

From Community-based Management to Co-management Thailand's Experience

by Yves Henocque and Sanchai Tandavanitj

Introduction

Fish for the People recently presented an overview of the current status of decentralization and rights-based fisheries management in ASEAN-SEAFDEC Members Countries, under the framework of the recommendations adopted at the Millennium Conference (Volume 1, Issue 2). In the article, key questions were raised about fisheries policies and decentralization. Thailand has been particularly active in developing its decentralization policy, promoting governance at both provincial and local levels. Different processes and tools are being tried out through a number of national projects, such as the CHARM Project under the coordination of the Department of Fisheries.

This article describes the structure of this project, and discusses its achievements to date. The article contributes to the debate on decentralization in the

region, and on the innovative management of coastal habitats and resources.

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Background

The Thai maritime area covers over 378,000 km², including territorial waters extending 12 nautical miles from the coast, and the Thai EEZ. The Gulf of Thailand comprises two-thirds of the area (252,000 km²), and the Andaman Sea (126,000 km²) the rest. Thailand's total coastline is 2,614 km in length, with 1,660 km on the Gulf of Thailand and 954 km on the Andaman Sea.

Management of Habitats and Coastal Resources –



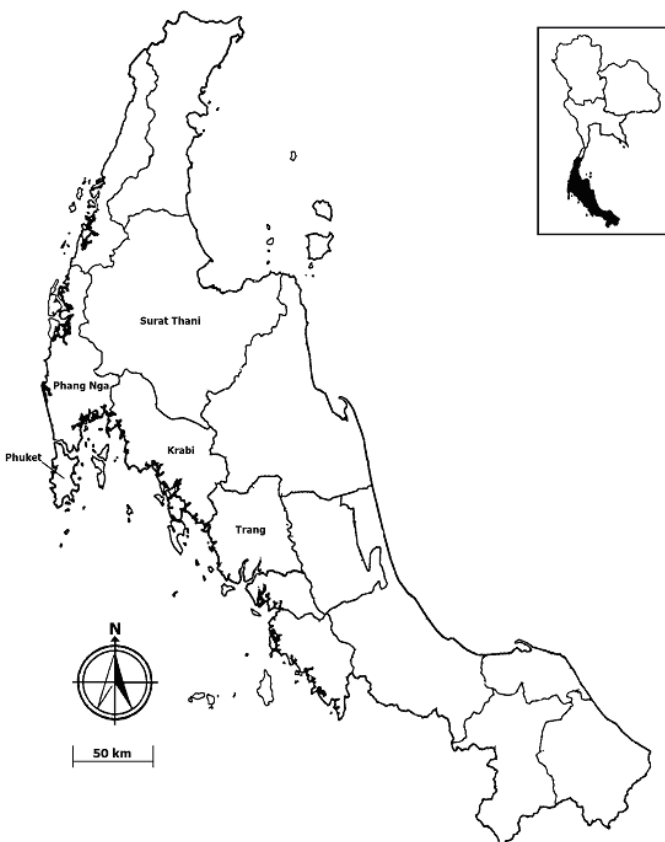
The use of coastal habitats and resources by the capture fisheries, aquaculture and tourism sectors contributed significantly to the rapid economic growth that took place in Thailand during the 1980s and early 1990s. But activities in these sectors are carried out in a context of largely unrestricted access to habitats and resources, frequent evasion of regulatory supervision and enforcement, and an extensive but non-integrated legislative framework that hampers effective management. Social conflicts over resource use have intensified, and Thailand's coastal resources are over-exploited, with coastal habitats now being rapidly degraded. Urgent action is needed to support and encourage environmentally sustainable coastal resource use and habitat conservation.

This situation was discussed at the European Commission (EC) – Thai Senior Officer Meeting (SOM) held in Bangkok in July 1998. Following the meeting, a concept paper was developed for a project to address coastal habitats and resources management (hence CHARM) in Thailand. This was subsequently accepted by Thailand's Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), and submitted to the EC in February 1999. After a preparatory mission in summer 1999 to explore in detail the complex issues and problems to be addressed by the project, a Financing Agreement between the EC and Thailand was signed successively in Brussels on 15 January 2001 and in Bangkok on 18 October 2001. The Department of Fisheries, under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MOAC), is the executing agency of the project.

