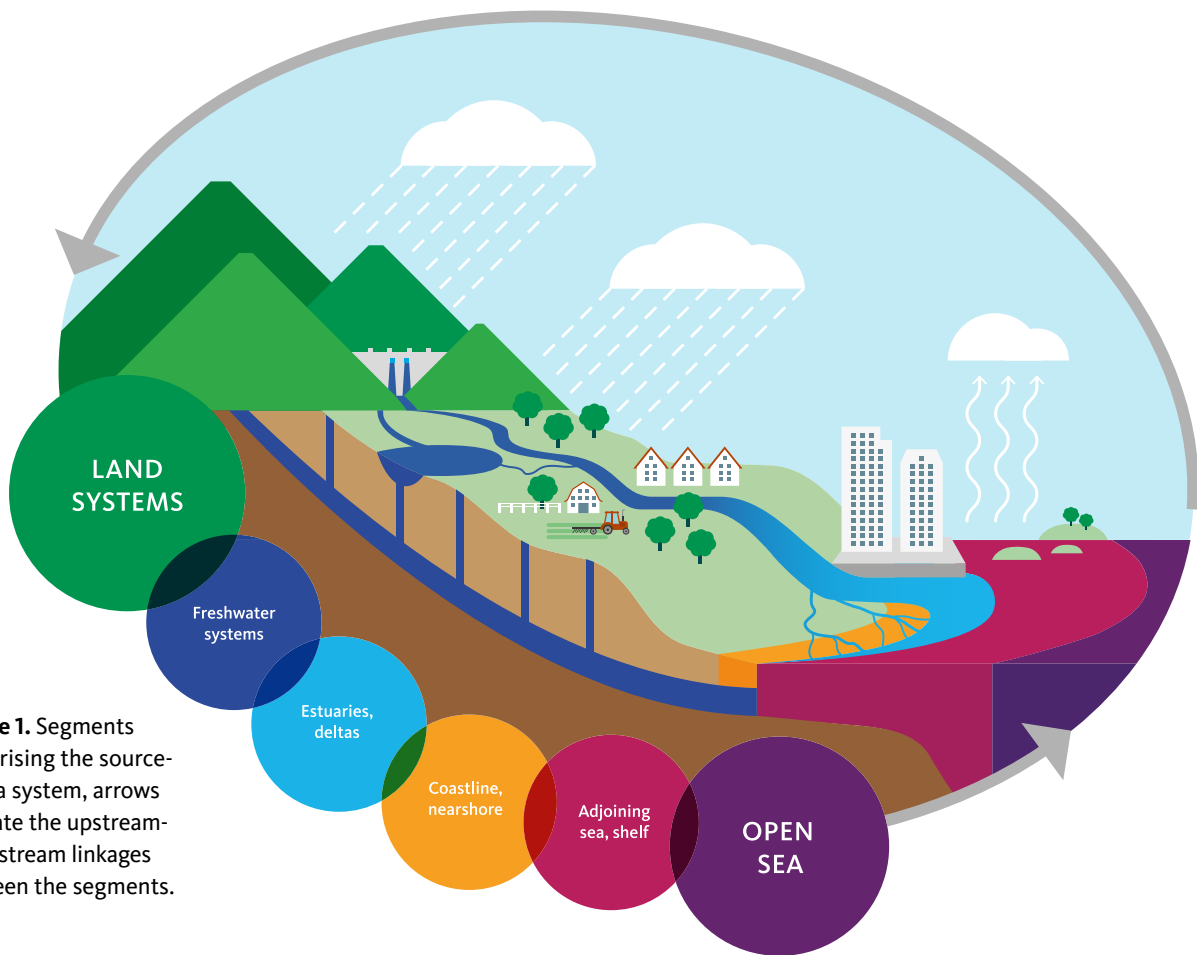
Fragmentation of management and governance structures – often based on a limited understanding of linked ecosystems and the interdependence of social and ecological systems – has been further highlighted as a major stumbling block for effective responses to climate related risks by the [2019 IPCC Special Report on the Ocean and Cryosphere](#).

