

Towards Sustainable Coastal Development in Thailand: Marine and Coastal Resources Policy Green Paper

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This Policy Brief, which takes into consideration the key findings of the Marine and Coastal Resources Policy Green Paper, has been proposed to the Department of Fisheries of Thailand as the CHARM implementing agency and to the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources as the Secretariat of the National Sub-Committee on Marine and Coastal Resources Management under the aegis of the National Environment Board and the Deputy Prime Minister.

The Green Paper and its Policy Brief, which were prepared by the CHARM Integrated Coastal Management Group (Box 1), are the products of years of local coastal resources management initiatives and specialist studies carried out along the coast of Thailand including the last five years of operation of the Coastal Habitats and Resources Management (CHARM) and partners' coastal co-management experiences on both the Andaman coast and the Gulf of Thailand. CHARM is a collaborative project of the European Union (EU) and the Government of Thailand. Workshops have been held to obtain feedback for the Green Paper. Based on this feedback a paper was prepared with the objective of setting out Thailand's future policy on coastal resources management, where its progressive implementation could start through appropriate institutional and legal arrangements in the implementation of priority programs and demonstration projects. The Environmental Management Program and its Marine and Coastal Resources

Management Plan is envisaged to generate wide public support for a new and innovative policy while the civil society's growing strength could be harnessed to develop a shared responsibility for sustainable coastal development. This Policy Brief presents the need for a Marine and Coastal Resources Policy, a vision for Thailand's coasts well as the principles, goals and objectives for coastal resources management. It also presents possible institutional and legal arrangements for implementing the proposed Marine and Coastal Resources Policy.

Need for a Coastal Policy

Thailand's coast is a rich national heritage which provides enormous benefits to its people. It offers many opportunities for future economic and social development, particularly in under-developed areas of the country. At present, the value of coastal ecosystems as a cornerstone for development has not been appropriately acknowledged in decision-making processes. The country's valuable coastal assets together with the future development opportunities will only be squandered unless the diversity, health and productivity of coastal ecosystems are maintained. Thailand needs to invest in coastal resources management to realize and sustain the benefits and opportunities that its coast could offer. A radical new approach is needed to manage the coastal resources wisely and to harness them for sustainable coastal development. A Coastal and Marine Resources Policy is therefore crucial in achieving this change. The CHARM Green Paper sets out a new approach to marine and coastal resources management that aims to: realize the coastal benefits; sustain coastal benefits; and promote proactive and cooperative governance.

Realizing Coastal Benefits

Thailand's maritime area covers over 378,000 km² including the territorial waters extending 12 nautical miles from the coast and the Thai EEZ. Two-thirds of the area (252,000 km²) covers the Gulf of Thailand and the rest

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(126,000 km²) in the Andaman Sea. The total coastline length is 2,880 km with 1,920 km on the Gulf of Thailand and the remainder along the Andaman Sea in the southwest. Of the country's 76 provinces, 23 including Bangkok are coastal provinces. Thailand is endowed with rich coastal and marine resources, world class tourist destinations amidst its sparkling beaches and coral reefs, and an extensive coastline that is home to 25% of the nation's population. Together, coastal and marine ecosystem goods and services account for 5% of the GDP.

But coastal ecosystems have an economic value that goes beyond the marketing benefits supporting human lives and livelihoods through the provision of food and materials, nutrient cycling, waste processing, and other essential goods and services. In addition, the country's coast has significant aesthetic, cultural, educational, scientific and spiritual value that also offers future development prospects exceeding those available in most other areas of the country. Thailand's coast therefore provides an important basis for the country's future economic development, poverty reduction and sustainable job creation.

Sustaining Coastal Benefits

Providing benefits on a sustained basis to all is only possible if the coastal ecosystems on which those benefits depend are wisely managed. This means managing the coastal ecosystems in a way that recognizes their inter-connected nature. Since coastal ecosystems involve complex biological, chemical and physical inter-relationships between land and

sea, the coast is a high-energy environment that is subject to constant change. These conditions give rise to a variety of landforms, plant and animal species and habitats, and to an abundance of natural resources.

The coast is also the site of complex inter-relationships between humans and natural systems. Although coastal ecosystems are resilient, they are finite and vulnerable to over-use, pollution and damage. Inappropriate decisions can expose human life and property to high risks. While many activities take place at the coast, these are seldom coordinated, reducing the overall benefits. Without effective management, many coastal resources would be over-used and degraded to the point where social and economic benefits can no longer be drawn from them. Specifically, Thailand's coast requires a dedicated, coordinated and integrated management approach to sustain the coastal ecosystems on which the coastal benefits depend.

Promoting Proactive and Cooperative Governance

Current institutional and legal arrangements for coastal management seem inefficient and fragmented, and fail to coordinate the many activities taking place at the coast. A proactive Marine and Coastal Resources Policy is therefore needed to promote harmony between sectoral policies, strengthen institutional arrangements, promote coordination and integration of planning, management and investment strategies, and strengthen the human resource base for coastal management.