The project

CHARM is a five-year project (2002-2007) that aims to promote a co-management approach among the Royal Thai Government, the private sector and local communities at national, provincial and local levels. Institutional arrangements and technical operations for co-management are being tested and established in two project areas.

These two project areas, Ban Don Bay in the Gulf of Thailand, and Phang Nga Bay in the Andaman Sea, are located in the Upper South Region of Thailand. They comprise Surat Thani province on the Gulf of Thailand coast, and the provinces of Phuket, Phang Nga, Krabi and Trang on the Andaman Sea coast. The former includes four districts (*amphoe*) and 26 sub-districts (*tambon*); the latter comprises 12 districts and 73 sub-districts. In all, 356 coastal villages, including 24 island villages, are covered by the project, with an estimated coastal population of about 300,000.



Southern Thailand, showing project provinces

In both areas, overlapping responsibilities and conflicting jurisdiction over coastal resources among key government agencies are major issues to be resolved in any attempt to improve inter-institution coordination.

CHARM objectives

By 2008, it is expected that:

- at least 300 km of Thailand's 2,614 km coastline in 30 of 99 coastal sub-districts in the two project areas will have coastal habitats and resources with stable or improving conditions
- 30 tambon administrative organizations (TAOs) in the two project areas will be engaged in a sustainable process of co-management of their coastal resources, and
- at least 30 sub-districts in all five coastal provinces will be using integrated coastal resource management (ICRM) in the development of major coastal activities, namely agriculture, aquaculture, fisheries and tourism.

Stakeholders

The project addresses both primary and secondary stakeholders. Coastal communities are considered as primary stakeholder groups, and first beneficiaries in co-management arrangements. Secondary stakeholders (intermediate beneficiaries) include central, provincial and local government on the one side, and NGOs, academic institutions, private sector groups and investors on the other.

Coastal communities are considered as complex arrangements of people with kinship, political, economic, religious or social ties to one another and other communities. Ties among community members are often generational and deeply entrenched. In the CHARM Project, a community will generally be represented at the level of the village, although other community arrangements at a larger scale can be considered, such as those between villages involved in the exploitation and management of the same commons.

Approach and phasing

Some community-based coastal resources management (CBCRM) or locally-based coastal resources management (LBCRM) projects have previously been initiated in the two pilot areas or elsewhere along the Thai coastline, but these have remained essentially at the village or sub-district levels. CHARM builds on these experiences, enlarging their scope to include provincial, regional (bay-wide) and national levels in order to involve all concerned stakeholders, from local communities to the central government.

“CHARM builds on these [existing local] experiences, enlarging their scope to include provincial, regional and national levels in order to involve all concerned stakeholders”

A goal as ambitious as this means that CHARM has had to develop a strategy to strengthen institutional capacity for coordinated planning, management, and information transfer in the central government with the advisory activities of the Project Management Unit (PMU) in the Department of Fisheries. It has also had to promote measures to improve vertical integration through linkage between Field Management Offices (FMOs) in Krabi and Surat Thani, and counterpart organizations.

CHARM's organizational structure tackles this bottom up/top down strategy as follows. From a bottom-up perspective, co-management serves as a participatory and flexible management process that provides and maintains a structure for action on rule making, conflict management, leadership, decision-making, and learning among fishers, government and other stakeholders. At the national level, on the other hand, co-management could represent the core of a



larger process of ICRM. Both are underpinned by the CHARM's key attributes – participation, partnerships, integrated approaches and methods, learning and adaptation, and building capacity.

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These key attributes of the CHARM co-management approach emphasize the five project components:

