

## Strengthening Local Capacity for ICM Implementation and Scaling Up in Preah Sihanouk, Cambodia

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### Key Message

- Integrated coastal management (ICM) can be applied in developing areas where capacities, both human and financial, are limited.
- The ICM system helps to develop technical and leadership competencies in local practitioners so that they become effective agents of change.
- Support increases for ICM when acquired skills translate to changes in the governing institutions and the implementation of projects that are beneficial to stakeholders.
- The benefits derived in Preah Sihanouk, Cambodia, and the continuing implementation by the provincial government have led to stronger acceptance by stakeholders and interest from other coastal provinces. All four coastal provinces have now adopted ICM.

### Abstract

ICM was introduced to Preah Sihanouk Province (formerly the Municipality of Sihanoukville) in 2001 to address conflicting uses of the coastal area, which were resulting in increasing deterioration of the environment. Having emerged from a turbulent past, human and local institutional capacity was severely constrained. Coordination was poor among institutions, planning was inadequate, and technical capacity was lacking. People were still rebuilding their livelihoods and securing participation was difficult unless it ensured immediate benefits of livelihood improvement.

The ICM program was among the few initiatives in the country where the responsibility of managing and implementing a project was given to a municipal government. Capacity development was therefore critical as the implementation would rely heavily on local staff. A two-pronged approach that

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provided immediate benefits while at the same time prepared institutions for long-term engagement was necessary. Organizing a management mechanism to run the ICM program was by itself an achievement and it was accomplished by building on existing human capacity and developing basic institutional capacity on program implementation as well as individual skills and competencies through a stepped-up effort as the program developed.

ICM implementation requires people that are resourceful and willing to learn. They must be willing to share power and resources, and to inspire others into action. ICM is now institutionalized in the provincial government with the upgrading of the Project Coordinating Committee into the Coastal Development and Management Committee. The Preah Sihanouk ICM Demonstration program has influenced policies, prompting positive reforms on coastal and marine management at the national level and created opportunities for scaling up. ICM is currently implemented in all coastal provinces in Cambodia, with Preah Sihanouk ICM staff being able to guide the coastal provinces on the implementation aspects.

## Background

Sihanoukville Municipality became Preah Sihanouk Province through Sub-decree No. 07 issued on 9 January 2009. The province is designated as one of the three economic development areas in Cambodia and serves as a commercial gateway for local and international trade with its deepwater port facing the Gulf of Thailand. Its beaches and islands make it one of the country's most popular tourist destinations. With abundant resources and opportunities for economic development, Preah Sihanouk's coastal assets were subjected to conflicting uses, leading to deterioration of the coastal and marine environment. Five key

management challenges in the province included habitat loss and modification, marine pollution, coastal erosion and siltation, groundwater extraction, and multiple resource use conflicts. Management was unable to effectively deal with such problems due to poor coordination among institutions; inadequate planning, policies, and legislation; low level of public awareness; and lack of financial and technical capacities.

Adding to these problems was the strong sectoral and centralized approach of local governance. The political framework and the supporting legal system were still largely under the authority of the central government. Prior to ICM implementation, agencies that were involved in policymaking and management worked individually, guided only by their own objectives. Conflict of interests and unclear management boundaries were common among the agencies.

Sihanoukville commenced ICM implementation in 2001, barely a decade after the UN Transitional Authority was established in the country. The ICM program was initiated in a society that was still grappling with the ghosts of a nation's past. Institutions were not ready for organized action and people were still finding ways to survive and viewed the government system with disenchantment and distrust. With poverty incidence of more than 32% in 2001 (PG-Preah Sihanouk and PEMSEA, 2013), protecting the environment was definitely not the first priority. Securing participation was difficult unless the activity ensured an immediate benefit of livelihood improvement.

