

Different Gardens, Different Blossoms: an analysis of the experience with community based coastal resource management in the Philippines, Viet Nam and Cambodia

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Abstract

Community Based Coastal Resource Management (CBCRM) initiatives in Southeast Asia have emerged from a range of donor-funded projects, government programs and civil society initiatives. Numerous social, political and cultural factors contribute to how CBCRM efforts unfold. Community-based management may be endorsed at different scales i.e. by local communities or at a national level, leading to different types of resource management institutions and policies. Impacts, therefore, vary within and across scales. Questions arising from these experiences include probing broad factors that facilitate CBCRM processes, while understanding context-specific realities.

This paper will examine the experiences of CBCRM in the Philippines, Viet Nam and Cambodia, drawing upon the authors' experiences working in the region. Specifically, factors such as the impacts of decentralization processes, scale, sustainability and equity issues will be probed. CBCRM processes appear to be unfolding differently in each context, resulting in varying degrees of local power (ranging between communities to government dominance in the scale of management arrangements). Are the benefits from CBCRM processes widely shared? Key factors contributing to the success of CBCRM include working at multiple scales, nurturing local initiatives and a political commitment to this type of approach. However, successes are modulated by each social and cultural context, which are perhaps even locally specific.

In order to assess the context-specific impacts of CBCRM, a series of questions will be explored. For example, 'people power' and a strong decentralization mandate has been associated with CBCRM in the Philippines, facilitating considerable public participation linked to an advocacy agenda involving civil society actors whose alliances and networks form, collapse and regroup regularly. Do such decentralization processes give real 'power' to local governments and communities or is this just an offloading of responsibilities? This situation differs from Cambodia where CBCRM is far newer; however, CBCRM appears to be proliferating within a hierarchical context where decentralization processes are just beginning. A key question for government agencies in the Cambodian context, for instance, is what role communities might play in community-based management. In contrast, Viet Nam presents a challenging situation for CBCRM: it is difficult to get local participation in community-based management, and state control governance remains pervasive.

Insights from the Philippines, Vietnam and Cambodia will enable a better analysis of factors that can contribute towards successful CBCRM initiatives. Further questions to be probed include: what is sustainable about these CBCRM processes? Is scaling up having a concept adopted as national policy, as with recent policy shifts and legislation? Or does real scaling up take place when there is popular support for CBCRM and mechanisms in place at the local level to ensure its implementation? In order to assess these and other factors, we will consider various ways to

evaluate the impacts of CBCRM, including an analysis of the social-ecological changes achieved through CBCRM in each context.

Community-based coastal resource management (CBCRM) initiatives are sprouting in many parts of Southeast Asia emerging from a wide range of donor-funded projects, government programs and civil society sources. CBCRM has been endorsed by many different actors from local communities to a national level, and applied at many different scales, from protecting a village level mangrove forest to bay wide resource management leading to different types of resource management institutions and policies. CBCRM impacts, therefore, vary within and across scales. The variety of experiences gives rise to many questions that include probing broad factors that facilitate CBCRM processes, within context-specific realities.

This paper will deal with issues of decentralization processes, scale and equity, and their impacts on CBCRM. It will discuss how CBCRM processes appear to be unfolding in different contexts, resulting in varying degrees of local power and then ask the question on how benefits are shared. It will talk about how CBCRM in the Philippines is strongly associated with the Filipino “people power” and a decentralization mandate that favors strong local participation and then asks if such processes give real ‘power’ to local governments and communities or is this just an offloading of responsibilities. It will describe the different situation of CBCRM in Cambodia and Viet Nam, where CBCRM is newer but taking root in spite of the challenges it faces in a more state-centered political regime, and then asks what role communities might play in community-based management.

These questions will be raised largely from country-specific realities but efforts will be made to analyze them in the broader regional context. The paper will relate the questions with further reflections and general factors related with the sustainability of the community-based natural resource management (CBNRM) processes in Southeast Asia.

CBCRM and Community-Based Organizations

Community organizing is a core strategy of CBCRM strategies in the region. The CBCRM approach is based on the premise that resource management approaches should build on the

inherent capacities and practical experience of communities. Organizing facilitates the creation of community institutions, structures, programs and systems.

Philippines

In the Philippines, organizing efforts lead to the formation of a community structure called a people's organization (PO). A PO is an organized group of community residents whose members take the lead in local resource management initiatives. Often, POs are organized at the "barangay" or village level. In some cases, a PO has members from different villages. Some POs are mixed groups of women and men; in others, a separate women's organization is formed. At a larger scale there are resource management organizations such as the Danao Bay Resource Management Organization (Heinen, 2003). A PO can also be a multipurpose cooperative, a savings and credit organization, a resource management cooperative, or some other form of resource protection association.

A PO is not a formal village organization, which is viewed as a government organization. In the Philippines, community-based natural resources management approaches are associated with people power and grassroots development. Community organizers are usually NGO workers or fisherfolk leaders and not the staff of government departments or academic institutions. Even in CBCRM projects that take place within larger government resource management programs, the government agency usually partners with a local NGO to organize the communities.

The PO in the Philippines becomes the representative of the community in decision-making processes such as in negotiating with the government on the access and use of resources. It is frequently involved in law-making in fisheries councils and thus in making decisions on regulations and restrictions on resource use. The PO could be the legal holder of a tenurial instrument as in the case of a mangrove stewardship agreement or a declared marine reserve. It is therefore a negotiating body, a resource tenure holder, and overall community representative (Gollin & Kho, 2002). The PO's roles in resource management are layered, complex and demanding.

Vietnam

In Viet Nam, community organizing involves the participation of some people within the already organized mass organizations e.g. women's union, fishers/farmers union and youth union.