The Green Paper proposes an approach to coastal management that emphasizes facilitation rather than regulation. It promotes cooperative governance and public-private partnerships to promote a shared responsibility for the management of the country's coastal heritage, and also suggests mechanisms for coordination and integration between different sectors. In order to develop and implement this new approach, an investment must be made in coastal management. It is only in this way that the diversity, health and productivity of coastal ecosystems could be maintained, and thereby realizing and sustaining the benefits and opportunities that the coast provide. Failure to make such an investment will leave many coastal communities in poverty and reduce options for future development.

Vision and Principles

The proposed Marine and Coastal Resources Policy must be based on accepted public values and should provide a clear guidance for addressing issues of public concern. First, an agreement should be reached on a national vision for the country's coast followed by the appropriate principles, goals and objectives for coastal management. Possible institutional and legal arrangements can then be developed and considered, ensuring that the policy is implemented in a practical and proactive way in order that issues of concern are addressed and the vision is realized.

Still in its infancy, a proposed vision statement (**Box 2**) has been derived from many vision statements collectively identified at the local level. Although many proposals were presented, a shared collective vision at national level was lacking so a proposed vision was established based on certain principles for coastal management (**Box 3**).

Goals and Objectives

The goals and objectives (**Box 4**) of the Coastal Policy have been organized along with the conceptual framework of the five-year (2007-2011) Environmental Management Plan as adapted to coastal zone management issues. These are: Goal 1: Community empowerment; Goal 2: Improvement of management framework; Goal 3: Mobilization of local administration; Goal 4: Livelihoods development; Goal 5: Enhancement of natural resources; and Goal 6: Restoration and monitoring

Box 2. Proposed National Vision

Collectively to help conserve natural resources and enhance environmental quality for society emphasizing: 1) the beautiful scenery; 2) a clean and good water quality and environment; 3) the equity of marine and coastal resources exploitation; 4) the ecological balance; and 5) wealthy aquatic resources.

Box 3. Principles for Coastal Management

National heritage. The coast should be retained as a national heritage, with public rights to access and benefit from coastal resources

Economic development. Coastal economic development opportunities should be optimized to meet basic human needs and to promote human well-being

Social equity. Coastal management efforts should ensure that all people, including future generations, are treated with dignity, fairness and justice

Ecological integrity. The diversity, health and productivity of coastal ecosystems should be maintained

Holism. The coast should be treated as an indivisible system, recognizing the inter-relationships between coastal users and ecosystems and between the land and the sea

Risk aversion and precaution. Coastal management efforts should adopt a risk-averse and precautionary approach under conditions of uncertainty

Duty of care. Coastal management is a shared responsibility, thus all people should be responsible for the consequences of their actions, and have the duty to act with care to avoid damage to others and their coastal environment

Coordination and integration. Coastal management efforts should be coordinated and integrated, and conducted in an open, inclusive and transparent manner

Institutional and Legal Arrangements

Institutional arrangements

Appropriate institutional and legal arrangements need to be considered while the preferred arrangements should be put in place. This will require the participation and support of all spheres of government, the private sector and civil society. Furthermore, it would also require the harmonization of policies and actions of institutions responsible for different aspects of coastal management.

National Level

In the short and medium-term, the most appropriate vehicle for a national coordination is the Subcommittee for Marine and Coastal Resources Management, recently set up through the National Environmental Board (NEB) under the Deputy Prime Minister's authority. The Subcommittee is primarily responsible for consideration, approval and follow-up of national marine and coastal resources management policies and plans, checking compliance of line Ministries with the Coastal Policy, harmonizing sectoral activities and fostering

Box 4. Objectives corresponding to each goal

GOAL 1: Community Empowerment

- Enhancement of coastal and fishery resource management by community
- Zoning of conservation area with people's participation
- Enhancing coordination among community, with government and concerned parties
- Promoting awareness on conservation and utilization of marine resources
- Community empowerment for community based mangrove ecosystem management
- Promoting study, research and develop marine and coastal resource database
- Collecting local knowledge and wisdom concerning coastal resource management (CRM)

GOAL 2: Improvement of Management Framework

- Creating motivation and mechanisms to reduce fishing capacity
- Controlling and zoning of fishing ground and conservation area
- Disseminating updated information about catches to assess fishery resources supply
- Developing rules and regulations for organizations concerned with CRM

GOAL 3: Mobilization of Local Administration

- Strengthening of local administration organization for CRM
- Encouraging local administration organizations to participate in CRM
- Encouraging local administration organizations to participate in pollution control

GOAL 4: Livelihood Development

- Promoting integrated fish culture and develop alternative livelihoods
- Enhancing coastal fishing capacity
- Increasing added-value of marine products
- Setting up Community Seafood Bank
- Developing mangrove forest into a center of nature study and eco-tourism
- Setting up resource utilization rules to minimize conflicts and compliance with rules

GOAL 5: Enhancement of Natural Resources

- Evaluating the carrying capacity of natural resources in the Thai seas and major freshwater courses
- Developing fish culture technologies
- Providing incentives for sustainable and balanced utilization of natural resources

GOAL 6: Restoration and Monitoring

- Restoring fishery resource production at the level of other countries' stocks
- Overseeing and controlling environmental quality management of production areas to meet international standards

strategic alliances. The Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) serves as its secretariat.