ICM implementation faced two huge challenges. First, most development projects in Cambodia in the early 2000s were administered at the national level, and as a result, local capacities were not built and institutions remained largely reliant on ministries located in the country's capital. In

many cases, concluded projects and programs ceased to exist when external funders exited, as local capacities and institutions were not ready to financially and technically continue them. The Sihanoukville ICM program was, at that time, among the few initiatives in the country to have accorded a municipal government with the responsibility of managing and implementing a project.

Second, stakeholders were not organized and mobilized for collective action. For a society just emerging from a turbulent period, an integrated approach that can mobilize people was difficult as fragmented communities had to be first convinced of the value of collective action. Benefits of coastal and marine management take time to be noticed, especially if interventions were focused on habitat protection alone. A mixed approach that provided immediate economic benefits while preparing institutions for long-term engagement was necessary when considering capacity development initiatives.

Several obstacles stood in the way of accomplishing capacity development and stakeholders' participation. When ICM was just established, data and information were scant and scattered among different agencies, which meant that analyzing local problems and vulnerabilities was more difficult. Only a few staff at the municipal hall could communicate in English limiting interaction between PEMSEA project staff and the local counterpart. Communication and transportation facilities were also poor. Sihanoukville's bus and taxi services were erratic, roads unlit and unpaved in many areas, and Internet and communication facilities were expensive and, in many cases, did not work after heavy rains. Setting up a Project Management Office (PMO), much less making it work, was a major challenge.

## Approach and Methodology

### Preparing and initiating ICM implementation (2001–2003)

As part of the preparatory stage of ICM, PMO and the Project Coordinating Committee (PCC) were established in November 2001 through the issuance of *Deka*<sup>1</sup> 074 and *Deka* 080, respectively. The PCC was the decisionmaking and coordinating body composed of directors and deputy directors from line agencies while PMO, composed of four staff at that time, served as the secretariat to PCC. Although established, the capacity to perform their designated functions was limited, and up to 2002, both were not fully functional and integrated into the local development processes.

To address this, capacity development involved a two-pronged approach: training in administrative and technical aspects for PMO staff while strengthening acceptance and political support from local leaders. Technical training involved on-site and remote coaching, workshops, and field activities. The other track was conducted over shorter duration with more site visits rather than classroom instruction. This approach was matched with regular dialogues — both formal and informal — and short-term executive training courses.

In setting up the project, PEMSEA conducted a two-month mission in 2002 to mentor the core staff — four at that time — on basic project operations. These included financial management and reporting, use of personal computers, record keeping, and project reporting. The first phase of training focused on administrative aspects, such as financial management and reporting through a short “classroom” training by PEMSEA staff

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<sup>1</sup> *Deka* – local ordinance.

***“Initiating the ICM implementation in Sihanoukville Municipality, at that time, was a difficult process. I was assigned in PMO as I had some basic English language skills and can communicate with different stakeholders. There were many organizations who came here and asked us questions but they never came back.”***

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Technical Officer  
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and members of the Regional Task Force<sup>2</sup> (RTF) followed by continuous coaching and/or actual exercise. The process was long and painstaking since the technical capacity of the staff, technology, and language at that time, were very limited.

Aside from the problems of limited capacity, getting stakeholder support was challenging at the start. The first step was to convince the core group to follow the “ICM process” and that on-the-ground application would be more effective if the planning was done right. This was a challenge for Sihanoukville as many local implementers were adamant of change and wanted immediate action, with less emphasis on the planning aspect. During the first year of implementation, PMO was under great pressure to produce results. Getting implementers to appreciate stakeholders’ participation was difficult as the team used to think that consultations were just an added layer of work and that they, as implementers, already knew what the communities would say as well as the underlying causes of marine and coastal

management issues. Rather than explaining the logic of getting stakeholders involved in the process, the team was mobilized to conduct activities and interact with communities. It gave the local officials, as the implementers, a degree of confidence in the knowledge of communities and the socioeconomic problems that affect use of coastal resources in the villages.

Parallel to building technical competence was getting stronger political support for implementation. This was critical as the ICM plans have to be adopted by local officials who need to be convinced of the benefits. As part of capacity development, the governor and deputy governors participated in the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments’ Forum. Their interaction with other local governments in the region imparted a degree of legitimacy to ICM initiatives and confidence in the process of implementation.