The absence of a cohesive approach to achieving the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda) and lack of political commitment to work together on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in a coherent manner is stalling our progress. By applying a source-to-sea approach, we can increase focus on the interdependencies between the SDGs and bring attention to their interlinkages, in general across the SDG agenda, and in particular between SDG 6 on water, SDG 14 on ocean and SDG 15 on terrestrial ecosystems.

If development challenges are not tackled holistically, tradeoffs between upstream and downstream stakeholders and across sectors will not be adequately addressed. Source-to-sea management allows for open dialogues to be held, linking across geographies and sectors, improving the success of policies, planning and investments. Source-to-sea systems are often transboundary in nature further demanding inclusion of a range of perspectives. Addressing development challenges posed by climate change, losses in biodiversity and global crises such as the Covid-19 pandemic need targeted action. Source-to-sea engagement allows for much needed prioritization and leads to innovative solutions.







**Figure 1.** Segments comprising the source-to-sea system, arrows indicate the upstream-downstream linkages between the segments.

## OUR ACHIEVEMENTS



The [Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management \(S2S Platform\)](#) is a network of organizations committed to promoting, implementing and building expertise on source-to-sea management – bridging knowledge, policy and practice. Through individual and joint activities, the S2S Platform demonstrates the value of addressing persistent and rising issues such as climate risk adaptation and mitigation, declining biodiversity and marine pollution – from source to sea.

Since its formation in 2014, the S2S Platform has successfully highlighted the importance of a systems approach to ecosystem management through the development of the source-to-sea conceptual framework, analyzing the linkages between SDG 6 and 14, and developing key guidance for implementers through [Implementing the Source-to-Sea Approach: A Guide for Practitioners](#) and its application in [Source-to-Sea Framework for Marine Litter Prevention: Preventing Plastic Leakage in River Basins](#). The Platform has also seen increasing recognition of the need for a source-to-sea approach in key international processes, financing and operational strategies. The S2S Platform has grown into a network of more than 25 committed partners from around the world and across sectors.

The greatest strength of the S2S Platform continues to be the diversity and conviction of the partner network.

# The source-to-sea approach

The underlying principles of the source-to-sea approach allow it to be an effective solution to addressing the complexities of development challenges. The approach is:

**HOLISTIC** | addressing upstream and downstream linkages across issues, stakeholders, desired outcomes, costs and benefits.