Organizing also necessarily includes the participation of commune and village authorities. Some examples include the Phu Long and Van Hung communes (CRP & IMA, 2004) or the Ea Sup reservoir (Logarta et.al, 2001). In the reservoir, a core group of fishers was organized, which eventually became the interim board of the community organization. Subsequently, local authorities recognized the organization but it was unfortunately placed under the farmer's union, making it a sub-union subject to the decisions of the main union. In Phu Long commune, a Marine Sanctuary and Management Council was established by the Commune People's Committee and it became the primary management and decision-making body for all sanctuary-related activities.

The organizing experience in Hue is similar. To ban electric fishing in Quang Thai Commune in the Tam Giang lagoon, a self-management committee worked with the Quang Thai People's Committee facilitated by Hue University researchers. The committee also led awareness building activities. The researchers in the meantime facilitated external support to households which would give up electric fishing. What is noteworthy in the Hue experience is how the researchers serve as links between the government and the community people. Aside from electric fishing, the widening of waterways in Phu Tan is another major problem. These waterways were narrowed by the increase in the number of net pens in the lagoon. The research team facilitated the formation of the Government Fisher Joint Committee for Research that led the investigation of the problem on the narrow waterways and recommended workable solutions which are acceptable to all parties concerned. With this process, the fishers felt they were making a contribution in solving their problems while the local authority, on the other hand, deepened their understanding of the lagoon ecology and became increasingly aware of the potential benefits of resource management. What was important in this process was having a common goal that revolved around the resources of the lagoon, the livelihoods of fishers, fishing and aquaculture activities and local fishery management system (Tuy n, 2001; Phap, 2002)

Historically, lagoon communities in Viet Nam were organized into groups of fishers called vans. A van was a self-managed unit that closely collaborated with the village authorities in controlling and managing natural resources, like in the case of the Tam Giang lagoon. Although overall village management fell into the hands of village authorities, the vans play a major role in regulating fishery use, resolving fisheries conflicts and forming the rules to protect the resources and maintain fishing activities in an orderly way. The vans were bounded by family ties, marriage, friendship and profession. Before 1945, there was a van for fixed gear fishers and another for mobile gear fishers in the lagoon (Phap, 2001; Phap 2002). With the change of political climate in Viet Nam, beginning from the Ngo Dinh administration (1959-1963) to the Liberation Period in 1975 and the Doi Moi (time of renovation) after 1988, the van slowly disappeared and the social roles and dynamics in fishing communities changed (Phap, 2001).

In effect, what happened in Viet Nam is that the van was lost as a potential community management system. With its demise, the traditional role of fishers in resource management was lost too in spite of Communist Party rhetoric regarding peoples' participation. Fishers became gradually dependent on the government's decisions while the latter had become used to solving community problems on their own and laying down their decisions with the expectation that people will understand and obey them. Today there is little evidence of community organizing in Viet Nam directed towards participation in governance of natural resources. The recent examples cited above from Tam Giang Lagoon were organizations formed for specific tasks and the association/organizations did not persist. These few cases involve outside agents (NGO staff, university researchers or project staff) as catalysts in a problem solving process which did not lead to institutionalizing a CB organization. However, more recent work in the Tam Giang Lagoon has renewed efforts to promote participatory planning of lagoon resource utilization and with stronger links to the commune government may lead to formal roles of newly constituted groups (Tuyen, per. comm).

Cambodia

In part as a response to declining access to natural resources, community-based management (also known as community fisheries, community forestry or co-management) has emerged in Cambodia (Marschke, 2003). Although approaches can vary, communities are actively

establishing their own management areas and plans often with support from NGOs or government institutions. In 2002, for instance, there were an estimated 162 community fishery sites and 237 community forestry sites in Cambodia (McKenney & Tola, 2002). Many of the community forestry and fishery sites in Cambodia have an elected resource management committee (also known as a community fisheries or forestry committee) that is responsible for guiding resource management activities. How CBNRM unfolds, at a village or commune level, varies across provinces and varies between projects and government agencies. In Koh Kong province, a project on Participatory Mangrove Management Resources (PMMR) began in 1997 to better understand livelihood and management issues in one protected area (Marschke & Nong, 2003). In these earlier project efforts, resource conservation for livelihood enhancement was a common emphasis. In some cases, it took years before a 'committee' was organized around resource management issues. Committees may also work on multiple resource management issues i.e. water supply, fisheries, forestry or land tenure issue or rally together around a specific issue i.e. protection of a spirit forest. Community fisheries can be based in a village, a commune (several villages combined into one administrative unit) or organized around the fishery itself. The villages elect the members of a management committee and its chief (the person who receives the most votes) joins an inter-village committee combining all participating villages (Gum & Navirak, 2001).

The current draft of the Sub-decree on Community Fisheries (CF) now calls for the formation of CF committees that are mandated to lead in CF processes. The draft Sub-decree on CF stipulates that the CF Committee shall be elected for five-year term and composed of 5 to 11 people depending upon the real situation and decision made by the Congress. Women are encouraged to be involved in the CF Committee (Articles 17-19, Chapter 4).

Overall, it seems that the CF organizations at the village level, while having varying names, operate in similar ways i.e. act as lead organizations in CF organizing. At this point, there has been no evaluation on the effectiveness of these CF organizations or approaches in Cambodia.

General Thoughts on Community Organizing for CBCRM

Organizing communities is a fundamental part of CBCRM work in the region. The process varies considerably between the Philippines, Cambodia, and Vietnam due to differences in historical context, governance structure and culture. Who organizes communities and what are the outcomes of the organizing process are also different in each context.

