

# Engaging Civil Society Organizations in Sustainable Development of Coastal and Marine Areas through the Application of Integrated Coastal Management System

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## Key Message

A review of several integrated coastal management (ICM) practices in the East Asian Seas (EAS) region clearly demonstrated that the ICM system is effective in:

- providing an opportunity for local governments to work directly with communities and community groups;
- developing the capacity of civil society groups and empowering them to serve as partners in the protection and management of their local areas and resources; and
- sustaining or even scaling up and replicating good practices beyond the initial project phase.

## Abstract

The human factor, such as local people dedicating themselves to protecting marine and coastal areas and resources, is the most important element in protecting the local environment and the benefits it provides to the communities.

The lack of competence, awareness, and participation of community groups and civil society organizations, however, is a barrier to effective planning, implementation, and sustainability of development projects/ programs.

Local governments can overcome this barrier by partnering with these groups, developing their awareness and capacities, and proactively engaging them in sustainable development projects and initiatives.



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The process of ICM development and implementation, as advocated by PEMSEA facilitates local government engagement of civil society groups as stakeholders and partners. The engagement provides civil society groups the opportunity to express their respective interests, concerns, and needs. It also provides opportunities to contribute local knowledge and skills to the ICM program; build capacity in planning and management; improve livelihoods; and interact, network, and learn from other stakeholders.

It is important for local governments developing ICM programs to connect with civil society groups early in the ICM project cycle; identify their main areas of focus and the specific aspects where they can contribute to the ICM program; create opportunities and incentives for their participation; and invest in their capacity development, organizational strengthening, and sustainable engagement.

Meaningful engagement of civil society groups facilitates better understanding of issues and priorities that are important to coastal communities and how to address them; develops their capacity and empowers them to serve as partners of the local government; and encourages local acceptance and ownership of the program.

## Background

Previous paradigms in environmental management provided limited recognition of the competition and conflicts arising from multiple interests and use of a limited space. They did not take into account the programming cycle and the political, social, and economic dynamics within which environmental management is subsumed. ICM is a natural resource and environmental management paradigm that integrates human activities and the socioeconomic web of a particular area. This inclusion changed the focus of environmental and conservation programs,

from looking primarily at species or the ecosystem, to consideration of their interface with human activities (Chua, 2008).

Such a shift in focus necessitates the involvement of various stakeholders, including civil society groups. Civil society, defined as nongovernment and not-for-profit organizations present in public life expressing the interests and values of their members (World Bank, 2013), can be community-based organizations (CBO), youth groups, associations, women's groups, and local and international nongovernment organizations (NGO) who have a stake in the use and management of the ecosystem.

As immediate users of coastal areas, civil society groups have a crucial stake in the development and implementation of ICM programs. As local stakeholders, they have a good understanding of local conditions and issues, and play an important role as users and managers of their surrounding natural resources (Gupte, n.d.). However, as their livelihoods are commonly dependent on healthy ecosystems, environmental degradation can adversely affect them including their health and well-being (UNRISD, 1994; Ohlsson, 2000; IUCN, 2003). In many cases, however, local people and civil society groups may also be marginalized in policy and decisionmaking processes related to the use and management of their natural resources and environment (Gupte, n.d.; Fordham, et al., 2011).

The challenge is how to transform civil society groups from being just bystanders into committed and valuable players in the development and implementation of ICM programs.

This case study focuses on distilling the good lessons and operational methodologies drawn from several ICM practices in the EAS region as well as those community-based Global Environment Facility (GEF) small grant projects implemented in the region. The outcomes of this analysis and the lessons learned are highlighted.

## Approach and Methodology

PEMSEA has successfully assisted the countries in the EAS region towards achieving sustainable coastal development by developing and implementing ICM programs. The purpose of this study is to identify approaches and methods being employed by selected ICM sites in the region in involving and empowering civil society groups, in particular, when and how to involve them; understanding their expectations and securing their commitment; and ensuring their long-term participation and contributions to the ICM initiatives.