**COLLABORATIVE** | building upon existing institutions, established methods and ongoing processes.

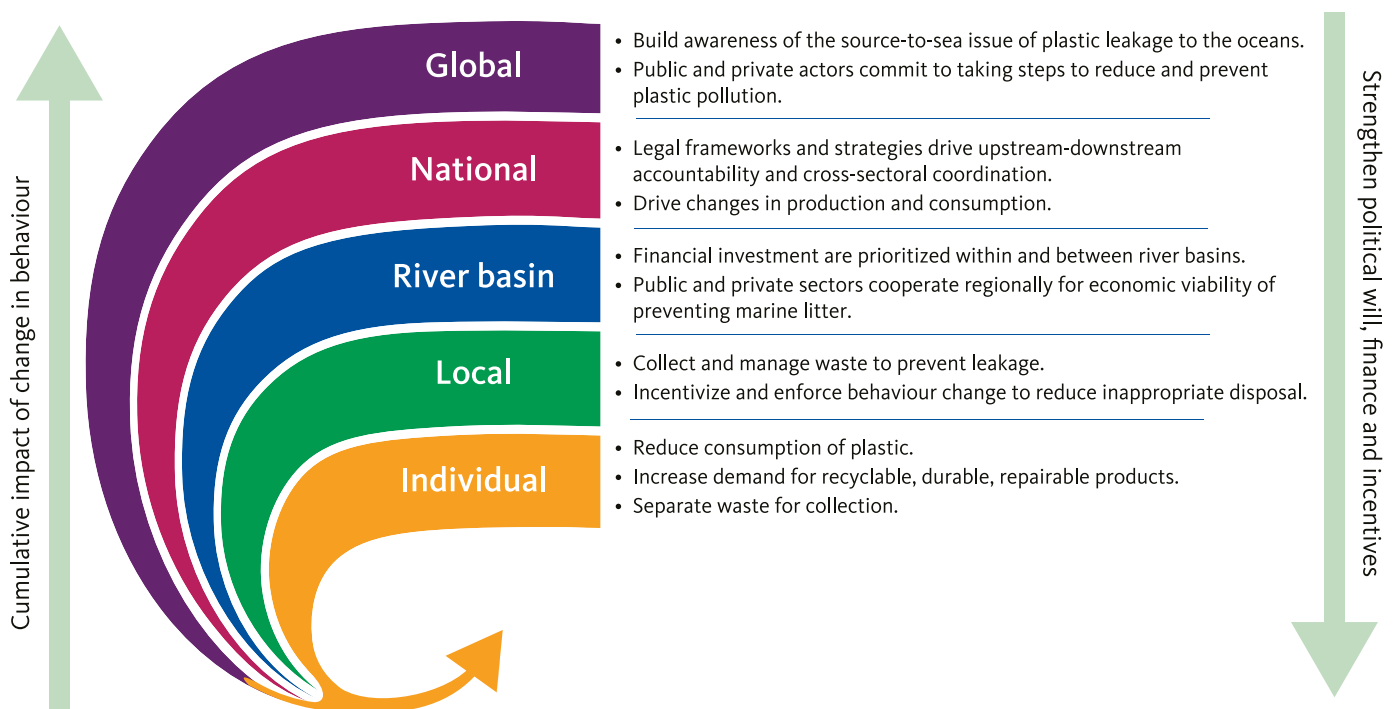
**PRIORITIZING** | targeting and addressing the issues that hold the greatest potential for generating positive impacts for the system.

**PARTICIPATORY** | engaging upstream and downstream stakeholders from different sectors and raising awareness about the impact of human activities.

**CONTEXT DEPENDENT** | derived from, and responsive to, the local context.

**RESULT ORIENTED** | targeting intermediate outcomes that contribute to overall improved economic, social and environmental status.

**ADAPTIVE** | learning-by-doing through pragmatic implementation, monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management.



**Figure 2.** Applying the source-to-sea approach identifies solutions to marine litter.



Photo: Max Gudczinski, GEF-UNDP/UNEP-IOC UNESCO IW:LEARN

## How we work

Collectively the S2S Platform partners deliver the aims of our shared strategy. These activities may be undertaken individually or collaboratively. By working together as the S2S Platform, the impact of these activities is far greater than what would have been achieved in isolation.

A Steering Committee elected from among the partners guides the direction of the S2S Platform, identifying annual priorities and taking leading roles in promoting the source-to-sea approach by engaging their networks.

The activities of the S2S Platform are supported by a secretariat, hosted by the Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI). The secretariat helps to maintain a vibrant community of committed source-to-sea advocates through facilitating partner engagement activities and supporting collaborative activities.

The Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management Strategy 2021–2025 (Strategy 2021–2025) focuses the activities of the Platform partners on four strategic areas needed to achieve the Platform’s mission and make progress toward its shared vision.



# A new strategic direction

With this strategy, we set our sights on advancing the implementation of the source-to-sea approach and application of source-to-sea perspectives to achieve the ambitions of the 2030 Agenda by influencing policy makers, assisting practitioners and growing understanding on the needs for and benefits of source-to-sea action.

Strategy 2021–2025 guides and engages all S2S Platform partners towards action that will achieve our shared vision. We must continue to leverage the voice of our partners to keep source-to-sea action on the agenda of important international, regional and transboundary processes. We will rely on partners grounded in research, implementation and monitoring to strengthen the evidence-base and build the demand for source-to-sea action by demonstrating how a source-to-sea approach is needed to address persistent and rising issues such as climate change, marine pollution, and biodiversity decline as well as an essential tool for a blue-green post-pandemic recovery. We will ensure that capacity is built and that local practitioners have the required resources to plan and act holistically. Finally, we must continue to connect as a global network of partners to share our learnings and expertise with each other and beyond to grow the source-to-sea community.