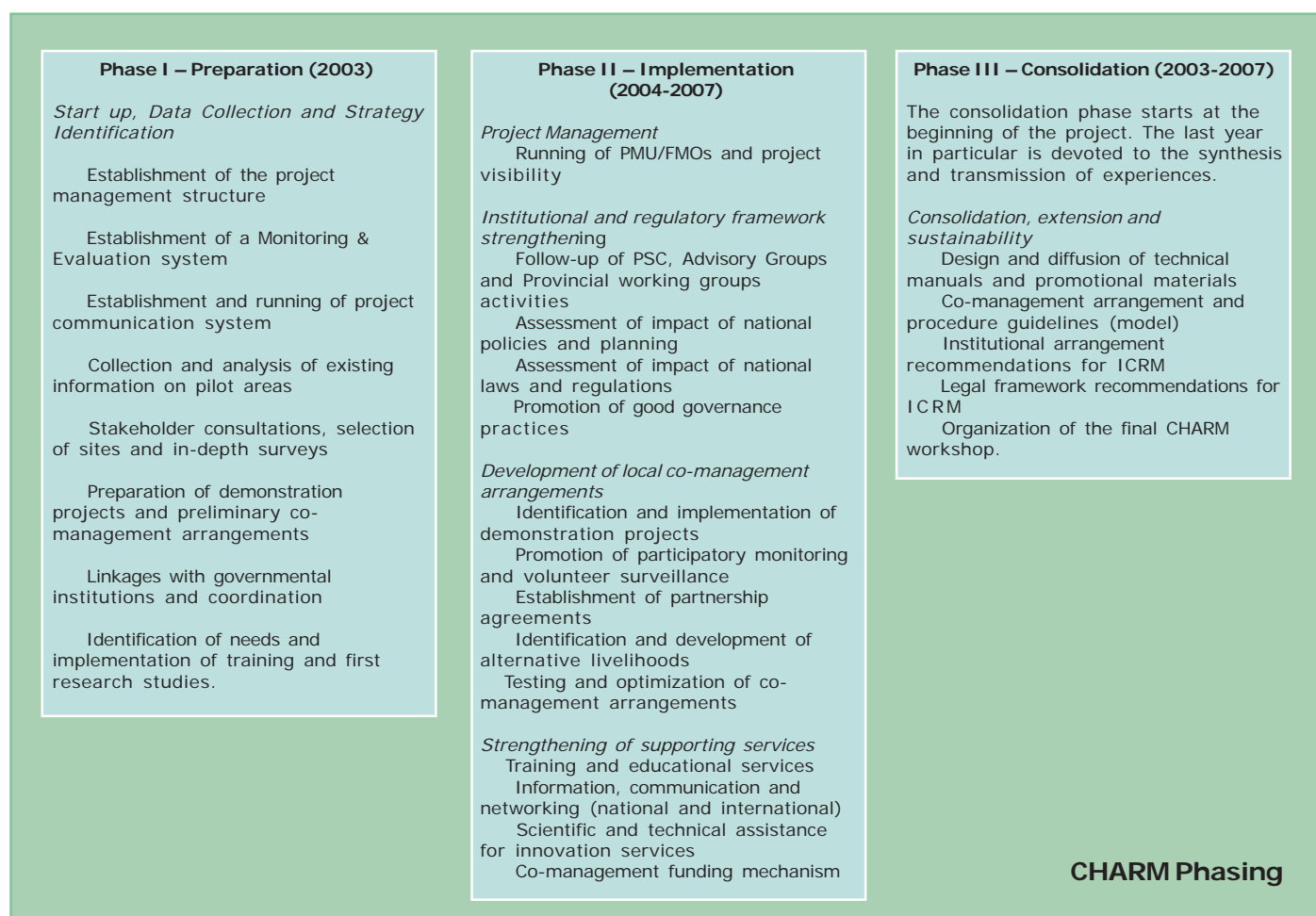
1. The policy and legal framework
2. Participatory management
3. Human capacity
4. Information and communication, and
5. Project management, monitoring and evaluation

The first two components are the pillars of the co-management approach; the three others provide the necessary support for development and sustainability of the first two.

The project has a start-up phase for data collection and strategy identification (2002-2003), an implementation phase to develop the co-management process, institutional support and capacity building (2003-2007), and a consolidation phase that starts at the beginning of the project.

Selection of sites and participatory approach

One of the main activities of the first preparatory year was the collection and analysis of existing information on the two project areas. A total of 35 sub-districts and 56 villages and municipalities were short-listed with the Department of Fisheries (DOF) Provincial Offices in the two project areas. Among these, at least one per province was pre-identified for implementation of a co-management demonstration





Key attributes of the CHARM co-management approach

Participation – International experience demonstrates that projects are sustained only where there are constituencies that are active advocates for improved resources management. CHARM seeks to carefully design mechanisms to assure that participants at national, provincial and local levels participate in each phase of the co-management process. Under the Provincial and Tambon Administration Organizations (PAO and TAO), village committees should become focal points for conflict mediation and implementation of “pragmatic co-management activities” that test new approaches to habitat and resource management at a pilot scale.