In all three countries, what often remains unexplored is the relationships community organizations have with each other and with other individuals and groups in the community. When core group leaders are organizers, they naturally focus their organizing efforts on their existing social networks. It is far easier for local organizers to convince their kin, or members of their church, pagoda or mosque to join an organization than it is to cross family, class, ethnic, or religious barriers to recruit members. The close connections between community organizations could be an asset in building a cohesive organization but little attention has been paid to the implication of this process on the larger community. Who are community organizations really representing?

In the Philippines, with its long history of organizing work, many questions remain unanswered about PO representation and leader-dominated politics mirrored in POs. NGOs and external facilitating organizations have limited resources and tend to focus on building the capacities only of the organized PO or the even smaller segment of PO leaders. This tends to create a new group of “elite” people in the community where the benefits of the CBCRM processes are not widely shared in the community.

In Viet Nam, it is observed that while the state espouses the dictum “people know, people discuss, people carry out and people supervise,” the reality is that more attention needs to be given to understanding local dynamics in existing and potential community organizations. The same could be said in Cambodia where the facilitating outsider-organizations are usually concerned more with the formation of groups and less about understanding issues of broad and equal representation.

Gollin and Kho (2002) suggest that CBNRM projects should not seek a group of people to be “the community” since no community exists in any practical, operational and fixed sense for natural resource management purposes. They propose that while we all belong to multiple communities that are the key components of our identities, the type of community required to manage natural resources rarely already exists. They suggest rethinking community to allow for representation of internal differences in power and interest (implicit in differences in gender, ethnicity, and social status) as well as broader inclusiveness is a serious challenge to current CBNRM models.

Do we need to have a more fluid understanding of CBCRM? Or do we need to rethink our understanding of community and the institutions that can best represent them? CBCRM means control by local stakeholders and there are likely to be a range of management structures to accomplish this. But what should be the basis of the management structures and how do they link with existing formal and informal institutions? Should these be based on the type of resources, the relationships of stakeholders and existing legal and political structures?

Jentoft (2000) and McCay and Jentoft (1998) argue that the complexity of CBCRM institutions should reflect the complexity of both the natural resource that is being managed and the communities and stakeholders that are managing them. They envision a wider variety of management bodies of various degrees of formality, that exist within communities, between communities and between communities and various levels of government so that the multiple stakeholders can come together around their common and divergent interests. These multiple levels and kinds of management structures are what Ostrom (1990) refers to as “nested institutions.”

CBCRM and Social Justice

In much of the literature and in some sectors in countries like the Philippines, community-based approaches, such as CBCRM, are associated with a goal to address issues of social injustice that are associated with unequal resource access and wide gaps in benefits-sharing from resource use. The idea of “equity” as potential benefit or desired outcome of CBCRM initiatives is rooted in

ideals of social justice. The extent to which a social justice agenda influences the on-the-ground practice of CBCRM varies considerably throughout the region.

In the Philippines, community-based coastal resources management is seen as a resource management tool but more so as a response to the need for social and political reform (Batongbacal, 1997; Rivera, 1997). For instance, the small-scale fishers of Manila Bay in the 1980s planned to fence in the bay's municipal waters by putting artificial reefs and buoys. This proposed initiative was not really intended for resource management but as a political action to stop the intrusion of commercial trawlers. Civil society groups, which shaped the foundation of the people's movement, played an important role in consolidating grassroots actions and initiatives that would later on mold community empowerment and self-reliance. The NGO community contributed to the process of building community self-reliance that provided the impetus for community-based management. In many of the CBCRM efforts in the Philippines, the intrinsic goal has always been the search for ways to promote broader people participation and genuine democratic governance mechanisms. These CBCRM "buds" have usually been localized phenomena, operating separately from one another, though sometimes linked in loose NGO or fisherfolk networks. The individual projects have been small scale, diverse, and reflect the local realities and priorities as well as the agendas and expertise of their NGO implementers.

In recent years, however, the Filipino CBCRM movement has also been wholeheartedly adopted by international funding bodies such as the Asian Development Bank, and by many levels and agencies of the Philippine government. These CBCRM efforts have been characterized by their large scale, since they generally operate on a Bay-wide or even regional level, their strong emphasis on resource management, and institutionalization or standardization of approaches. The two Philippine government implemented Fisheries Sector Programs, and the US-Aid/World Bank funded Coastal Resources Management Project are examples of larger scale, institutionalized CBCRM programs. Though they use similar language of "participation" and "community-based management" to describe their efforts, these donor-driven programs do not spring from the same soil as the NGO and PO led efforts that have emerged to respond to social justice issues. Many of the larger CBCRM programs focus mostly on resource conservation and

use local participation to increase the efficacy of their program delivery, rather than as a real means for local empowerment.

In the Philippines, the key assets that resulted from over ten years of CBCRM experience are the social organizations and networks that have been organized by different projects and actors. But the key contribution of CBCRM to promoting social change and justice is one area that needs further attention. It is particularly relevant in light of the often complicated relationships between the NGO movement and their organized fisherfolk partners and the large number of fisherfolk through the country that remain unorganized despite over a decade of organizing work. Where are the gains real gains from CBCRM in the Philippines being experienced? Who is benefiting and who is not?