The PMO staff also kept a close relationship with the office of the governor, which made convincing local officials easier. At the national level, the project was implemented directly under then Environment Minister Mok Mareth’s office, thereby generating a higher level support and giving legitimacy and credibility to the project.

### **Developing and adopting stage (2004–2008)**

The development and adoption stage required a more technical and focused approach to implementation. The Coastal Strategy (CS) was developed and adopted in 2003 with the signing of the CS declaration by former Minister Mok Mareth and the different stakeholders. In 2004, the Coastal Strategy Implementation Plan (CSIP) was prepared, following a series of stakeholder consultations to identify the three priorities for implementation. While the adoption of CS and

<sup>2</sup> PEMSEA’s RTF is composed of skilled professionals outside Cambodia who provide technical support to topic-specific capacity development.

CSIP was important in generating awareness and support for ICM implementation, Sihanoukville was a developing municipality in need of more concrete demonstration of the practical benefits of ICM. The development of management plans was done in parallel with implementation of priority projects. Beach management, solid waste management, and fishery-related initiatives were among the first few projects implemented to show how integrated management approaches can improve livelihood, community cleanliness, and overall health. These projects were done on smaller scales at the village level to demonstrate changes and for the team to be able to manage the implementation process.

An important dimension of the process was the involvement of department leaders and staff. While the different line agencies were expected to lead the implementation, many were still caught in internal battles of setting up their own offices, struggling to exert control within their respective departments and unwilling to share responsibilities, resources, and “power”, while others were awaiting orders from their “mother” ministries at the national level.

To many, working together under the ICM program was a threat to the newly acquired power of the line agencies and staff. Local institutions were also unclear of the roles and responsibilities, mandates, and reporting processes, making it difficult to pinpoint where accountability really laid. Despite initial animosity, the PMO staff made sure that the departments that had the mandate for related activities were informed of the activities and that good interpersonal relationships with leaders and staff were cultivated. They were initially part of the process of coastal use zoning, development of the coastal strategy, and implementation plan of 2003–2004, but in many of these, their involvement was limited to either sharing information or participating in workshops.

Aside from involvement with project activities, informal meetings also served to generate mutual

trust between and among PMO staff and line agencies. These relationships would prove useful in encouraging more active involvement among the line agencies in ICM-related initiatives. With the start of CSIP implementation in 2004, the key departments in charge of specific issues were asked to lead the task teams in field activities with PMO backing the operations and providing support on management.

For instance, the implementation of community-based solid waste management was led by the Department of Environment; the beach management by the Department of Tourism; and the Stung Hav fishery management by the Fisheries Administration. Giving departments the leadership roles, while guiding them in the process, created stronger buy-in and commitment from department heads and staff. The implementation also provided the line agencies the opportunity to touch base with communities and various stakeholders, which would be useful later on in executing the mandates of their own departments. It contributed to strengthening their roles in fulfilling their mandates, so that the development initiatives could be sustained as part of their own efforts over a longer period.

The RTF was again tapped to provide on-site support for training workshops on coastal use zoning, beach management, and pollution reduction. The role of the local Royal University of Phnom Penh (RUPP) was also significant in assisting the team with the development and implementation of the pilot-scale community-based solid waste management activity. [Table 1](#) summarizes the major activities and related capacity development initiatives.