Partnerships – Forging mutually beneficial partnerships among institutions, communities, NGOs and donors is a central feature of CHARM activities at every level. The Financing Agreement that governs the relationship between the Royal Thai Government and the European Commission is designed as a partnership, with National and European co-directors having comparable responsibilities and authority. At the ministerial level, the Project Steering Committee is a partnership among Departments and professional organizations with major roles in coastal management. The departmental coordinators group should develop as a partnership designed to improve the effectiveness of departmental actions at national, provincial and local levels. The PMU/FMOs and the Community Development Department are developing a partnership for community consultation, promotion of alternative livelihoods, and operation of community revolving funds. The PMU/FMOs will work in partnership with NGOs with whom they are already working.

Integrated approaches and methods – Integration in coastal management is the major difference from traditional sectoral projects that address only fragments of the whole picture. The integration is multidimensional in nature:

- integration of science with policies, with a strong emphasis on social and political processes, and the belief that research and technical tools (such as permits, zoning and impact assessments) are of little value if the institutional and societal context in which they are introduced is not yet capable of effecting the changes in values and behaviour that such tools require;
- integration between bottom-up and top-down approaches to resource management;
- integration between large-scale and small-scale management, and between short-term and long-term time scales; and
- integration among sectors and disciplines, expressed through the multi-agency project steering committee and the inter-department focal points group, and through the participation of academic and research institutions.

Learning and adaptation – Feedback should be central to the implementation of the CHARM project activities. Techniques and mechanisms have to be developed to encourage the open exchange of ideas and experience and foster learning both among the CHARM project staff, and with stakeholders and the public at large.

Building capacity – The project works at building a core group of professionals that can sustain a coherent co-management process into the future. This concerns individuals with adequate training and experience working in government at national, provincial and local levels, universities, NGOs and communities in the different sites. The ‘learning-by-doing’ approach is intended to be bolstered by formal training along with exchange visits within the country and to other countries.



project. It was assumed that a well-trained provincial fisheries officer can cover 3-5 villages at first, so about 6 officers would be needed in each province. Beyond the FMO and the assigned staff, it was therefore decided to integrate CHARM activities, including demonstration projects, into the regular programming of the DOF Provincial Offices in order to get the full participation of DOF staff in the field while building up the sustainability of the co-management framework. The partnership strategy developed by the project is intended to allow collaboration with other Departments, such as that initiated with the Community Development Department (CDD), and NGOs as a network support for specific implementation and follow-up.

Based on the mandate to prepare a computerized database for the two project areas, the FMOs have compiled data from the Community Development Department, the Department of Fisheries, NGOs and other projects in the two project areas as well as CHARM survey data collected at the TAOs in the five project provinces. The data have been compiled as basic information about the two project areas, including the number and size of local coastal villages, administrative arrangements for each village, occupations in the village, income generated, environmental status and willingness to participate. Once data were compiled into an evaluation grid, project staff were able to evaluate the status of each village in terms of these different aspects. The data represent a valuable source of information for building up the selected sites baseline.

From December 2003, once the sites had been selected, the process moved to identification of critical

issues with villagers and the prioritisation of those issues. Next, an in-depth field assessment was carried out in each selected site to serve as a benchmark for participatory monitoring and evaluation.