In Cambodia the emergence of CBCRM was very different than the Philippine experience where community-based fisheries management is accommodated in the draft fishery law and termed as “community fisheries” (*sahakum nesaat*) in the law. Thay (2002) suggests that the reform was brought about by increasing conflicts between family-scale fishers and fishing lot owners. Since 1987, when the Fiat Law on Fisheries Management and Administration came into effect in Cambodia, fishing grounds have been auctioned off as fishing lots to commercial-scale operators through a bidding process. The “owner” of a fishing lot is then granted exclusive rights to fish in that area for a period of two years, with the condition that it would not engage in fishing during the closed season imposed by the government. Family-scale or small-scale fishing is allowed in Cambodia all year round for all fisheries domain, except in sanctuaries. Under the law, they could fish in designated areas inside the fishing lots. However, family-scale fishers come into conflict with fishing lot operators, who, in spite of the law, prevent subsistence fishers from accessing the resource through intimidation, violence and false imprisonment (Levinson, 2002). The increasing fishery conflicts together with public protests and letter writing action from the Cambodian people, and the political motivation of the government to win the 2002 commune and 2003 national elections, paved the way for fishery policy reform (Mansfield 2002).

In October 2000, the ‘fisheries reform’ began when PM Hun Sen visited the provinces and heard about conflicts between fishers and the fishing lot owners. He immediately announced the

release of 8,000 ha from the 84,000 ha under commercial fishing lots in Siem Reap province. By February 2001 the government agreed to release a total of 536,000 ha from the fishing lot systems for local community management or 56% of the entire area under commercial fishing lots in Cambodia (Evans, 2002). Although no law was in place to support such a reform, the PM wields enough power to mandate such a change. The Department of Fisheries was under intense pressure to follow up on this reform, even though there was a limited understanding of what community fisheries might evolve into. There was a transitional withdrawal of provincial fisheries inspection people apparently to learn more about community fisheries and subsequently, the Community Fisheries Development Office was created in 2001 and became overall in-charge of the process of crafting a Sub-Decree on CF.

Pressure for the reform did come from growing trends in community based management, no doubt, along with escalating conflicts. But, also, the realization that fish resources were being heavily overfished and that something needed to be done. Marschke (2004) notes that much of this initial CBNRM work was ‘experimental’, with community members and NGOs or government-supported projects working on understanding just how CBNRM could unfold ‘on the ground’. Such experiences have informed policy debates and policy formulation, both from a good governance mandate (i.e., the PLG Ratanakiri experience) and from a community based management perspective (i.e., the FAO Tonle Sap project) within the Departments of Fisheries and Forestry. Most village-level institutions were created in a policy vacuum, being recognized informally through appropriate signatures (from village headperson to the provincial Governor) and in some cases technical departments at a provincial or national level. With new policy creation relating to resource management, committees will need to consider how to align themselves within emerging governance structures.

Although CBNRM work has taken place around Cambodia, there is little analysis or synthesis of these experiences. That is, documentation tends to be related to a specific project, highlighting the successes of individual projects, rather than an overview of what CBNRM really means at a local, provincial or national level, or what it is really believed to be achieving. Therefore, it is hard to get a sense of what really takes place ‘on the ground’ with regards to CBNRM work once plans are finished, and maps are made and approved. How do resource management committees

really function? What are they struggling with most? While CBNRM activities may make sense to do (from a livelihood or environmental paradigm), it is more challenging to see if such plans or maps help to enhance livelihoods, solve conflicts or increase access to resources for the rural poor (Marschke, 2004).

But what has been the real contribution of CBCRM in promoting social justice? Has it made a dent in bridging the gap between the rich and the poor or the powerful and the powerless? Which poor people has CBCRM reached in the past? Which powerless people have been empowered? It may be too early to evaluate the fishery reform currently going on in Cambodia. However, a perception study by Oxfam (2003) indicates that the quick implementation of the reform has a negative impact on the quality of its implementation, particularly in the development of CF projects. There are capacity problems related to the fishing communities and the institutional authorities (including but not confined to fisheries staff). The immediate and most visible benefits of the fishery reform are enjoyed by the medium-scale fishers who are paying reduced taxes and fees. So far, the small-scale (and poorer) fishers who were not required to pay pre-reform fees do not appear to benefit from this change in policy. There are some cases where poor fishers in the Tonle Sap indicate better access to the fishery; however, the majority of fishers feel they have less access to fisheries resources. The fisheries reform appears to have limited impacts upon coastal fishers.

The general positive contributions of CBCRM could be seen from the results of individual CF projects that have been going on prior to the reform. In the PMMR project for example, CBCRM is viewed to have positive impacts such as decreasing illegal activities (e.g. mangrove cutting) and promoting livelihoods activities (Marschke & Nong, 2002). In this project much more attention was paid to organizing fishers through capacity building than in other villages or projects in other places. There was more time spent to involve fishers in workshops and awareness building activities side-by-side with local village, commune and provincial officials. The intensity of village level work was higher and slowly led to the formation of the village management committees. While these efforts have addressed issues of social justice, from one perspective, in promoting access of the poor to coastal resources, the distributive effect can not yet be assessed.

Similarly in Viet Nam, it is too early to assess the impact of CBCRM activities in promoting social justice. The approach has been with the intent of sustainable resource management and it is expected that this should increase equity of access and more user participation in management, but there is simply not enough activity or time to evaluate the impacts.

CBCRM, Governments, Decentralization and Power Sharing

Many of the CBCRM initiatives in Southeast Asia have taken place in the context of decentralization of government functions through changes in key legislation. However, the impetus for decentralization and its impacts have varied widely in different countries. Decentralization trends are found in The Philippines, Vietnam and in Cambodia.

In the Philippines, CBCRM has been legitimized by the passage of the Local Government Code (1991) and the new Fisheries Code (1998). Both these laws potentially give municipal governments a lot of power in creating and enacting fisheries management legislation. This also potentially gives NGOs and POs the power to assume a large role in setting the resource management agenda in their area. But laws encouraging or allowing decentralized decision making and power sharing do not necessarily guarantee that will happen. Power sharing has to have at least two willing partners for the sharing to begin. In a context of unequal power distribution, power sharing is another goal of CBCRM. This has never been an easy aspiration because of the layers of complex power struggles in the access and control of natural resources. These could be struggles between state and non-state actors, or between civil society players, or among government organizations and politicians.