Several developing countries in the region have been implementing ICM programs for more than a decade (Table 1). In their respective ICM programs, community and other stakeholder participation has been mainstreamed so that their voices and concerns are considered in planning and decisionmaking.

The concept and operational methodologies of the ICM system are examined to identify the methods and techniques used in securing the cooperation of the civil society groups, and how they can serve as valuable partners in advancing the visions of each ICM site. Also examined are various community-based GEF small grant projects, which operate in synergy with the ICM programs to advance the social aspects of local communities. This study further explores how the ICM framework can contribute to enhancing synergies with sectoral initiatives to achieve the wider objectives of sustainable development.

## Results

### Get buy-in from civil society groups

ICM provides a window for the direct participation of local CBO in projects that benefit the local

**Table 1. ICM sites in the EAS region covered in this study.**

Country	ICM site/year established
<b>Cambodia</b>	Preah Sihanouk (2000)
<b>Indonesia</b>	Bali (2000), Sukabumi Regency (2003)
<b>Philippines</b>	Batangas (1994), Bataan (2000), Cavite (2004), Guimaras (2008)
<b>Thailand</b>	Chonburi (2001)
<b>Viet Nam</b>	Da Nang City (2000)

environment. During the initiating stage of ICM, dialogues are undertaken among different sectors and stakeholder groups within the community to identify the issues, challenges, and conflicts that directly and indirectly affect the management and use of coastal and marine resources. It is during these early interactions that relationships are built, while providing ICM managers with insights into when and how local people and public and private sector organizations interrelate on different issues, who are the leaders and potential champions, and where and why opposition to change may be expected.

Various participatory approaches and tools are then employed to engage the stakeholders including civil society groups, as appropriate, in the ICM process from baseline assessment to strategic planning, program implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.

The Province of Batangas, Philippines, provides a good example of a local government engaging different civil society groups in the development and implementation of an ICM program. The province has successfully engaged international NGO, fishers' organizations, youth groups, divers' organizations and the business community, to name a few, in its ICM program for the past 20 years (Figure 1). The partnerships have resulted in the scaling up of ICM initiatives from just one bay to the entire coastline of the province.

**Figure 1.** Participants from stakeholder groups during a meeting on ICM in Batangas Province.



### Tap external support

The GEF Small Grants Programme is key catalyst for engaging CBO, NGO, and people's organizations (PO) in the implementation of ICM action programs. The programme makes grants directly available to CBO and NGO for local projects that contribute to sustainable development of their communities. At the same time, these grants provide hands-on experience for community and civil society organizations, to develop their capacities, knowledge and understanding.

In collaboration with local governments implementing ICM programs, PEMSEA provides technical advice and assistance to civil society groups to develop project proposals for submission to the National Steering Committees for the Small Grants Programmes operating in Cambodia, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Philippines, Thailand, Timor Leste, and Viet Nam. These projects have directly contributed to the objectives and targets identified

in coastal strategies/sustainable development plans adopted by the local governments, for example:

- mangrove replanting programs in Preah Sihanouk (Cambodia); Bataan, Cavite, and Guimaras (Philippines); and Chonburi (Thailand) (GEF SGP, n.d.-b-d-e-f-i-j-k);
- sustainable management of mud crab stocks in Chonburi (GEF SGP, n.d.-f);
- protection, monitoring, and regulation of local fishing grounds and fish sanctuaries in Preah Sihanouk, Batangas, Bataan, and Cavite (GEF SGP, n.d.-b-d-g-i-j-k);
- alternative livelihood programs in Preah Sihanouk (GEF SGP, n.d.-i-j-k); Batangas, Bataan, Cavite, and Guimaras (GEF SGP, n.d.-b-d-e-g; Anak Balayan, 2009);
- microfinancing and savings programs for women's organizations in Preah Sihanouk (GEF SGP, n.d.-k);
- community-based waste management through waste reduction, segregation, recycling, and composting in Guimaras and Chonburi (GEF SGP, n.d.-a-e-f-h); and
- urban tree planting in Danang (Viet Nam) (GEF SGP, n.d.-c).