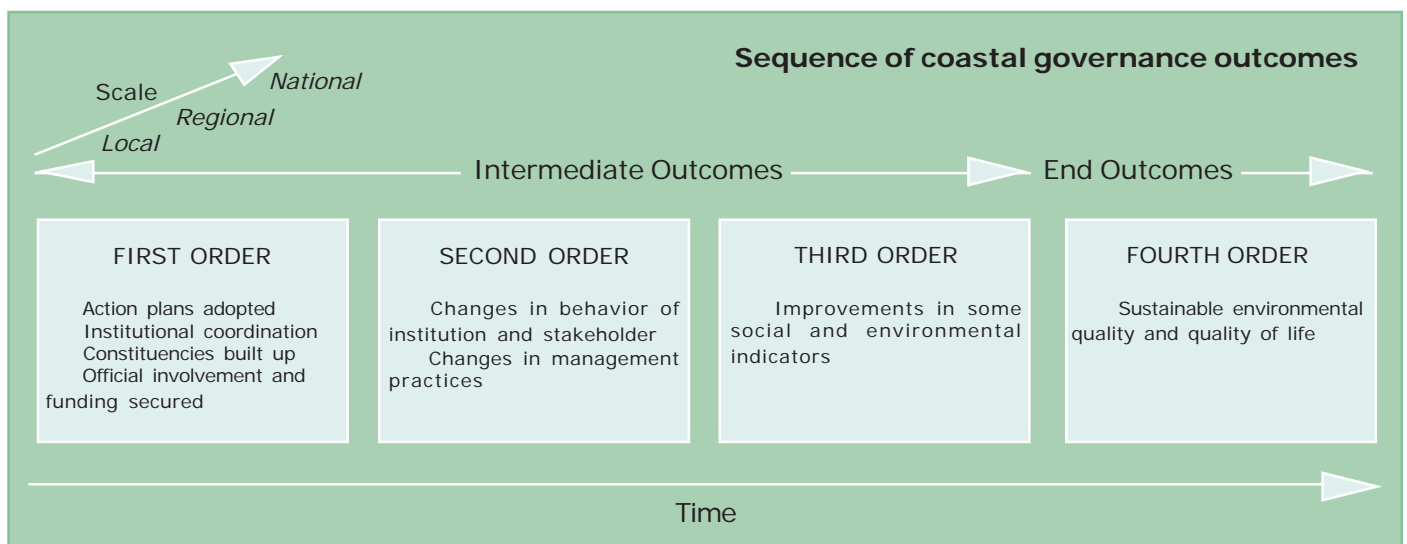
“Achieving goals such as improved quality of life for coastal communities while maintaining biological productivity and biodiversity in populated coastal regions requires efforts that must be sustained over many decades”

The villagers then formed a village committee or used an existing body to take actions to deal with priority issues. These committees became the focal point for planning and implementation of the agreed action plan. Through partnership agreements, provincial personnel, such as Fisheries Officers and Community Development Officers, and project staff provided technical assistance to the village committees.

Monitoring and Evaluation system

Sequence of outcomes

The growing body of international experience in coastal management reinforces the fact that achieving goals such as improved quality of life for coastal communities while maintaining biological productivity and biodiversity in populated coastal regions requires efforts that must be sustained over many decades. As shown in the figure below, such sustained efforts progress through a sequence of outcomes. While



measurable improvements in some social and environmental indicators (“Third Order Outcomes”) may be achieved under favourable conditions at the community level in a decade or less, achieving such outcomes on a larger scale, particularly where coastal ecosystems are already severely degraded and where there is poverty, requires a larger and more protracted effort.

In CHARM’s case, it is reasonable to expect that better institutional coordination and constituencies might be achieved at the national level, but should be achieved primarily at the provincial level (‘First Order Outcomes’) in the two pilot areas and their corresponding provinces. The necessary development activities and changes in societal behavior (“Second Order Outcomes”) will be limited more to the selected sites and corresponding local governments (TAO) on which CHARM will focus its management efforts. The achievement of Second Order Outcomes on a larger scale lies in the future, with implementation of national policies, and will include overall rehabilitation of mangrove or shrimp pond areas, sound shorefront development practices and the control of activities that result in the degradation of water quality and habitats. As Third Order Outcomes may to a degree be achieved at the community level, building up the conditions of sustainability before the end of CHARM is essential.



The CHARM monitoring system therefore focuses on the intermediate outcomes, including end of project outcomes (‘outcome indicators’), and the processes at stake to reach them (‘process indicators’).