To understand power and power relations, one needs to understand the various facets and nuances of participation. For many people, power and participation are inevitably connected because the aim of the latter is necessarily strategically transformative i.e. to transform the present power inequities. Yet empowering processes are not always intrinsically present in participatory activities. Some studies may offer ways of describing participation (Chambers, 1995; Pomeroy & Carlos, 1996; Christie & White, 1997) that are useful to partially explain community realities but participation and empowerment are elusive terms that may be best

described and shared by those who claim to have them. Participation can swing both ways - it could lead to empowering results such as building the confidence of community people or to disempowering outcomes like promoting further gaps in access to resource use or wealth distribution.

In the Philippines, a comparison between people participation in forest and coastal resource management is instructive. Community-based forest management in the Philippines was pursued in the 1970s when *kaingin* (slash and burn agriculture) activities were widespread and the government had a hard time controlling social instability in the upland areas. It was likely that Marcos used Community-Based Forest Management (CBFM), later renamed Integrated Social Forestry (ISF) as a means to increase his mass support and curb social unrest while the government remained in control. If scrutinized closely, some participation in decision-making and implementation has occurred with CBFM, particularly for the organizations formed and legally recognized by the government. But the control of tenure and funding remained with the Department of Environment, making CBFM a pseudo-empowering instrument for the people while remaining largely a government scheme on centralized control. Ironically, the CBFM was enshrined as the nation's core strategy for sustainable forest management in 1995 (Gollin & Kho, 2002). More generally, this process of co-opting people to form "communities" for the purpose of natural resource management has dubious consequences with respect to "empowerment" (Li, 2002).

Compared to the experience of the upland sector, people participation in CBCRM in the Philippines is equated more with "people power." CBCRM practitioners have shaped a community approach that asserts control over coastal and marine waters, which are difficult to "own" even by the state. There are documented cases on the establishment of marine protected areas in Apo and Sumilon Island (White, 1989; Alcala & Russ, 1997), San Salvador Island (Buhat, 1994; Christie, White & Buhat, 1990) and Danao Bay (Heinen, 2001; Heinen, 2003). There are cases documenting community participation in multi-stakeholder enforcement councils, as members of the *Bantay Dagat* (sea wardens) or para-legal workers (Piquero, 2004; Galit, 2001). The Filipinos have celebrated many strong examples of community claims and

assertions on their rights to access and use coastal waters and resources (Ferrer, de la Cruz & Domingo 1996; Rivera & Newkirk, 1997; Ferrer, de la Cruz & Newkirk, 2001).

The Philippines success with localized CBCRM initiatives forces the question “what exactly is being shared?” In most examples communities asserted their rights to manage the resources adjacent to their community by taking on responsibilities that the government has been reluctant to, or unable to, assume. Is this power sharing, or is this local people taking control? In the Philippines experience, the most problematic aspects of decentralization have involved efforts to truly “co-manage” or share resource management decision making and resources with government. Efforts towards co-management have frequently taken place through larger government or donor initiated coastal resource management projects. Or increasingly, as part of efforts to form municipal or bay wide management bodies (FARMC) as mandated under the Fisheries Code. It is in these contexts that government agencies seem more comfortable downloading responsibilities, but not in truly sharing power. Due to these experiences, the term co-management has negative connotations in the Philippines context. Despite this, there have been meaningful power sharing experiences in the Philippines, and these genuine efforts do not come exclusively from the grassroots or from the government, but from a real partnership based on an evolving relationship that started with building trust and mutual understanding.

In Viet Nam, community consultation processes formed an essential part of people participation in CBCRM. In Phu Long and Van Hung communes in Northern Viet Nam, participatory planning and the use of PRA tools for research are common features (CRP & IMA, 2004). There is a similar experience in the Tam Giang lagoon in Hue province, Central Viet Nam. Through meetings, workshops and sustained consultations organized by the research team of the Hue University the community people slowly gained the confidence to voice their opinion to government. The government, on the other hand, gained an understanding of the lagoon environment and the production activities of the fishers. Gradually, both the community and government see the usefulness and the vital need for people participation in making decisions and implementing activities related to resource use and management (Phap, 2001).

The situation is comparable to Cambodia where community facilitators make use of participatory tools in research and planning (Gum & Navirak, 2001; Marschke, Nong & Vantha, 2001; Khim et al., 2002). Community members are enjoined to elect their CF leaders, take part in patrolling, implement livelihood and credit projects, and seek funds for their activities. There are also numerous trainings in Cambodia as a means to broaden the participation of local people in community planning and management. However, training alone does not ensure that power or participation issues are addressed. The elite may, in fact, become the CF committee; the poor may never participate in any CF activities. Are methods that participatory given the fact that facilitators continue to come from the national or international levels?