### Find the right civil society group

Sustainable fisheries, coastal tourism, and improved waste management are the three main challenges identified in the coastal strategy implementation plan of Preah Sihanouk, Cambodia. Fisheries deterioration, especially in the district of Stung Hav, was a result of a combination of socioeconomic problems, poverty, and the entry of trawl fishers into community fishing grounds, which resulted in competing uses of dwindling resources. It was therefore necessary to develop an approach to address the different root causes of overexploitation of fishery resources.

To address the problem, the ICM Project Management Office in Preah Sihanouk supported the Fishery Community, a CBO composed of fishers in Stung Hav, to develop a project proposal for submission to the GEF Small Grants Programme. The project was initiated in 2006 with the following components: protection of community fishing grounds, rehabilitation and protection of mangrove areas and an existing freshwater reservoir, and improvement of community livelihoods (Figure 2).

On the issue of protecting community fishing grounds, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a local NGO, was tapped to lead a dialogue between

**Figure 2. Stakeholders in Preah Sihanouk (Cambodia) mobilized for mangrove reforestation in Stung Hav.**



encroachers (fishers from other communities catching fish in other communities' fishing grounds), in this case mostly from Sre Ambel, and from Stung Hav. This began an empowerment process, which led to agreements among groups to protect each community's coastal and marine resources. Both communities agreed on a common measure to discourage entry of trawl fishers into community fishing grounds.

The AFSC was an effective contributor to this process, having prior experience organizing fishers' groups in neighboring communities. It also had personnel in the locality with the capability to bring the conflicting sides together for dialogue.

### Partner government and civil society organizations

The project of Stung Hav district, with its various targets in support of sustainable fisheries, provided the framework for a number of organizations to work together including the Fishery Action Coalition Team, Star Kampuchea, and the Sihanoukville Fishery Administration. Each had a particular advantage to mobilize action among members of the community.

The Fishery Administration, a government agency, took on the challenge of addressing the dwindling fish catch and preventing the entry of illegal trawl fishers into the community fishing grounds. To tackle the challenge, the Fishery Administration helped the communities to map out potential *refugia* (no-take zones) near the fishing boundary and to monitor the entry of illegal fishers into community fishing grounds. Artificial reefs (molded concrete blocks) were deployed near the boundaries to deter trawlers from entering as their nets would get caught and ripped by the blocks. The blocks also served as artificial reefs and provided spawning grounds for fishes.

The Fishery Administration provided technical inputs in the execution of this component of the project. Being a government agency, it had the

unique capacity to define boundaries and its staff knew the technology to help replenish fish stocks and deter trawlers. It also had the capacity to support training and enforce policing measures.

Just months after the installation of artificial reefs, community members attested to the significant increase in fish catch in the surrounding areas. An evaluation by the Small Grants Programme indicated a 7-10 kg increase (25-30%) in catch among small-scale fishers. Regular patrolling operations, composed of organized local fishers, were done to complement the installation of the artificial reefs. Some 33 volunteers took turns in patrolling the area to ensure that large-scale fishing vessels stayed beyond the district's fishing grounds and to monitor illegal fishing activities (Rafael, et al., 2010).

In Sukabumi Regency, West Java, Indonesia, the local government works with several civil society organizations. These include Tim Pelestarian dan Penataan Pesisir Teluk Palabuhanratu (TP3TP) or Conservation and Planning Team for the Palabuhanratu Bay and various community groups focusing on mangrove conservation, turtle conservation, ecotourism, urban greening, beach safety, and waste management. TP3TP, established in 2002, is an NGO composed of representatives from the private sector, academe, and communities. It serves as a stakeholders' consultation forum for sustainable development of the bay. Community empowerment and engagement are facilitated in Sukabumi through various community groups including the Kelompok Masyarakat Konservasi (POKMASI) or Community Conservation Group and the Kelompok Masyarakat Pengawas (POKMASWAS) or Community Surveillance Group. Members of these groups are trained by the local government on various environmental protection and resource conservation techniques, and provided support for organizational development and the establishment of community facilities until they are able to sustain the operations on their own.