Provincial Level

The Provincial Administration Act (1997) has mandated the Provincial Administration Organization (PAO) to protect, take care and maintain/enhance the natural resources and

the environment. As proposed in the draft on Promotion of Marine and Coastal Resources Management Act, the Provincial Marine and Coastal Resources Committee would be led by the Governor as Chairman and the Head of Provincial Office as the Vice-Chairman with qualified members coming from the main department regional offices. It will be in charge of the preparation and submission of Provincial Marine and Coastal Resources Management Plans complying with the national policy while the Provincial Natural Resource and Environment Officer would act as member and secretary.

Local Level

The local sphere of government is responsible for a wide range of executive functions relating to coastal management. The Sub-district Administration Organization Act gives the Tambon Administration Organization (TAO) the authority to develop their respective sub-district in terms of economic, social and cultural aspects including the protection, maintenance and enhancement of the natural resources and the environment. The TAO may issue district regulations as long as they are not against the general law or the TAO roles and functions. Following the draft on Promotion of Marine and Coastal Resources Management Act, it would be supported by the Village- or Tambon-level Local Marine and Coastal Resources Committees.

Day-to-day coastal management

Since the great majority of day-to-day coastal management work takes place at local government level, the ongoing executive functions of TAO, municipalities, district councils and traditional leadership structures should include natural resource management, waste management, local economic development, environmental health, and tourism promotion. Currently, the capacity levels of local authorities along the coast greatly vary. Since the long-term aim of the national policy is to ensure that the capacity of local government is developed, coastal considerations should therefore be effectively incorporated into this mainstream work. In the short-term, the focus should be on education and training programs for local and district councilors or the so-called "Coastal Community Officers" and officials, traditional leaders and community-based organizations. These programs should explore the implications of the national policy for coastal management at local level, and may be accompanied by the development of guidelines for local coastal management by the National Marine and Coastal Resources Committee in consultation with provincial lead agents. In areas where local political and administrative structures are weak, a Provincial Marine and Coastal Resources Committee funded by government and donors will provide assistance where possible with the aim of strengthening the structures' overall capacity.

Building co-management

A long-term aim of the national policy should be the establishment of local- and regional-level coastal forums and networks in as many coastal areas as possible in order to promote dialogue between government, business and civil society stakeholders. The existing Andaman Triangle Network has been capable of leading the sharing of information and better communication between the Tambon communities and local authorities up to the provincial level.

In the short-term, the Provincial Marine and Coastal Resources Committee and lead departments' provincial offices should assist in developing these local coastal forums wherever possible. One such promising network is the Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) Local Governments Network initiated by the Partnerships in Environmental Management for the Seas of East Asia (PEMSEA) regional project, recently expanded through the CHARM national project. When local environmentally oriented forums already exist like fisheries forums, catchment management forums, advisory forums and subcommittees of development forums, the possibility of using these existing structures to address coastal issues should be explored. Such local coastal forums and networks may be in a position to advise local authorities in dealing with detailed coastal management issues in a practical way. Having sectors of local government represented in such forums could as well assist the Provincial Marine and Coastal Resources Committees in achieving coordination between these sectors and in ensuring that coastal considerations are incorporated in the provincial coastal management plans.

Managing local demonstration projects

Another key aspect of implementation of the national policy at local level is the selection and possible extension of a number of local demonstration projects along the coast in the short-term. The existing coastal management-related projects should be part of a nationally coordinated Plan of Action, and should be systematically used to provide experiences and lessons learned about the way co-management and finally integrated coastal management should be promoted. Capacity building for demonstration project management structures should be one of the focus areas of national/provincial education and training programs by developing the members' organizational, financial and coastal management skills. In each province, a coastal coordinator should assist management structures in becoming operational in the medium-term. In the longer term, this should lead to the further development of structures to run local coastal management initiatives like co-management arrangements or public-private partnerships on a self-sustaining basis.

Non-Government Roles and Functions

Achieving the ideal of sustainable coastal development depends on the establishment of partnerships and co-responsibility between the government, the private sector, civil society organizations and the research community. The proposed responsibilities of the non-governmental role-players are outlined below, with particular focus on short- and medium-terms.