Definition of indicators

Any coastal management project like CHARM, which can be considered as part of a government response to identified issues, will be monitored through input, process and outputs type of indicators where,

- **Input indicators** monitor the project-specific resources provided – facilities, human and financial resources, staff and beneficiaries training, and strategic studies;

The CHARM Monitoring and Evaluation system

Drawing on national and international experience, the CHARM Monitoring and Evaluation system is based on the following guidelines:

- It is important for coastal zone management projects to adopt objectives-based outcome evaluations, defining environmental and socio-economic goals and establishing baselines against which to measure the impact of project initiatives.
- Indicators should be user-led, and coastal stakeholders should be involved in the process of selection and development of indicators from the beginning. In this regard, an enhanced report on the state of the environment and development of the coastal zone can provide an occasion for collaboration between sub-national and national levels for the achievement of shared objectives.
- Monitoring and evaluation mechanisms have to be incorporated from the beginning. Indicators must therefore be set as an integral part of the project proposal, and revised in response to adjustments to project results and implementation activities.
- Headline indicators or indices (combined indicators) should be selected based on policy relevance, predictability, interdependency, measurability, and performance.
- Not every area of assessment lends itself to the use of quantitative information. Certain policy areas should be assessed in qualitative terms. This is especially true in the case of governance indicators.

- **Process indicators** cover the governance response indicators, or the process by which interventions take place. They may document public awareness and education programmes that sensitise stakeholders to the coastal management issues and encourage voluntary changes in behaviour. They also describe consultative processes to determine public opinion about desired outcomes, and they may include strategies for regulatory interventions. In the case of the CHARM project, they mainly cover the co-management processes;

- **Output indicators** can be classified as either (a) environmental indicators, or (b) socio-economic indicators.

Development and application to the project first year

Based on the above framework and guidelines, the CHARM project monitoring system comprises three main modules (excluding the financial module).

The Core Operations Monitoring module represents the main reporting system of the project. It includes activities related to the Policy and Legal Framework component, the Participatory Management component, the Human Capacity component, and the Information and Communication component. It incorporates two types of indicators: input indicators, which, besides funding, staff and facilities, include all activities related to research and training services (support services) development, and output indicators. The progress of the project output indicators is measured against the environmental and socio-economic indicators that describe the initial situation (site and bay-wide baselines) in the two project areas.

Interestingly, while it is estimated that a little more than 50% of the input indicators-related activities have been fulfilled in regard to the first year objectives, the output indicators indicate an average of 40% progress towards the first year objectives, probably too ambitious in terms of the enabling conditions, one of the main assumptions still to be fulfilled, i.e. effective inter-Department collaboration.

The Co-management Monitoring module mainly focuses on the use of governance (process) indicators

for the main stakeholders involved – communities, TAO, other government institutions, private sector and the public in general.

Within the project’s first preparatory year, any change in behaviour related to the project activities can hardly been measured, while the enabling conditions-related activities indicate progress of less than 40% in regard to the first year objectives. The main reasons are related to the delay in identifying and selecting the sites (“site leaders and village committees identified”) and a primary focus on fishery activities to the detriment of other sectors (“tourism operators identified”).

The Project Progress Monitoring module is mainly an aggregated presentation of the Core Operations module and the Project Management component main indicators. It reflects directly the logical framework’s Objectively Verifiable Indicators (OVI), and is primary aimed at several key information users, including the Project Steering Committee, the Executing



Authority and the European Commission through the delivering of the Quarterly Progress Reports, Annual Work Plan and Budgets, and the Annual Booklet.

A new political context

Since October 2003, the Royal Thai Government has been actively implementing its 'Governor CEO' policy. This has been seen as a move towards decentralized administration, but it will also help consolidate provincial administration under stronger provincial governors' leadership. Politically speaking, the spatial approach under the Governors CEO will transform the provincial administration into a 'State government' in all but name. The Cabinet, at its 19 August 2003 meeting, resolved to implement the delegation of authority from line ministries to Governor CEOs, and to groups of governors for matters covering more than one province. Such an approach is seen as facilitative at the provincial and bay-wide levels to CHARM's co-management strategy and in the

framework of the new zoning scheme currently discussed by the newly established Provincial Fishery Committees.