### Address the three pillars of sustainability

Engagement of government agencies and civil society groups as partners in ICM implementation leads to innovative approaches that have cross-cutting social, economic, and environmental benefits to coastal communities. In Bali Province, Indonesia, for example, a group of fishers involved in coral mining were engaged under the ICM program in coral conservation and restoration. With sustained awareness and training activities supported by local and provincial governments, local universities, NGOs, and the Small Grants Programme, the fishers were converted from being coral miners to leaders in coral reef conservation in their area. At present, they are operating an ecotourism program in partnership with private tour agencies, providing tourists with hands-on experience in coral conservation and releasing key species, such as sea turtles, to the sea.

In Chonburi Province, Thailand, fishers' associations were engaged in mud crab conservation, women's groups were employed in waste segregation and recycling, while youth groups were trained to serve as volunteers for mangrove rehabilitation, waste segregation and recycling, water quality monitoring and ecotour guiding (Figure 3).

In Preah Sihanouk, Cambodia, a microcredit facility with a savings and lending components was introduced to create supplemental income and capital to help families meet their basic needs. The savings group was composed of 142 members, 92 of whom were women. Fourteen savings groups were formed and each group was provided with a US\$ 200 startup fund. Members took turns to borrow from the fund depending on their savings. Aside from increasing savings of members from 3,000 riel (US\$0.74) per month at the initiation of the project, to 10,000 riel (US\$2.50) per month in 2008, the credit facility enabled families to sell their products at more competitive prices outside the community. This reduced the role of middle persons, traders lending money in exchange for fish, and provided the families with opportunities to improve household income and increase savings (Rafael, et al., 2010; Figure 4).

**Figure 3. Members of the community in Chonburi Province undertaking waste segregation and recycling (top) and mangrove rehabilitation (bottom).**



In Bataan, Cavite, and Guimaras, Philippines, improvement of existing fish sanctuaries and ecotourism parks in partnership with local people's organizations covered organizational and technical capacity building of the groups on mangrove reforestation, management, regulation, patrolling and monitoring of the protected areas, waste management, as well as alternative livelihood development (GEF SGP, n.d.-b-d-e).

### Invest in institutional strengthening and sustainability

Mechanisms should be established for continued participation of civil society groups as partners of local governments in coastal and marine conservation to enable them to evolve from being passive recipients of projects to being project implementers and leaders. This would include supporting their organizational strengthening and capacity building, recognizing their contributions, and facilitating support to address their concerns and advocacies.

In Batangas Province, Philippines, the *Bantay Dagat* (i.e., Sea Patrol) started as fisherfolk volunteers to support monitoring and surveillance of community-based marine protected areas. *Bantay Dagat* groups from various municipalities were eventually

**Figure 4. Establishment of a microcredit facility (left) and development of alternative livelihood for communities(right) in Preah Sihanouk.**



organized into a network and institutionalized into the government structure as partners of the provincial and municipal governments and law enforcement units responsible for surveillance of the Verde Island Passage Marine Corridor. They were deputized, provided with law enforcement authority, trained on law enforcement and logistics support (communications equipment, boats, etc.). They were also given benefits and incentives, including health and accident insurance packages by the local government in collaboration with private sector partners.