Private sector

The private sector has a critical role to play in achieving effective and integrated coastal management. Stakeholders with commercial interest in fishing, aquaculture, agriculture, forestry, industry, tourism, and property development have direct interest in and the responsibility for protecting coastal ecosystems in order to sustain the flow of coastal goods and services on which their businesses depend. Where appropriate, these businesses should incorporate coastal management issues in their safety, health and environment programs.

Civil society

Every day, civil society shows valuable role in mobilizing support for coastal management and in carrying out monitoring, research and awareness building as well as education and training functions. A number of developmental and environmental NGOs have been instrumental in raising public awareness of coastal issues in Thailand specifically on the need to conserve coastal resources and ecosystem services and functions for the benefit of coastal communities. In particular, many NGOs have also played central roles during emergency, e.g. during the 2005 Tsunami, as well as in initiating and supporting local demonstration projects along the coast, particularly in under-resourced parts of the coastal provinces.

Community-based organizations (CBOs) in coastal communities are often centrally concerned with the utilization of coastal resources and the promotion of economic development opportunities. This places the CBOs in a critical position to influence coastal management and to assist in achieving sustainable coastal development. In particular, local demonstration projects based on co-management approaches can generate community support, while ensuring that these projects meet the basic needs of coastal communities. CBOs should also play a valuable role in gathering and disseminating information through the development of Information and Learning Centers in order to contribute to such efforts as public awareness, education and training. In particular areas of the coast, specific user-groups, such as sea gypsies, recreational anglers and sailors, should also be involved as stakeholders in specific coastal management activities.

Research community

The research community has special roles to play in research, monitoring, public awareness building, education and training and in providing specialist support for coastal management. In Thailand, tertiary institutions including universities and research institutions have been at the forefront of coastal research, providing the knowledge base for the development of thinking on coastal management issues. In collaboration with the government agencies and the civil society (NGOs, CBOs), further applied research should be developed in both the natural and social sciences contributing to a better understanding of the biophysical and socio-economic state of the coast.

Legal arrangements

Most of the substantive issues involved in managing the coastal zone and marine areas are already governed by existing legislations. Other laws in force regulate the sectors and industries that impact the coastal zone and marine areas, in particular the Ministry of Agriculture and the Department of Fisheries of Thailand. This conventional approach to regulation means that coastal and marine resources are governed piecemeal. Although the provisions of sectoral laws are implemented within each sector, little or no regard is put on the effects of implementation of the regulations on other sectors or coastal communities. Besides the need for possible revision and adjustment of these laws for better harmonization, there is also a need for a legal framework that recognizes coastal communities and gives them legal personality while providing an inter-ministerial, cross-sectoral committee mechanism to coordinate all of the governmental actors that already operate in the coastal zone and marine areas. The draft Promotion of Marine and Coastal Resources Management Act, prepared in 2006 by the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR), attempts to do this as well as implement constitutional efforts that guarantees of citizen's rights to participate in natural resource management through access to information and participation in decision-making.

If adopted as drafted, it would provide a framework within which the multiple government authorities operating in the coastal zone and marine areas can coordinate and harmonize their functions, and provide for resolving conflicts of jurisdiction among government authorities and for resolving disputes among stakeholders. The issues of allowing citizens participation in resource management and of sharing benefits with local people have a long history of being highly contentious in Thailand. If this draft Act can be adopted with its co-management and benefit-sharing provisions relatively intact, it will provide a precedent for governing other types of ecosystems as well. The draft is now in the hands of the Minister of Natural Resources

and Environment for consideration and submission to the Secretary-General of the Cabinet, at which time a standard governmental process of vetting a draft law will begin. It may be anticipated that the draft Act will be revised several times before being submitted to the National Assembly for debate and adoption.

Next Steps

September to November 2007

Meetings and workshops will be held in the coastal regions during this period, to assist interested and affected parties in developing a good working knowledge of the Green Paper. The meetings will also provide opportunities to identify matters of concern in the Green Paper and to suggest alternative policy proposals as well as seek as much better agreement as possible on matters relating to the coastal regions and provinces.

December 2007 to April 2008

The regional and provincial gatherings will provide the basis for preparing a draft national Coastal Policy document that were distributed before the end of 2007 for public comment. This draft policy will form the basis for a National Policy Event(s) in early 2008. The policy formulation phase of the Coastal Management Policy Program will be concluded at the end of April 2008. This is envisaged to set the scene for the Government of Thailand to adopt and implement a new Marine and Coastal Resources Policy in 2008.

Feedbacks

The purpose of the Green Paper is to stimulate discussion and debate about the most appropriate approach for managing the marine and coastal resources of Thailand. Feedbacks to the further development of the policy are being collated. Further information about the Green Paper and coastal co-management issues can be obtained on www.charmproject.org where full-text project documents and reports can be downloaded.

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