As we build on our success of raising awareness among influential stakeholders and shift towards a greater focus on implementation, we seek to engage a new set of actors. We aim to increase our connections with land-based and marine audiences as well as strengthen engagement among actors who can contribute to local adoption, such as the private sector and civil society.

*Influencing policy makers, assisting practitioners and growing understanding on the needs for and benefits of source-to-sea action.*

## DEVELOPING STRATEGY 2021–2025

This strategy builds upon Strategy 2017–2020 as well as key messages collectively developed in various S2S Platform publications. Input to the strategy has been collected through online surveys, individual consultations, discussions with the Steering Committee and a dedicated dialogue during the 2020 Partners Meeting.

The strategy was developed during the global covid-19 pandemic and the call for a green-blue recovery from the impacts of the pandemic. The climate emergency, alarming levels of biodiversity loss, the spectre of marine litter were all high on the global agenda. These issues were added to persistent source-to-sea challenges such as changes in water flows, nutrient pollution, high levels of sediment erosion or sediment starvation, habitat degradation and the overall loss of ecosystem services. This has influenced our selection of strategic aims and the activities we commit to.

The strategy text was shared for review with partners and formally adopted by the Steering Committee on 10 December 2020.



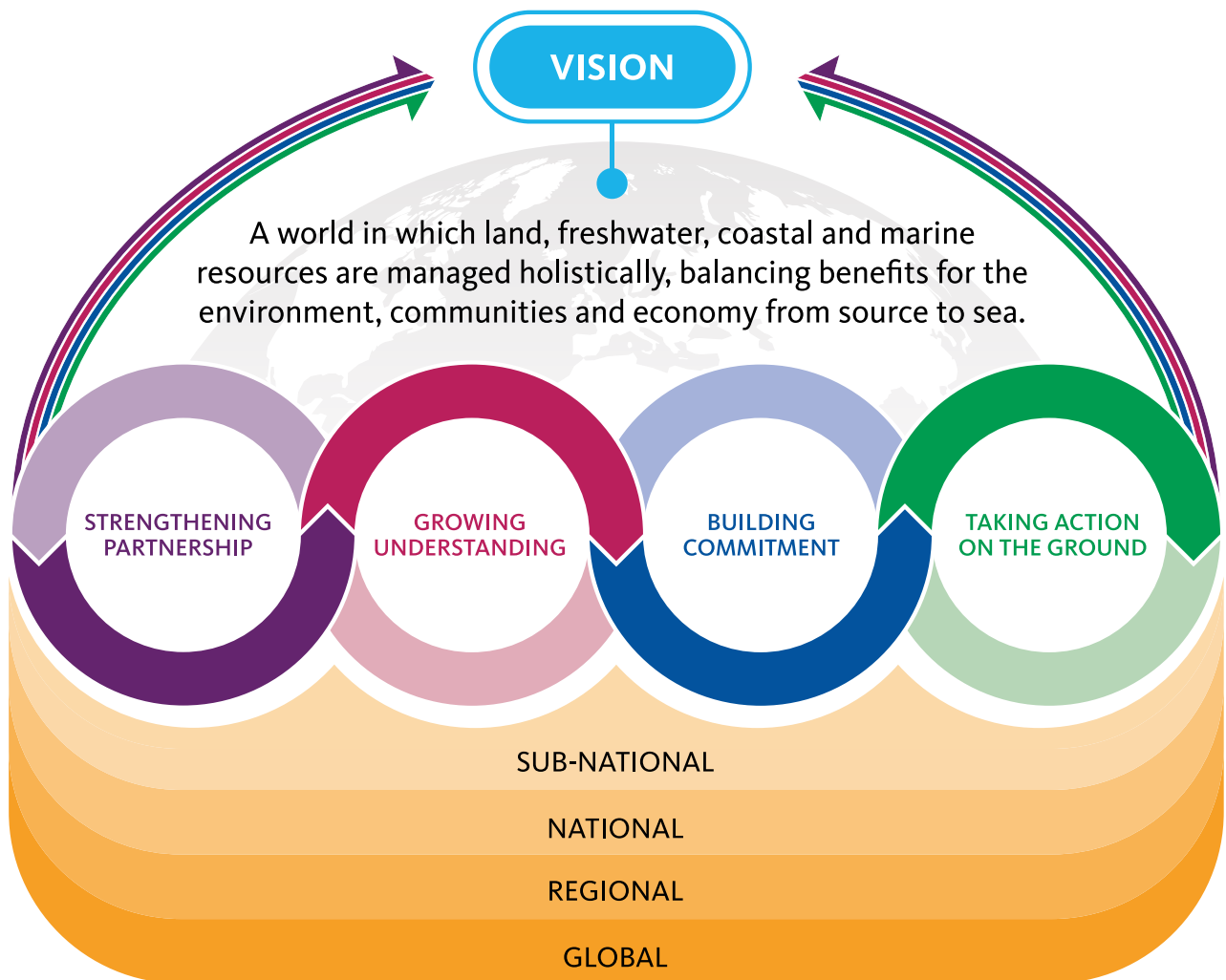
Photo: Ruth Mathews

# Vision

A world in which land, freshwater, coastal and marine resources are managed holistically, balancing benefits for the environment, communities and economy from source to sea.

# Mission

The mission of the Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management is to enable sustainable development across the land-freshwater-marine continuum through supporting the adoption and implementation of a source-to-sea approach to management at regional, national, and sub-national levels.



**Figure 3.** Theory of change in which activities contributing to the Strategic Aims undertaken at the global to sub-national levels will lead to achieving our Vision.



# Strategic aims

## **STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP ACROSS ACTORS AND INITIATIVES:**

Through individual and joint activities, we will engage our extensive networks and connect with relevant initiatives promoting source-to-sea policies and practice; thereby building understanding, commitment and action to address source-to-sea issues.