“The new Governor CEO’ policy has been seen as a move towards decentralized administration, but it will also help consolidate provincial administration under stronger provincial governors’ leadership”

At a more local level, the government has already institutionalised, under the Administrative Decentralization Act, the Tambon Administration Organization (TAO) planning models in a five-year cycle (the current cycle runs from 2002 to 2006) and the annual cycle, in accordance with the Royal Thai Government Fiscal Year. A number of technical agencies have been assisting TAOs in providing Coastal Resources Management inputs to their planning; however, the quality of their plans largely depends on the TAO leadership, and physical, social and political access to each TAO. Improvements in the quality of TAO planning are expected to improve with the evolving CEO role for provincial governor and the strengthening Provincial Administrative Office (PAO).

Fine-tuning the strategy

Beyond assigned CHARM staff within the DOF, it is the involvement of the institution that is critical. Given the DOF structure and functioning, the participation of the five DOF Provincial Office Heads is of the utmost importance, and can be achieved by progressively integrating CHARM activities into each Provincial Office's regular programming. Their involvement in site selection was the first step towards this objective. The same approach should prevail with other concerned Departments with the help of the CHARM Departmental coordinators. The ongoing collaboration with the Community Development Department is a good example of this. Instead of 'selling' its own activities to other organizations, CHARM will continually take into account organizational dynamics and adapt its different component activities accordingly through a partnership strategy. Following its double-track strategy, the project will, at the national level, have to work at building up a strong constituency within





the PSC and the inter-department coordinators group, and at the local level, will have to facilitate the negotiating process between coastal resource users and decision-makers.

“CHARM will continually take into account organizational dynamics and adapt its different component activities accordingly through a partnership strategy”

Coordinating with other projects

At the regional and international levels, CHARM is already well known among relevant agencies and projects, including PEMSEA (Partnership for the Environment of the South-East Asian Seas), the GEF/UNEP South China Sea Project, and the IOC/UNESCO Working Group on Integrated Coastal Area Management. The second year will be devoted to the strengthening of links with such organizations in order to increase both CHARM’s national, regional and international visibility, and its capacity to learn from international experiences.

There are several ongoing coastal management projects in the southern region of Thailand, including PEMSEA, the South China Sea Project, the

SEAFDEC-DOF Chumphon project, Children of the Sea, and Wetland International. Some of these are active in CHARM project areas. The implementing agencies of these projects are essentially part of a group of stakeholders whom CHARM will involve in the consultation process in order to evolve a common set of objectives, intervention strategies, implementation, monitoring, and adaptive planning. Wherever applicable, the coordinating and monitoring roles will be shared to ensure maximum interventional efficiency.

Conclusions

Co-management is a two-track approach that utilizes a strategy of formulating actions simultaneously at the community and national levels. This strategy typically begins with a national coastal management initiative, with demonstration projects at selected sites. These define and analyse the issues that must be addressed and formulate new approaches to resolving them on a small scale. The assumption is that success will be replicated, and will eventually produce a coherent and effective coastal management strategy and decision-making procedures that encompass the whole nation.

CHARM has adopted a strategy that calls for experimenting with the application of co-management practices at the local scale, while contributing to

building constituencies, capacity and policy within provincial and national governments. This two-track approach features an initial emphasis on tangible demonstrations of what co-management means and how it can result in improved governance, changed behaviours and improved conditions.

“Co-management is a two-track approach that utilizes a strategy of formulating actions simultaneously at the community and national levels”

CHARM is not a research project but a time-limited five-year project that strives to improve villagers’ livelihoods by strengthening participation in decision-making processes. It therefore has to combine ‘rapid assessment’ techniques that provide a snapshot of environmental and social conditions in the two areas with more in-depth analysis, involving the identification of main issues, their causes and possible remedies by local stakeholders, leaders and officers in selected sites. Its goal therefore is to promote a process that allows the involvement of stakeholders through the development of pilot activities at a number of sites along the southern coasts of Thailand, to be expanded within the two project areas and elsewhere.

About the authors

Yves Henocque, PhD in marine ecology, had notably previously worked at IFREMER with East and Southeast Asia. He has experience with Integrated Coastal Zone Management in various countries, including in the region. Today, he is the EU Co-Director of the CHARM project, which for him represents a new challenge at the crossroad of a co-management approach and an integrated coastal zone management policy.

Sanchai Tandavanitj, has long experience in aquaculture but also in working with international organizations and small-scale fishermen. Present in the CHARM project since its inception, he has been recently promoted from Deputy Director to National Co-Director.