Decentralization has not been a smooth process in the three countries but it is a more challenging idea and reality in Cambodia and Viet Nam. This is because real decentralization has to come with power sharing and real power sharing stems from genuine people participation. To some extent, the difficulties in participation could also be attributed to the prevailing socioeconomic and political context in both countries. In Vietnam, community participation in CBCRM is hampered by a general lack of experience in participatory planning (CRP & IMA, 2004). There is very little precedent for involving Vietnamese communities in the planning process, which is traditionally a centralized effort. In Viet Nam, the centralizing mechanism of the government is still a strong force even with the decentralization efforts of the government since 1989. For example, local policies need the approval of the central management and are usually predisposed to short-term gains of the local authority (Tuyên, 2002). In Cambodia, some deconcentration (administrative decentralization) has taken place. Although an analysis of policy initiatives on deconcentration shows that it has been more about delegating tasks rather than decision-making, indicating a weak version of deconcentration where decision-making is still retained by the center (Blunt, 2003). The draft community fisheries sub-decree, for example, delegates some responsibilities to provincial and local fisheries staff but retains central control. Moreover, community fishery organizations cannot undertake patrolling activities, or fine offenders, without fisheries staff being present. One has to wonder how much 'community' management such a sub-decree really offers. Blunt (2003) notes that Cambodia's cultural context is largely unreceptive to bottom-up forms of decision-making or influence, which are the essence of decentralization and, to a lesser extent, deconcentration. Cambodia, and Vietnam, are only

beginning to embark on decentralization processes; however, experience within this region suggests that decentralization trends within the natural resource management sector reflects a rhetoric more than a substance. That is, most natural resource management policy is characterized by substantive central government control and management over natural resources rather than a genuine shift of authority to local people (Shackleton et al., 2002).

While all CBCRM projects emphasize the importance of community participation, there has been little research on the nature and quality of this participation in communities. In Graham's study (1998) in Prieto Diaz, Sorsogon, The Philippines, it was found that a relatively small number of community members are actually participating in CBCRM initiatives. This was attributed to the impacts of kinship, economic security, social standing, and gender on residents' willingness and ability to participate. In addition, the level of participation varied considerably between fisherfolk leaders and the community at large. The spread of participation determined how outcomes of CBCRM were experienced; those who were actively involved received most of the benefits, while non-participants bore the costs of CBCRM intervention. These patterns had implications for the long-term viability of projects, as conflicts ensued between CBCRM supporters and those who perceived that they were treated inequitably under the new regime.

Hence, we need to ask about the nuances of participation. We need to identify the building blocks that led to community empowerment. What personal and social changes resulted from CBCRM? Who were empowered? What was the reason for empowerment? How could we measure empowerment? Has CBCRM resulted in some shifts in power? What will this power sharing look like?

As discussed earlier, the entry point of CBCRM in the community generally begins with a set of prioritized and specific issues within a small and geographically defined area. Following this, the community, often guided by an external agent, develops a resource management scheme on its own. An observable difference among the three countries is in the timing of reaching out to government in order to put community actions within the existing legal and policy framework. Ideas about being localized and "community-based" or adopting some kind of a "co-management" scheme differs in different contexts. The co-management strand is strongly

evident in Vietnam and Cambodia while Philippine groups, NGOs in particular, often hesitate to immediately go into partnerships with government, or any other stakeholders. NGOs and POs in the Philippines are historically situated opposite the state so there is a seemingly strong resistance in forming partnerships with government.

While this is the case, there seems to be an agreement that the state plays a critical role in legitimizing and sustaining the benefits of CBCRM. Government provides the legal and policy framework that will enable CBCRM to prosper. It is a provider of funds and resources. Government might be in a better position to solve conflicts in larger scales such as the contestations to own the Spratleys or the control over the overlapping marine boundaries in the Thai-Cambodian borders (Tana & Todd, 2001). Government also provides legitimization of resource management rules. For example, the proposed sub-decree on community fisheries in Cambodia stipulates that the Department of Fisheries needs to approve the fishery agreements that communities want to adopt. In addition, government is also the one in charge of law enforcement. Even if PO members in the Philippines become authorized sea wardens and, thus, legally mandated to make arrests, they cannot impose penalties or use the money earned from fines for enforcement (Gollin & Kho, 2002). The government-community divide in fishery law enforcement in Cambodia is even wider as the organized community fisheries cannot make arrests; they can only report any illegal fishing activities to the appropriate government institution.

Nevertheless, despite their often being portrayed at opposite ends of a spectrum the government-community divide, particularly at the village level is in reality, a blur. For example, barangay officials and even the elected politicians in the provincial and municipal levels are relatives of many people in an area. In other cases, the PO leaders are also barangay officials. Do we oversimplify this relationship? Are we not scrutinizing enough the connecting points between government and community? Do we view community groups as replacement for government organizations? Isn't the relationship between civil society groups and the state a more complex one? How do we analyze the state when it is not a single entity? How do we deal with government if it is composed of layers and layers of mixed actors, sometimes cooperating but other times competing with one another too?

An example that shows how government is not a monolithic entity comes from a long-standing NGO initiated project in the Philippines. Prieto Diaz in the province of Sorsogon was recognized as one of the 10 best CRM sites in the Philippines in 1999. The partnership of the PO and the municipal government led to the creation of a multi-stakeholder task force that became the local leader in resource management. This task force, in fact, preceded the fisheries council that was mandated under the 1998 Fisheries Code. But what was thought of to be a happy story, ended with the bitter rivalry between the PO and the political leaders at the municipal level. During a recent local election, the incumbent Mayor accused the PO of supporting his political rival. Since his election, the new Mayor is single-handedly turning around the gains of the previous partnership of the PO and the government. The PO is devastated by the reversal in government support for resource management efforts. Having depended on the financial support and opportunities provided by the previous political leaders, the PO cannot seem to stand on its own. Its members are discouraged by this difficulty and very few have remained steadfast in pursuing the organizational activities. The cases of illegal fishing, which decreased in the previous years, are slowly increasing again. Even organized members of the POs, not hopeful of any support from their Mayor, have returned to illegal fishing.

This example encapsulates what seems to be a common aspiration in co-management schemes in building stable, long term partnerships of equals, partnerships where one works for and with each other. An equitable co-management scheme is one where power is not simply handed out but creatively created and negotiated among the co-management actors. The community, often situated in the receiving end of a partnership, should possess the knowledge and skills to negotiate from a position of strength, not merely from a standpoint of what is legally mandated. The key in co-management formations as a strategy for sustaining CBCRM initiatives is “negotiated power.” That is to say, even if a co-management agreement is ultimately a political, i.e. government decision, the substance of this agreement could be negotiated, with non-state actors working within the boundaries of government/public policy but creatively using windows of opportunities in the policy environment to achieve their goals and aspirations.

