



# ICM Solutions

## Engaging Civil Society Organizations in Sustainable Development of Coastal and Marine Areas through ICM

Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries/  
Shihwa Lake Management Committee

- The human factor, such as local people dedicating themselves to protecting marine and coastal areas and resources, is the most important factor in protecting the local environment and the benefits it provides to communities.
- The lack of capacity, awareness and participation of community groups and civil society organizations is a barrier to effective planning, implementation and sustainability of development projects. 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.
- Integrated coastal management (ICM) provides an opportunity for local governments to work directly with communities and community groups, developing the capacity of and empowering civil society groups to serve as partners in the protection and management of their local areas and resources, and to sustain or even scale up and replicate good practices beyond the initial project.





*The Shihwa Lake in 1996 two years after the dike construction. Pollution inside the lake is apparent.*



*Shihwa Lake today, where birds and animals can dwell.*

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Ministry of Oceans and Fisheries/  
Shihwa Lake Management Committee

## SHIHWA LAKE: A DEVELOPMENT CALAMITY!

Shihwa Lake was formerly a long stretch of tidal mud flat fronting the Yellow Sea along the Republic of Korea's west coast. In 1994, a 12.7 km dike was constructed and the shallow bay became an artificial freshwater lake of approximately 50 km<sup>2</sup>. However, as industry developed around the lake and the population grew, water quality in the lake deteriorated, including algal blooms and fish kills, which affected the local communities' economically, socially and emotionally. Water in the reservoir was declared unfit for agriculture, while traditional fishing activities became unsustainable. Shihwa Lake had become an environmental, social and economic calamity!

A series of public protests ensued in the late 1990s focusing on the urgency for government action to mitigate pollution in Shihwa Lake. In 1999, the Shihwa NGO was organized, putting pressure on the government to abandon its plan for a freshwater lake and demanding a new vision for the Shihwa Lake. The NGO developed a Citizens' Proposal on Shihwa Lake as a lake of hope, which received positive recognition from domestic and international communities. The proposal was pushed into the political agenda during presidential and local elections in 2002, which eventually forced several government agencies to review their existing plans and establish a new development plan for the Shihwa Lake region, in partnership with local communities.

As a result, the Shihwa Lake Management Committee was set up in 2002 involving government agencies and nongovernment and private sector stakeholders. Comprehensive management plans were developed and agreed upon over the period 1996 to 2006, with the Korean government investing about US\$ 1.1 billion for implementation. Presently the government is investing about US\$ 800 million for the third plan, which spans from 2012 to 2016.

Owing to the efforts of the government and the nongovernment and private sectors, Shihwa Lake today is truly becoming a lake of hope for the communities around the lake.

As immediate users of coastal areas, civil society groups have a crucial contribution to the development and implementation of ICM programs. Being users, they tend to have a deeper affinity to what is being managed. This leads to better and broader understanding of issues at stake and greater commitment to take action because of an inherent sense of ownership of place. Most often, environmental degradation is readily recognized by civil society groups because it comes along with a marked decline in livelihood.

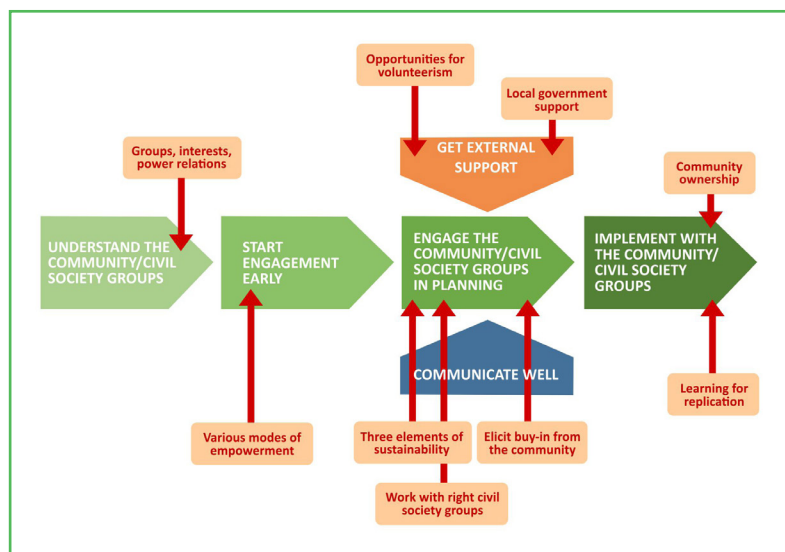
The challenge, of course, is how to transform civil society groups from a bystander status into committed and valuable players in the development and implementation of ICM programs.