## Results

Experiences in the demonstration initiatives and activities were used by the departments to initiate other projects. [Table 2](#) indicates the specific projects

**Table 1. Key project and related capacity development initiatives undertaken at different stages of the ICM cycle.**

	Major ICM activities	Related capacity development initiatives
<b>Preparing stage 2001–2002</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CSIP issue and area-specific action plans</li> <li>• Coastal use zoning</li> <li>• Integrated environmental monitoring</li> <li>• Sustainable financing mechanisms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• PEMSEA' s mission to provide support in setting up PMO and conduct financial and project management training</li> </ul>
<b>Initiating stage 2003–2005</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CS</li> <li>• Coastal use zoning plan</li> <li>• Tourism development and management plan</li> <li>• CSIP</li> <li>• Laboratory Office established</li> <li>• Capacity building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training Workshop on Coastal Strategy Development (RTF supported)</li> <li>• Training Workshop on Setting Up the Sihanoukville Environmental Laboratory</li> </ul>
<b>Developing, adopting and implementing stage 2006–2009</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ochheuteal Beach (OB) tourism development and management</li> <li>• Community-based solid waste management in Sangkat 4 Sihanoukville Municipality</li> <li>• Sustainable marine fishery rehabilitation and management in Stung Hav district</li> <li>• Integrated beach environmental monitoring program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training Workshop on the Development of the OB Tourism Development and Management Plan (RTF-supported)</li> <li>• Training on community-based solid waste management (RUPP-supported)</li> <li>• RTF-supported mission on beach water quality monitoring</li> </ul>
<b>Developing, adopting and implementing stage 2010–2014</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establishment of marine fishery management area in Prek Kampong Smach and Koh Rong</li> <li>• Development of ICM sustainable development plan</li> <li>• State of the Coasts reporting</li> <li>• Wastewater management along beach and city</li> <li>• Feasibility of environmental user fee/ foundation</li> <li>• Environmental plan and development of penalty guide</li> <li>• Climate change adaptation</li> <li>• Integrated beach environmental monitoring program</li> <li>• Port safety, health, and environmental management system for Sihanoukville Autonomous port</li> <li>• Capacity building</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community-based Training on Fishery Law Enforcement</li> <li>• District and Commune Level Workshop led by Technical Working Group (TWG) on development of sustainable development plan</li> <li>• TWG-led wastewater management discussions</li> <li>• Feasibility study on user fee (with national task force support)</li> <li>• Climate change adaptation (UN Habitat, national partner)</li> </ul>
<b>Refining and consolidating stage 2013–2015</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ICM project site scaling up</li> <li>• Revision of CS</li> <li>• Revision of coastal use zoning plan</li> <li>• Revision of tools, technique, and instrument for integrated beach environmental monitoring program</li> <li>• Planning for the next program cycle</li> <li>• Updating State of the Coasts report</li> <li>• Targeting ICM recognition certification</li> </ul>	

**Table 2. Specific projects implemented under the ICM program.**

No.	ICM project partners	Project name	Project period
1	GEF UNDP Small Grants Programme	1. Sustainable Coastal Resources Management and Rehabilitation 2. Water Source Rehabilitation and Restoration 3. Mangrove Project and Livelihood Improvement in Ream Commune	2006–2013
2	International Center for Environmental Technology Transfer, Mie Prefecture	Environmental Conservation	2008–2009
3	UN-Habitat	Human Settlement and Climate Change	2010–2013
4	National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development	Capacity Building and Natural Resources Conservation	2004–present
5	Food and Agriculture Organization	Regional Fisheries Livelihoods Programme	2008–2013
6	Cambodia Climate Change Alliance	Sustainable Sihanoukville through Climate Change Planning and Adaptation	2011–2013
7	Nihon University, Japan	Water Supply	2008–2009
8	Fauna and Flora International	Marine Ecological Conservation and Protection	2008–present
9	Coral Cay Conservation	Research on Coral Reef and Marine Biodiversity	2008–2013
10	Swedish International Development Corporation Agency and Swedish Embassy in Cambodia	Scholarship on Integrated Sustainable Coastal Development	2013–present

that were implemented through the ICM initiative and the subsequent replication projects undertaken by the line departments. It is important to stress, however, that two important factors — timing and urgency to address coastal and marine issues — contributed to implementation and scaling up of the pilot demonstration projects.