**GROWING UNDERSTANDING:** We will substantiate the need for and benefits of the source-to-sea approach and increase the understanding of source-to-sea linkages by gathering and sharing knowledge, building an evidence-base gained through research, and developing guidance on addressing source-to-sea challenges.

**BUILDING COMMITMENT FOR SOURCE-TO-SEA ACTION:** We will inform and influence global, regional and transboundary agenda setting and the priorities of governments, financiers, private sector and civil society to effectively address source-to-sea issues in policy and practice.

**TAKING ACTION ON THE GROUND:** We stimulate source-to-sea action by raising awareness from grassroots to national levels, building local and regional capacity and demonstrating its benefits in addressing development challenges through practical application.



By 2025

## Our goals for 2025

- The S2S Platform will have active, engaged partners representing the diversity of actors needed to fulfil our vision.
- The S2S Platform establishes a global source-to-sea knowledge hub.
- Source-to-sea perspectives hold a permanent place in the global agenda as a solution to rising and persistent development challenges.
- Expertise is built and source-to-sea management is applied in six continents.

ACHIEVING OUR VISION THROUGH FOUR STRATEGIC AIMS

## STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIP ACROSS ACTORS AND INITIATIVES

**We recognize that achieving our vision relies on using our collective and individual strengths. We commit to working together as a Platform to forge new knowledge, expand our influence and increase source-to-sea action. We as partners will work together to strengthen partnership by:**

- Building a stronger and united S2S Platform through regular engagement activities that increase connectivity, collaboration and knowledge sharing among partners and our extended community.
- Attracting strategic partners and supporters from across the source-to-sea continuum with increasing engagement from land-based and marine actors as well as actors who can support local implementation such as the private sector and civil society.
- Growing a vibrant source-to-sea community that expands source-to-sea action by leveraging our collective resources, networks and expertise.
- Securing a stable source of funding for the S2S Platform Secretariat and its activities.