Hence, it is important to ask in what ways power could be shared more equitably between government and communities. What would be a workable arrangement? In addition, it is important to know exactly what is being shared. We often talk loosely of power sharing, and in more concrete terms of who holds the financial or other resources to implement and enforce management measures, but is this all there is to resource management? It might be a more useful exercise to look more deeply at all the aspects of resource management from ensuring access to the fishery, to creating harvesting regulations, making fisheries policy, enforcing regulations, organizing and educating the community, and restoring damaged habitat and determine who is now doing what. Are certain responsibilities now widely being taken on by communities? Are others shared or solely the responsibility of the government? Of which level of government or which particular agency?

Scaling up CBCRM Impacts?

As noted elsewhere in the paper, many of the existing CBCRM successes have taken place at a local level. Those trying to make CBCRM more widespread talk about scaling up its impacts. One rationale for the many new decentralization laws in the region is to facilitate the creation or re-creation of the successful examples village or community groups taking responsibility for fisheries management responsibilities through CBCRM. Before talking about how and why to institutionalize the concept and process of organizing communities for resource management, it is worth considering what exactly is being scaled up. What are the impacts we are trying to recreate? Coastal communities depend on healthy coastal resources, for community based coastal resources management to be considered a success, local communities need to feel the impact of resource conservation efforts on their livelihoods and well-being.

In the Philippines, studies have shown that the community-based resource management approach does lead to improvements in fish catches, especially when the resource management strategies combine establishing marine protected areas with a real effort to eradicate destructive fishing practices (Alcala & Russ, 1997; Pomeroy & Carlos, 1996). There have also clearly been more intangible gains in terms of capacities built, ability to articulate a common vision and work towards it, leadership, relationships, confidence and a redefined relationship between fisherfolk and government partners (Arciaga et al., 2002; Rivera-Guieb, 2002; Pomeroy & Carlos, 1996).

Vera et al. (2003) note that the studies on the economic impacts of CBCRM on coastal communities have been incomplete and inconclusive. It is possible to equate improvements in fish catches with higher incomes, or to evaluate the economic benefits of livelihood projects. However, this alone does not really give a true measure of the impacts of CBCRM on people's lives since there are gains that are difficult to value such as empowerment, access, and opportunities, as well as opportunity costs in terms of time invested in CBCRM activities that are difficult to measure.

In reviewing CBCRM in the Philippines, one needs to focus not only on projects but on people since the resulting key assets from this long experience are the social organizations and networks (Rivera-Guieb, 2002). At this point, CBCRM must move beyond the mere implementation of pilot projects or the recognition of community groups in local political processes. At what points have impacts been made? What strategies will cement these impacts and make them less vulnerable to political whims?

It is harder to assess the impacts of CBCRM in Cambodia and Viet Nam since the efforts are younger. In many projects, there is an immediate objective of addressing livelihood concerns and the emphasis is on resource management or increased production through community-based mechanisms. CBCRM/CBNRM is introduced by donors or international NGOs as a means to tackle these more immediate needs. This approach may limit the design and support for adapting approaches to the social and political context of Cambodia and Viet Nam which are necessary to make CBCRM more effective in its role of social transformation as shown in other countries like the Philippines.

Ultimately, the impacts of CBCRM efforts are going to be hard for any outsider to truly grasp. So much of what is recognized as success by outside reviewers use assessment criteria that are not relevant within the local context. It is not only whether or not a project is successful that matters in evaluating impacts, but who is doing the assessment and when. Far too many community-based management success stories come from incomplete examples, and too little

effort is made to talk to communities one year, five years, ten years after the “projects” have ended and outside assistance has left the area (O’Hara, 2002).

Given that so many of the gains achieved by CBCRM are in the fields of power, and self-governance, it is interesting to reflect on what those will look like if they are scaled up. The challenge now is to expand without losing the vision and principles of CBCRM. Some Philippine NGOs refer to this as “institutionalization.” NGOs frequently approach this in one of two ways. One, networking with national, regional and international groups, viewed as necessary in pursuing policy advocacy and establishing market links. Two, institutionalization has to be reflected in the wider society’s acceptance of the values and vision of CBCRM. When this happens, the spread of CBCRM in broader people’s movements becomes inevitable.

Another strategy in upscaling CBCRM efforts is what is generally referred to as policy and advocacy work. This strategy becomes more vital in the light of the decentralization trend among governments in Southeast Asia. The Philippines has been acknowledged as a leader in decentralization, or at least as one of its earliest proponents. This has allowed for many innovative resource management initiatives spearheaded by local government or NGOs. It has also created a whole new kind of local elite as positions such as mayor or municipal councilor become associated with increasing power and the potential to amass wealth. In Viet Nam, the need to be involved in policy-making was noted in the Tam Giang lagoon experience. Many policy decisions on lagoon management, e.g. the ban of destructive fishing and land allocation, have been simply modified policies for marine and agricultural management of the central government. Tuyền (2002) notes that understanding the situation in the lagoon is not the whole story of research; making use of knowledge gained is much more significant to solve and prevent problems, and one such use is in lending support to policy changes, starting from the lagoon to higher levels of government.

A policy advocacy lens might be useful for looking at scaling up efforts in the context of nationwide fisherfolk organizations in the Philippines, but is it appropriate for discussing how effectively community fisheries is spreading in Cambodia? Are any of the questions and criteria discussed so far relevant for assessing how much impact CBCRM has had on people’s lives?

