

Fisheries and co-management in practice, Thailand

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Many faces of the sea – a tropical slug.
(photo: CHARM)

Summary

The Coastal Habitats and Resources Management (CHARM) has developed its approach around five attributes of co-management: participation, partnership, capacity building, development of integrated approaches and methods, and learning and adaptation.

Co-management is a dynamic partnership between resource users and the government. It works at the interface between the ecosystem and the social system and is seeking changes in the state of the first by bringing about changes in the behaviour of the second.

The main reason for the creation of the CHARM project was the recognition that overfishing of the marine waters of Thailand caused negative effects on the marine fish stocks, ecosystems and the coastal fishermen. The total marine annual catch is double the estimated maximum sustainable yield. The Thai government responded, in partnership with the European Commission, by carrying out the large-scale CHARM project between 2002 and 2007

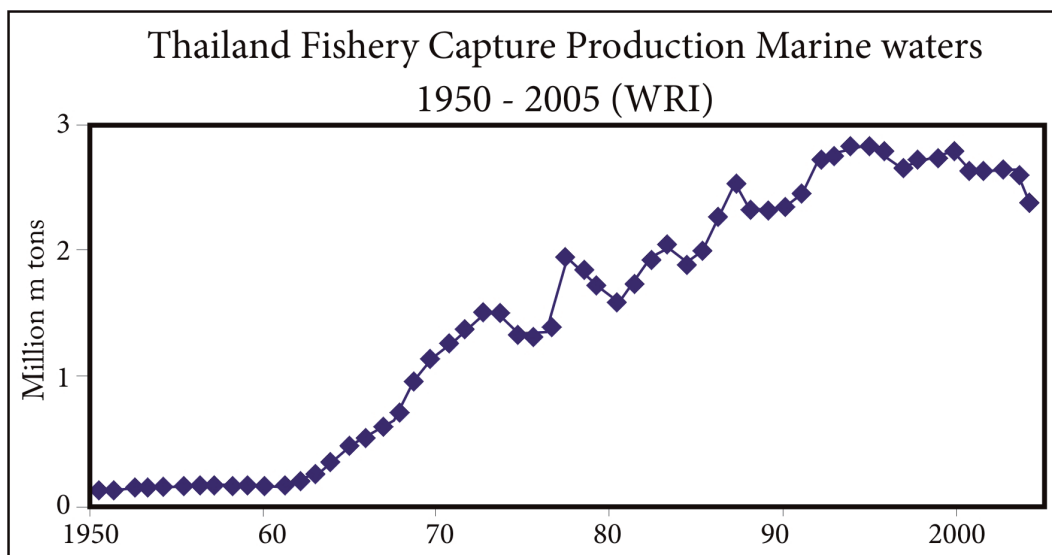
The achievements of fisheries institutions observed in Southern Thailand highlight the validity of co-management in addressing conflicts and gaps in fishery management. Co-management and rights-based fisheries offer a working decentralised system, sustainable at a national level and include some management rights entrusted to the local fishery institutions. This establishes them as partners of the government in management, with user rights, which aim to change their behaviour toward becoming more responsible for local marine resources.

CHARM supported over 200 local fishery projects and showed that the future of coastal resources co-management for better coastal governance in Thailand lies on the one hand with skilled self-organised community-based organisations and on the other with strong, committed and enlightened local government. An example of results of this co-management approach is provided in the improvement of fishery status in the Phang-Nga Bay during 1997-2005.

Self-organization and collective action do not always come easily to fishermen, which often follow local traditions. Because of this, capacity building by government agencies is a prerequisite for ensuring the involvement of most communities in local fisheries management, including conflict resolution. Institutional capacity building, begins at the national level, but must include provincial management bodies and fishing communities. The future fields of engagement should also be broadened to enhance community based tourism and small enterprises. This is a long-term process that will take years and require lasting political will and endeavour.

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Thai capture fishery in marine waters in metric tons 1950 – 2005, with several interruptions, but with a gradual decline after the 1995 maximum production of 2.8 million m ton (WRI). This recognition of gradually decreasing fish production accompanied by an increased fishery fleet, was one of the reasons why CHARM - project was created. (source: WRI, adapted by R. Misdorp)



*Learning, discussing and adapting to a changing fishery culture.
(photo: CHARM Annual Booklet, 2005)*