## Solutions

**Get buy-in from civil society groups.** ICM provides a window for the direct participation of local, community-based organizations in projects that benefit the local 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.

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

**Tap external support.** The UNDP GEF Small Grants Programme (<http://sgp.undp.org>) is one of the key partners of PEMSEA in engaging community-based organizations (CBOs), nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), and people's organizations (POs) in the implementation of ICM action programmes. The Programme issues grants directly to CBOs and NGOs in recognition of the key role they play as a resource and constituency for sustainable



*ICM Solution: Process of Building Capacities and Partnerships with Civil Society*



development concerns. Small grants allow communities and civil society organizations, in particular those that are poor and vulnerable, to access funding (maximum of US\$ 50,000) as they develop their capacity to participate in and contribute to sustainable development of their communities.

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 Vietnam. These projects have directly contributed to the objectives and targets identified in coastal strategies/sustainable development plans adopted by the local governments, including mangrove replanting programmes, sustainable management of crab stocks, monitoring and regulation of fishing in designated zones, exclusion of commercial (illegal) fishers from coastal waters designated as small-scale fishing zones, alternative livelihood programmes, microfinancing and savings programmes for women's organizations, and various other related activities.

Some of these projects are highlighted below.

**Find the right civil society group to work with.** The ICM experience in Preah Sihanouk, Cambodia, demonstrates the value in working with civil society groups with a stake and history in the area.

Fishery, coastal tourism, and waste management are the three main issues identified in the coastal strategy implementation plan of Preah Sihanouk, which was prepared in consultation with various stakeholder groups including local communities and civil society groups. Fisheries deterioration, especially in the District of Stung Hav, was a result of a combination of socioeconomic problems including poverty, and the entry of trawl fishers, which resulted in competing uses of dwindling resources. It was therefore necessary to come up with a strategy 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 community-based organization composed of fishers in Stung Hav, to develop a project proposal for submission to the Small Grants Programme. The project was initiated in 2006, and included protection of community fishing grounds, rehabilitation and protection of mangrove areas, rehabilitation of an existing freshwater reservoir, and improvement of community livelihoods.

For the issue of protecting community fishing grounds, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), a local NGO, was tapped to lead a dialogue between “encroachers” (fishers from other communities catching fish in the fishing grounds belonging to other



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



*More than 600 stakeholders in Preah Sihanouk were mobilized for mangrove reforestation in Stung Hav.*

communities), in this case, mostly from Sre Ambel, with fishers 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 boundaries.

The AFSC was fit to contribute to this component with its prior extensive work organizing fishers groups in neighboring communities. It had staff in the locality, and this afforded it better capability to bring together the conflicting sides into a dialogue.

**Partner governments and civil society organizations.** The District of Stung Hav project, with its various targets in support of sustainable fisheries, provided the framework for a number of organizations to work together. The other organizations included the Fishery Action Coalition Team (FACT), Star Kampuchea, and the Sihanoukville Fishery Administration. Each had a particular advantage in mobilizing action among members of the community.

The Fishery Administration, a government agency, took on the challenge of 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 entry of illegal fishers into community fishing grounds. Artificial reefs—molded concrete blocks—were deployed near the boundaries: first, to deter trawlers from entering as their nets would get caught and ripped by the blocks; and second, the artificial reefs doubled as spawning grounds for fish species.