For instance, the beach management plan was developed early in 2004 but implementation was delayed due to limited government and private sector support. It was implemented in 2008 as tourist numbers increased and the national government took keener interest in Sihanoukville. Another example was the effort on community-based waste management. This pilot-scale project was scaled up to cover the Sihanoukville Municipality after *Prakas*<sup>3</sup> 078 was signed by the Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Tourism,

and Ministry of Land Management. Through the *Prakas*, the provincial government was able to access US\$250,000 from the Ministry of Environment Fund for waste management in the province.

The working groups formally evolved to become the Technical Working Group (TWG) in 2009. The TWG, composed of directors/deputy directors from line agencies, facilitated the interdepartment cooperation and dialogue in ICM implementation and also information sharing. Task teams, composed of a representative from the province, community leaders and key stakeholders in target villages, were later organized to implement specific projects. As the lead agencies took on a greater role in implementation, the PMO's role evolved to become more of a support group, providing administration and backstopping.

<sup>3</sup> *Prakas* – a ministerial or interministerial decision or proclamation.

***“We have had four governors since we implemented ICM. This meant four different styles of leadership, and ICM has helped us work well with our leaders. I think that is one good result of capacity building: being able to adapt to different management styles.”***

**Sally Nay**  
Technical Officer, PMO  
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### Capacity strengthening and scaling up

Encouraged by the progress of ICM implementation in Sihanoukville, the PMO through its interaction with other coastal provinces, was able to generate wider interest from local officials of Kampot, Kep, and Koh Kong Provinces. In 2008, the three provincial governors of these coastal provinces requested the Ministry of Environment (MOE) and PEMSEA for support to set up ICM. The three provinces participated in the National ICM Training co-organized by MOE, RUPP, PEMSEA, and the provincial government of Sihanoukville. Despite initial scepticism from concerned staff from the newly joined provinces, the PMO was successful in convincing the other provinces to participate in regional activities such as the annual forum of the PEMSEA Network of Local Governments (PNLG). To date, the Preah Sihanouk Province was able to facilitate the membership of the above three coastal provinces by assisting them in seeking the approval of the Ministry of Interior to be members of PNLG and subsequently, applying as members to PNLG. They were accepted as new members in May 2016.

As part of the scaling up initiative, the Preah Sihanouk ICM PMO organized two key training workshops, including the project and financial management on 10–11 June 2016 and extended technical support to its neighbor, Kampot, on the development of its coastal use zoning scheme on 19

July – 11 August 2016, mobilizing RTF members from the Korea Maritime Institute.

Continuous networking of PMO staff and local officials also resulted in several projects being scaled up or replicated with national or external funding support (Table 2). These created more opportunities to address the priorities indicated in CSIP and to build competence of technical staff in the implementation process.

### Making changes and creating opportunities

While it cannot be claimed that ICM is the sole driver in many positive developments on coastal and marine management policies, it can be said that ICM in Preah Sihanouk has catalyzed some of these changes.

Cambodia officially became a member of the Most Beautiful Bays in the World Club on 26 May 2011. This was a result of the application made by Preah Sihanouk Province during the Club's Sixth Congress in Halong Bay in May 2010. Subsequent evaluation of sustainable management practices and economic potential in the province was made within a year in several meetings held in Sihanoukville. The Ministry of Tourism then extended the application to cover the entire coastline and other provinces to encourage effective coastal management, hence the inclusion of Cambodian Bay which spans 440 km across the coastal provinces of Kampot, Kep, Koh Kong, and Preah Sihanouk.

Following the acceptance of Cambodia to the club, Prime Minister Hun Sen signed Circular No. 1 on the Development of Coastal Areas of the Kingdom of Cambodia on 12 February 2012. The circular served as a guide for the ministries, institutions, and subnational governments to implement the principles in the management, utilization, safeguarding, protection, and development of the kingdom's coastal areas. The circular provided definitions of the offshore area, islands, beaches, coasts, and right of passage; and the use and



development of islands for residence, coastal area development and construction, which is useful in implementing zoning. The government recently made a clear pronouncement of its commitment to remove illegal infrastructure along the beach to protect coastal integrity.