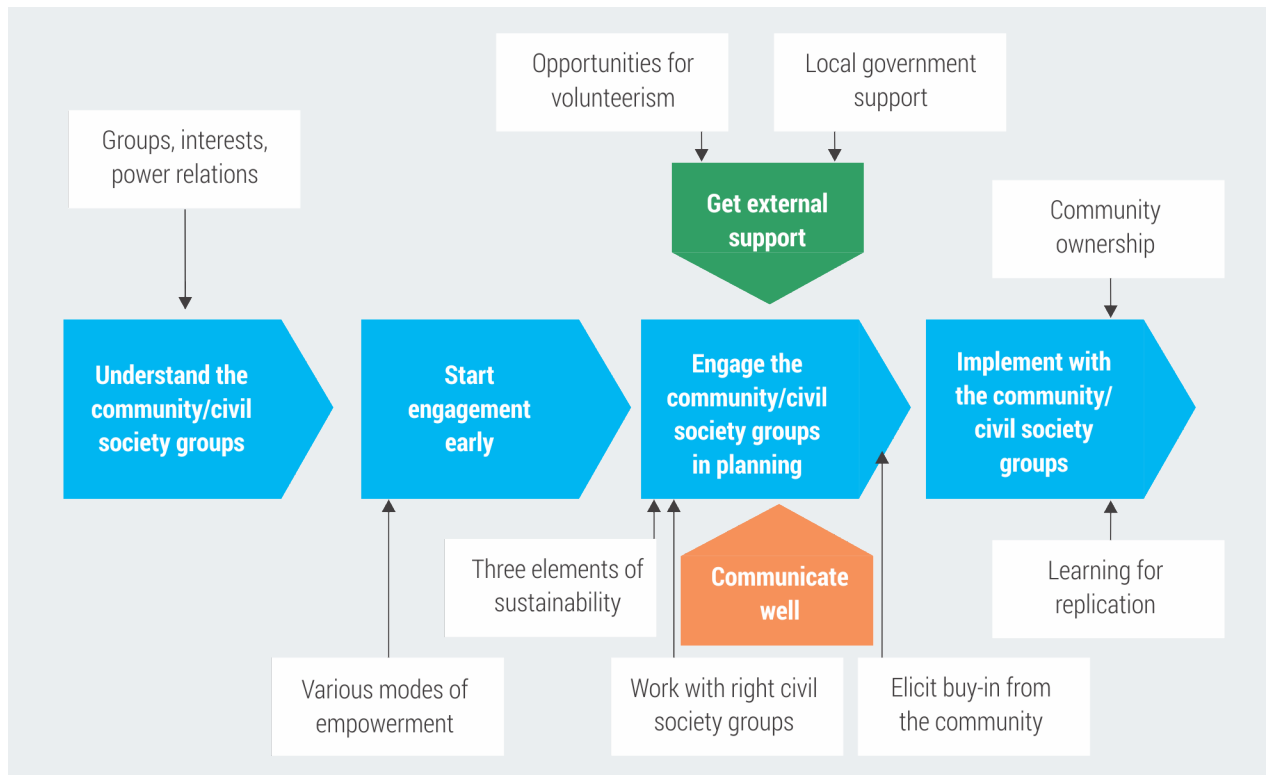
The process and approaches employed by selected local governments in the EAS region in engaging and empowering civil society groups as partners in ICM program development and implementation are summarized in Figure 5.

## Outcomes

**Enhanced ownership and sustainability.** The projects presented above were implemented as part of ICM programs. They highlight how engaging civil society and peoples' organizations enabled local governments to better respond to the challenges and priorities of coastal communities, particularly the poor. By initiating and developing relationships with the civil society groups, the local governments can transition these groups from potential project beneficiaries, or even project adversaries, into organizations that lead and implement project interventions, which continued beyond the projects themselves.