Photo: Ruth Mathews



Photo: Minh Hai

By 2025

**The S2S Platform has active, engaged partners representing the diversity of actors needed to fulfil our vision. This is supported by:**

- Participation in the S2S Platform has expanded to include a diversity of sectors and regions, transboundary organizations and actors along the land-freshwater-marine continuum.
- Partners take an active, catalytic role in delivering the four Strategic Aims, realizing and contributing to greater progress than would have been possible as individual organizations.
- Partners connect regularly through S2S Platform partner engagement activities.
- Partners regularly share source-to-sea news to be disseminated by the Platform and disseminate Platform news through their own communications networks.
- Multi-year funding for the S2S Platform Secretariat and its activities is secured.

## ACHIEVING OUR VISION THROUGH FOUR STRATEGIC AIMS

## GROWING UNDERSTANDING

**We recognize that source-to-sea action starts with understanding the benefits of addressing development challenges from source to sea, building a strong knowledge base of its merits and challenges, and identifying barriers to implementation as well as the means to overcome them. We as partners will work together to grow understanding by:**

- Developing knowledge resources that help overcome barriers to source-to-sea management and guide implementation of the source-to-sea approach in a variety of contexts and development challenges.
- Building the case and evidence-base for a source-to-sea approach as a necessary and credible response to rising and persistent development priorities at regional, national and sub-national levels by collecting and analyzing cases, research, data and lessons learned from implementation in different contexts, as well as strengthening the understanding of trade-offs when linking across the land-freshwater-marine continuum.



Photos from left to right: Minh Hai, Ruth Mathews and Georgette Mrakadeh-Keane

**By 2025**

**The S2S Platform establishes a global source-to-sea knowledge hub. This is supported by:**

- The Platform has a rich catalogue of case studies, data and experiences from partner led initiatives, demonstrating applicability of the approach under a variety of circumstances, including the means to overcome barriers to implementation.
- The Platform has produced reports and policy products demonstrating applicability of a source-to-sea approach in addressing persistent and rising issues, including the climate crisis and post-pandemic recovery.



ACHIEVING OUR VISION THROUGH FOUR STRATEGIC AIMS

## BUILDING COMMITMENT FOR SOURCE-TO-SEA ACTION

**We recognize that getting more source-to-sea action on the ground requires commitments from governments, financiers, private sector and civil society to address development challenges from source to sea. We as partners will build commitment by:**

- Supporting regional cooperation between freshwater and marine actors to address the transboundary nature of source-to-sea systems.
- Ensuring source-to-sea perspectives are well featured and advocated for in relation to key issues such as achieving the 2030 Sustainable Development Agenda, delivering on the Paris Agreement and the post-pandemic recovery through our active participation in prominent global, regional and transboundary policy processes.
- Engaging high-level and influential spokespersons to ensure that source-to-sea perspectives are championed and well considered in global, regional and transboundary processes.
- Raising awareness of the benefits of source-to-sea action, and its required enabling environment through dialogue with national and sub-national actors to encourage its uptake in policy and practice.
- Working with financiers, such as development banks, to incentivize financial mechanisms and investment tools that guide the consideration of upstream-downstream linkages and the viewpoints of stakeholders along the land-freshwater-marine continuum.



**Source-to-sea perspectives hold a permanent place in the global agenda as a solution to rising and persistent development challenges. This is supported by:**

- Source-to-sea, upstream-downstream linkages and/or the land-freshwater-marine continuum are considered and referenced within key global, regional or transboundary agenda setting processes.
- National level processes reflect the need for a source-to-sea approach to address current and future development challenges such as climate risk mitigation and adaptation, including mainstreaming in NDCs and NAPs.
- Key donors or financing institutions address the need for source-to-sea management in strategies and lending criteria.