Adding to the above achievements was follow-on Government Decision 152 on 13 July 2012 which established the National and Provincial Coastal Management and Development Committee (CDMC). The committee was tasked to oversee the development projects at national and provincial levels. This was significant as it encouraged the provinces to set up their coordinating mechanism for coastal management. For Preah Sihanouk, the PCC was upgraded to the CDMC, thereby formally institutionalizing the coordinating mechanism. It currently has 28 members and is chaired by the governor, and two deputy governors, and the port director as the vice chair.

## Lessons Learned

### **Developing a modest management capability is necessary to begin implementing an ICM program**

Coming from a difficult past where institutions were still being rebuilt, organizing a management mechanism to run the ICM program was in itself an achievement. This was done by building on existing human capacity with basic technical knowledge and management skills for project/program implementation, which were carried out over time through a series of training workshops, field activities, and feedback exercises. This was done through a stepped-up effort, with support and advice from PEMSEA.

### **Skills and competencies are developed at different stages of ICM implementation**

Different capacities were needed to implement different levels of ICM activities as the program

matured. At the initiating and preparing stage, interpersonal skills to gain trust and build working relationships were of primary importance. In the development and adoption stage, technical competence on specific topics was necessary to effectively implement the projects. Networking with other groups, where local capacity was not available, was done to ensure that project activities could be implemented. As ICM matured and scaling up got started, lobbying skills became essential together with the capacity to generate more resources for implementation of coastal and marine management projects.

### **Strengthening of individual capacity at the local level improves institutional capacity making agencies more functional and effective**

The capacity development initiatives were rooted in building individual competencies and eventually relying on these individuals to coordinate with concerned departments. Building good personal and working relationships with heads of departments facilitated effective cooperation, which eventually led to better cooperation in implementation. The engagement of staff from concerned departments in the implementation was done through the help of regional and national support groups of PEMSEA. The capacity development efforts increased the community's trust and support to government-led initiatives.

### **Maintaining harmonious working relationship with concerned departments is absolutely necessary**

ICM relied heavily on changing perceptions and attitudes to become more receptive to collaboration. Engaging the key departments in project activities and reducing apprehension of losing authority or resources, made them more receptive to the concept and practices of ICM; eventually making it easier to involve them in project activities.

### **Stakeholders participation promotes collective community action**

The ICM initiatives often engaged different levels of stakeholders. In Sihanoukville, these included district, commune, and village leaders who were instrumental in the process of ICM implementation. Village level implementation ensured that the communities in need of support were able to benefit from the initiatives.

### **ICM implementation requires positive attitude, resourcefulness, and willingness to learn**

ICM provided opportunities for technical training of staff to enable them to effectively develop implementation strategies. However, the core principle of integration could only be promoted by people who were willing to share power, resources, and able to inspire other people into action. Positive attitude built better relationships that could facilitate collective action. Personal relationships could be a starting point in gaining support for ICM implementation.

### **Experience is the best teacher**

This cannot be sufficiently underscored. Training and classroom education were important but people learned more from application and field activities. Demonstrating how things were done created better awareness and understanding. Capacity development should therefore be planned carefully enough so that the initiatives match the planned projects to be implemented.

### **Balance between simplifying concepts and increasing capacity for analysis**

There was a tendency to speed up implementation as the demand for change and associated benefits increased, especially in poverty-stricken areas. Livelihood projects needed to be thought out carefully before implementation, in order to

increase the rate of success. In the process of developing projects and programs, analytical skills on root causes of problems should be developed, rather than on hastily implementing measures.

### **Capacity to seize opportunities**

There are broader sociopolitical and economic factors that can make or break an ICM program. ICM capacity development can and should strengthen staff capacity so that they are able to seize the best opportunities in forwarding the objectives and impacts of ICM. For instance, the decision to set up CDMC at the provincial level clearly opened up opportunities for institutionalizing ICM into the provincial government. Thus, the Sihanoukville PMO made sure that the existing PCC was upgraded to become CDMC of the Province of Preah Sihanouk.

## **Reference**

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