**Empowerment of people and communities.** Participation of civil society groups facilitates two-

**Figure 5. Process of building capacities and partnerships with civil society.**



way communication of interests and concerns between the government and communities, leading to the identification of issues and priorities that are important to communities in general, and to underprivileged and needy sectors of communities in particular. ICM is rooted in the belief that sustainable development of marine and coastal areas can best be addressed through actions that are designed, implemented, and owned by the concerned local government, sectors, and communities, and with benefits such as enhanced food security, increase in household incomes, and sustainable livelihoods that directly accrue to them. For example, the microfinance facility of the ICM program in Stung Hav served as social insurance for its 92 women members. The access to credit in a shorter time period, without restrictive requirements like land titles and other assets as collateral, increased the participation of women in alternative livelihood initiatives at home and in the community.

Engagement of civil society groups in ICM programs can lead to innovations in addressing poverty and the relentless reliance on natural resources extraction by the communities. While the connection looks far removed, this is actually one of the most important interventions. Mr. Prak Visal, a team member that initiated ICM in Preah Sihanouk said: “In areas like this, how can you even start discussing marine and coastal governance if the families don’t even know where to get their next meal?”

**Replication and policy change.** Over time, partnerships with civil society groups yield networks that enable improved natural resource management, capacity development, knowledge exchange, policy advocacy, and sustainability of ICM and related initiatives. These networks expand ICM’s reach, involving greater numbers of organizations and communities, and lead to greater impacts through scaling up, replication, and policy change. The experiences of the various

ICM projects validate the benefits of engaging civil society groups in ICM, such as the following:

- Their participation ensures that their interests and concerns are articulated and evaluated during strategic planning and the preparation of interventions;
- It enables project proponents to better understand the problems and needs of communities that can contribute to better planned interventions, ownership, and sustainability;
- It increases access to knowledge, resources, or skills of civil society groups that can serve the objectives of the project; and
- Their involvement creates greater opportunity to lobby local and national government agencies to play an active role in scaling up and replicating ICM initiatives beyond the original project.

## Lessons Learned

Key lessons learned from the engagement of civil society groups in ICM program development and implementation include:

1. **Engaging groups, who are in close proximity to local problems, is key.** Participation of civil society groups in every stage of the ICM project cycle is important. Direct users and beneficiaries of coastal and marine resources oftentimes have a deeper and broader understanding of local conditions and have a keener sense of strategies that are responsive to local issues (Christie, et al., 2000 in FAO, 2007);
2. **Social groups are a source of social and financial capitals.** Civil society organizations represent both formal and informal sectors. Experience at existing ICM sites in the region has shown that the participation by a broad spectrum of social groups ensures access to a wealth of skills and expertise, experiences, social

and financial capital, and other factors that can contribute to project implementation and achievement of goals;

**3. Socio-cultural diversity enhances governance.**

Each civil society group may have a specific local focus, but their collective engagement gives credence to issues at the macrolevel. This engagement enriches the plurality of experiences that provides direction to addressing cross-cutting issues and providing lessons to other communities confronting similar challenges;

**4. Partnerships must be inclusive.** The capacity of civil society to broaden participation also ensures contribution of unique groups, like the youth sector, who are not traditionally included in environmental programming;

**5. Sustainability is anchored in buy-in and volunteerism.** Civil society groups embody values such as volunteerism and civic action. In many cases, the sustainability of projects and programs is anchored on the sense of ownership of projects. The sense of trust, collaboration, and ownership is developed as the resource users are engaged in implementing management strategies (Christie and White, 1997 in FAO, 2007). In the case of Sihanoukville, mobilizing the fishers to conduct patrolling and mangrove rehabilitation enhanced their sense of having a stake in the project. Volunteerism hinges on a strong sense of belief and conviction that it is the right thing to do, not only for one's family but for the community, which can be fostered in areas where livelihood is closely linked to their environment and people can easily relate environmental degradation to socioeconomic deterioration; and

**6. Capacity building empowers.** The likelihood of project sustainability is increased as civil society groups are engaged (Court, et al., 2006). The experiences in the ICM sites indicate that, with

the necessary training and guidance, civil society groups can build on the achievements of projects not only to sustain but to develop, scale up, and replicate initiatives at new sites.

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