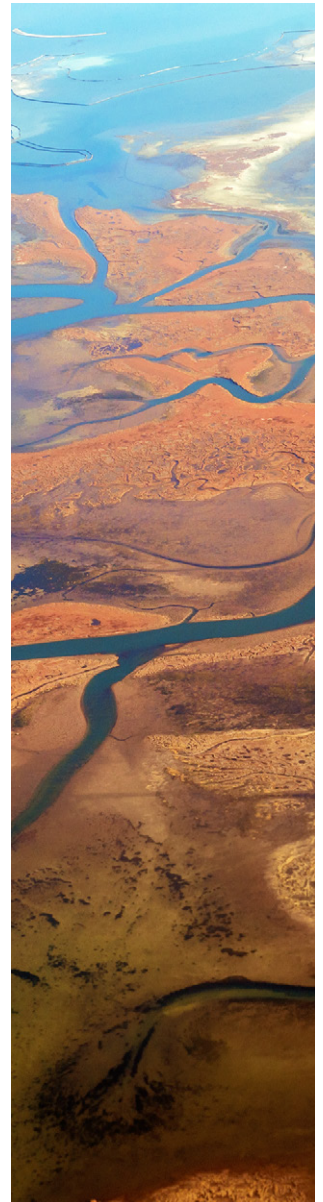


Photo: Georgette Mrakadeh-Keane

ACHIEVING OUR VISION THROUGH FOUR STRATEGIC AIMS

## TAKING ACTION ON THE GROUND

**We recognize that getting source-to-sea action on the ground relies upon increasing demand from grassroots to national levels, building local capacity through providing training, tools and guidance and demonstrating benefits in addressing development challenges from source to sea. As partners we will support action on the ground by:**

- Raising awareness of the benefits of source-to-sea management in addressing the trade-offs that can arise from upstream-downstream linkages, contributing to an increase in demand from grassroots to national levels for taking a source-to-sea approach to addressing local priorities.
- Building local capacity among public, private and civil society actors to address upstream-downstream linkages and facilitating cross-sectoral coordination.
- Increasing local and regional expertise in implementing the source-to-sea approach through interactive workshops and other training modalities, enlarging the overall number of source-to-sea practitioners.
- Demonstrating the benefits of the source-to-sea approach to management by applying it in response to local priorities in a variety of contexts.



Photo: Javier Acevedo Garcia



**Expertise is built and source-to-sea management is applied in six continents. This is supported by:**

- Local and regional capacity is built through capacity development activities, contributing to an increased awareness among upstream and downstream stakeholders about the benefits of a source-to-sea approach, building implementation demand from the grassroots to national levels and ensuring that expertise is readily available to drive implementation.
- Knowledge resources are developed to support the adoption of the source-to-sea approach at regional, national and sub-national levels.
- A strong case for source-to-sea approaches to management has been made through projects conducted in different regions and addressing a range of source-to-sea issues.



Photo: Georgette Mrakadeh-Keane





Photo: Secretariat of the Pacific Community | Graphic Design: Marianne Engblom | Illustrations p. 4 and 8: Emy Welin | If not stated differently, photos are credited Shutterstock or iStock.



# S2S PLATFORM PARTNERS 2020



The Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management gratefully acknowledges support from the Government of Sweden and UNDP.

## **About the Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management**

The Action Platform for Source-to-Sea Management (S2S Platform) was launched in 2014 as a multi-stakeholder initiative to exchange and generate knowledge, and support joint action for improved management of land, water, coastal and marine linkages. The S2S Platform has been successful in developing a shared knowledge base and in securing adoption of the source-to-sea approach in policies, strategies and funding mechanisms. Membership is open to all stakeholders that are committed to improving coherence and coordination in land, water, coastal and marine management.

The S2S Platform Secretariat is hosted and coordinated by Stockholm International Water Institute (SIWI). For more information about the S2S Platform, visit [www.siw.org/source-to-sea](http://www.siw.org/source-to-sea).