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. 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 attest to significant increase in catch in the surrounding areas. An evaluation by the Small Grants Programme indicated a 7 to 10 kg increase (25% to 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. Thirty-three volunteers take turns roving the area to ensure large-scale fishing vessels stay beyond the district's fishing grounds and illegal fishing activities are monitored.

**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 the Small Grants Programme, local and provincial governments, local universities, and NGOs, the fishers were converted from being coral miners to leaders in coral reef conservation in their area. They are presently operating an ecotourism programme in partnership with private tour agencies providing tourists with hands on experience in coral conservation as well as releasing key species, such as sea turtles, to the sea.



*Members of the community in Chonburi Province were involved in waste segregation and recycling and mangrove rehabilitation.*

In Chonburi Province, Thailand, fisher's associations were engaged in 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

eco-tour guiding, in support of the implementation of the ICM Action Plans in various municipalities in Chonburi.

In Preah Sihanouk, Cambodia, a microcredit facility with a savings and lending component was introduced to create supplemental income and capital to help meet basic family needs. The savings group was composed

of 142 members, 92 of whom were women. Fourteen savings groups were formed, and each 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\$ 0.75) 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 middlemen, traders lending money in exchange of buying fish, providing the families with opportunities to sell their fish at higher prices, improve household income, and increase savings.



*In Preah Sihanouk, activities under the SGP include the establishment of a microcredit facility and improvement of livelihood.*

## Results

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

**Empowerment of people and communities.** Participation of civil society groups facilitates two-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 (e.g., the poor, women, children). 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 that directly accrue to them, including enhanced food security, increase in household incomes, and sustainable livelihoods. 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, without restrictive requirements like titles and other assets as collateral, increased the participation of women in alternative livelihood initiatives at home and in the community.

The engagement of civil society groups in ICM programs has led to innovations in addressing poverty, one cause of relentless reliance on, and extraction of, natural resources by communities. While the connection looks far out, this is actually one of the most important interventions. Mr. Prak Visal, part of the team 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?" (Rafael, et al., 2010).



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 in activities related to ICM objectives, and lead to greater impacts through scaling up, replication, and policy change. The experiences of the various ICM projects cited validate the importance of engaging civil society participation in ICM. Several advantages have been cited. First, participation of civil society groups ensures that their interests and concerns are articulated, heard, and evaluated during strategic planning and the preparation of interventions. Second, it enables project proponents to better understand the problems and needs of communities that usually contribute to better planned interventions, ownership, and sustainability. Third, involving various sectors increases access to knowledge, resources, or skills of civil society groups that can serve the objectives of the project. Finally, the presence of civil society groups creates greater opportunity to lobby local governments and national government agencies to play an active role in scaling up and replicating ICM initiatives beyond the original project.

## Lessons Learned

1. **Connect with civil society groups early in the ICM project cycle.** The participation of civil society groups in every stage of the ICM project cycle is important, from conceptualizing, planning, and implementing, to evaluating the interventions. Civil society groups, being direct users and beneficiaries of coastal and marine resources, oftentimes have a deeper and broader understanding of the root causes of issues and have a keener sense of what interventions are more appropriate and how to implement them (Leowenson 2013).
2. **Identify the main focus of civil society groups.** Civil society organizations represent both formal and informal sectors. Experience at existing ICM sites in the region has shown that the participation from 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. Each civil society group may have a specific local focus, yet their collective engagement gives credence to issues at the macro level. This engagement enriches the plurality of experiences that provides direction in how to address cross-cutting issues and provide lessons to other communities confronting similar challenges. 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.
3. **Create opportunities and incentives for volunteerism.** Civic society groups embody values such as volunteerism/civic action. In many cases, the sustainability of projects and programmes is anchored on the sense of ownership of projects. (Stiglitz, et al., 2008). In the case of Sihanoukville, mobilizing the fishers to conduct patrolling and rehabilitation of mangroves raised their involvement and the 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 easily fostered in areas where livelihood is closely linked to their environment as people can easily relate environmental degradation to socioeconomic deterioration.
4. **Invest in sustainability and replication.** Sustainability of projects 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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