(Uvin and Miller, 1996) Is scaling up about how many fisherfolk or communities are reached by some sort of CBCRM program, or should it be about how much difference CBCRM has made on people's lives? This of course leads into a discussion of overall impacts of CBCRM on well being. Are the impacts we are measuring and then trying to expand or scale up, the conservation benefits of CBCRM from better fisheries management? Or is it conflict resolution and increased social stability (Cambodia), or real economic gain and better livelihoods, or more intangible empowerment, solidarity, political clout (Philippines?).

Concluding Remarks

CBCRM initiatives are blooming all over Southeast Asia. But it is important to keep asking: whose agenda is this? Many CBCRM programs are externally initiated. Outsiders implementing CBCRM projects come in with a set of values and a pre-determine agenda. There are real and perceived differences in terms of power, with the outsider-facilitator holding the control on project decisions and resources, at least initially. How does this affect the partnerships created within the community? How does the outsider-insider difference shape CBCRM projects? Positive results of these partnerships have been reported, prominent of which are the friendships created as inevitable outcomes of the personal trust that developed in these partnerships. However, further analysis needs to be done across local and national cultural differences.

What is the worth in sharing and comparing stories across such different socio-cultural contexts? Are grassroots and more government/donor driven CBCRM efforts going to achieve the same kind of results? If the community-government divide is really more illusionary and permeable than is often portrayed, does it really matter where CBCRM starts? Maybe who starts the process does not matter much in terms of creating enabling conditions for CBCRM, maybe what matters are the principles shared by those involved in the initiative. Perhaps terms like equity, social justice, community organizing, empowerment, power sharing, and decentralization are actually principles not criteria. In each setting, in each context, in each community, the stakeholders will negotiate their own definitions and applications of these terms.

Who these stakeholders are will always vary even within a country. Arriving at a common and standard definition of a community appears to be secondary to the desire of CBCRM

practitioners to understand the needs and interests of people. The desire is to search for meaningful ways to build upon the manner in which people are already connected to one another – mainly through explicit or implied social contracts and obligations. Hence, organizing begins with families and kinship groups. With a focus on community, organizing is regarded as the core strategy. The understanding and application of CO is diverse and often dependent on the social and political context. CO in Vietnam and Cambodia is done by organizing groups that do not challenge the authority of the government. What appears to be common in the different countries and context is the recognition that CBCRM does not mean that a stronger outside agent will change things for the weaker community. There is no substitute for making the weaker community stronger so it can make changes itself, initially with the help of the outside agent but eventually taking action on its own.

CBCRM has many entry points, implementing livelihoods or resource management among them. There is uneven distribution of power among communities that results in uneven access to resources. More documentation and analysis need to be done to look at differences in resource endowments or abilities to access resources. This will require more analysis of how power is distributed within communities and how the resulting benefits from CBCRM can be shared more equitably, particularly by those who are not participating in the CBCRM process.

In CBCRM, one needs to ask if equitable and fair partnerships exist. Some would say that CBCRM is really about governance either localized and “community-based” governance or adopting some kind of a “co-management” scheme. The co-management strand is strongly evident in Vietnam and Cambodia while Philippine groups, NGOs in particular, often hesitate to immediately go into partnerships with government, or any other stakeholders. The common desire though is for different stakeholders to develop a relationship of equals, a partnership where one works for and with each other.

There is a common expectation for CBCRM to expand and to gain a “critical mass” that will form a movement of peoples that links the different stories, gains, and experiences. Projects need to move beyond being local demonstration sites. In addition, expansion could also be achieved by building a popular culture of shared values. Some call this institutionalization, but

institutionalization needs to be done with care and with due consideration about what is actually being institutionalized. Blind replication will lead to the loss of much of the grassroots energy which drives CBCRM in the region.

A major challenge for Filipino practitioners concerns the idea of summarizing and critiquing experiences and using them as the basis for forming theories (Rivera-Guieb, 2002). CBCRM needs to shape theories that can generate and foster dialogues and exchanges for more innovative and fresher actions. It needs theories about change that are based on the process of change itself. In this context, practitioners and learners of CBCRM give and receive knowledge in an integrated fashion. Ideas become linked with action. Ultimately, CBCRM knowledge needs to be collectively shared and fostered because it is necessarily collectively created. What is unfolding in the Philippines is CBCRM's contribution to a peaceful political reform that is based on forming bonds and social contracts that commit people, starting from the communities, to the process of democratizing resource access and use. It is a change that is inherent in the broader process of social transformation. This challenge is not unique in the Philippines and reflects the need for a culture of learning, action, reflection and adaptation within the CBCRM community.

The flowering of CBCRM in Cambodia and Viet Nam is not certain yet. Indications are that the process is similar in many ways to the history of CBCRM in other gardens but the details are of course different. Through sharing of lessons among practitioners in these different countries it is expected that those directly involved will go deeper, sooner and with greater understanding of the roots, they will be able to establish a stronger base for CBCRM. In a Southeast Asian workshop, John Kearney asked where the "cutting edge of social change" is (Newkirk & Rivera, 2001). Is CBCRM at that cutting edge? The case studies reviewed indicate that CBCRM is indeed at the cutting edge of social change by exploring and making changes in resource tenures and by being innovative in combining responses to complex social and environmental problems. What was overwhelmingly recognized in these cases is the idea that:

"CBCRM does not adhere to a predetermined, exact and indispensable model but rather, a flexible one that works to achieve the inclusion of those currently excluded and marginalized from the institutionalized political processes. CBCRM works because it inspires people to search for their meaning and worth in their own context. CBCRM works because it continues to innovate and re-invent itself." (Ferrer et al., 2001, p.275).

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