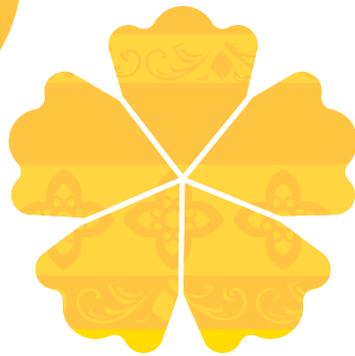


Creating “Space” for Interaction

Description of CACS Project Operations



Introduction

This note describes briefly how the Piloting Community Approaches in Conflict Situation (CACS) Project currently operates. As a learning activity, the project was designed deliberately to accommodate adjustments in response to lessons emerging from implementation experience. This note, the fourth in a series of brief operationally relevant pieces meant to inform a broad range of stakeholders about the design, implementation, and results of the project, reflects operations at the end of the project’s first year.

Conflict Context

Secessionist movements in Thailand’s southernmost provinces date back more than a century. Following decades of dormancy, a separatist insurgency re-emerged in early 2004. Over the past six years, killings and bombings have been daily occurrences – claiming the lives of over 4,000 people.

The conflict stems from various factors, key among them are the following: lack of sufficient sensitivity towards Malay ethnic and religious identity and language and limited political integration, including under-representation of Malay Muslims in local political and government structures. Relative economic deprivation as well as government policies and approaches since 2004 contribute to the sense of injustice.

In response to a request by the Royal Thai Government to learn from international experience with appropriate and effective approaches to working in conflict-affected areas, the World Bank mobilized grant financing through its State and Peace-Building Fund to first study and then pilot approaches to local development to help mitigate the conflict in Thailand’s southernmost provinces.



Project Objectives

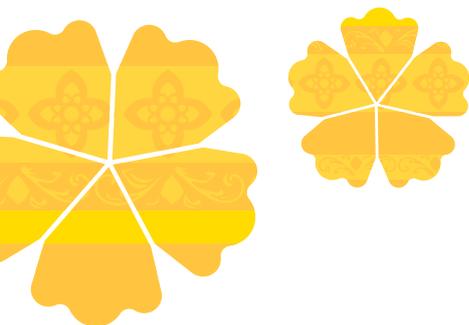
The first phase of the two-phase project, conducted in 2007-2008, was comprised of 1) a conflict study to understand and help inform the design of pilot activities, and 2) capacity-building activities to promote peace-building and conflict management. The research, conducted by a consortium of Thai academic institutions, found that community development projects were one of the key tools or means to help build peace and reconciliation.

Government efforts to implement livelihood development activities, the study revealed, had been largely unsuccessful due primarily to a lack of trust by local communities towards government officials and increasing communal tensions.

Limited community participation in local development, lack of responsiveness of investments to local needs, restricted access to project information and benefits, and the absence of monitoring further impede the effectiveness of these activities. Civil society organizations, particularly where local politicians cannot work effectively with community members, have a crucial role to play in local development, but are limited in number and suffer from capacity constraints.

The overall goal of this second phase of the project is thus to develop effective community approaches to local development that create “space” and opportunity for increased interaction within and among communities and between communities and the state apparatus in an effort to promote trust building in the conflict-affected areas in the provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwat.

To achieve its objective, the project finances grants through two facilities or “windows.”



Block grants are made to villages and sub-districts for local development activities identified through a participatory, community-driven development process.

Peace-building Partnership Fund grants are available to civil society organizations and their networks active in the conflict-affected areas for innovative approaches and partnerships that promote trust, peace, and development.

Community Block Grants

The CACS project provides block grants of approximately THB 300,000 (or USD 10,000) directly to both participating communities and sub-districts/municipalities for local development activities that members themselves identify, propose, implement, monitor and sustain.

Selection of Participating Communities

Over three years, the project estimates disbursing block grants to 27 communities in seven sub-districts (tambons) and two municipalities in the three southern border provinces: nine communities in the first year, and the original nine plus an additional 18 communities in the second and third years. Grants to the sub-districts/municipalities which include these communities will be made in year three.

The initial nine pilot communities are those that served as research sites in the study phase of the project (see Figure 1). They were selected initially based on the following criteria: dynamics of violent incidents, urban/rural characteristics, population demographics (ethnicity/religion), level of violence, feasibility of conducting research, and the distribution of resources. Spread equally across the three provinces, these communities represent a mix of rural and urban areas, and

comprise various proportions of Malay-ethnic and Thai-ethnic peoples as well as Buddhists and Muslims. The benefits of engaging in these areas include the wealth of existing data, the strength of relationships built, and the value of returning to contribute to the development of these communities.

The additional 18 communities to participate in the second and third years of the project will be selected by representatives from local government, religious and community leaders, and community members taking into consideration the presence of engaged community leaders, diversity within the community, actual or potential support received, existing community activities, and proximity to the initial nine communities.

Block Grant Cycle

The project's block grant cycle consists of six main implementation steps: 1) information dissemination and institutional preparation, 2) social preparation and sub-project planning, 3) sub-project proposal preparation; 4) sub-project appraisal and approval, 5) sub-project implementation, and 6) sub-project completion and handover.

1. Information and Institutional Preparation. Information about the project's objectives and approach is disseminated in a variety of ways. At the start of the project, a letter was sent to key government officials, including the Southern Border Provincial Administrative Center (SBPAC), key security agencies, the governors of the three provinces, sub-district officials and

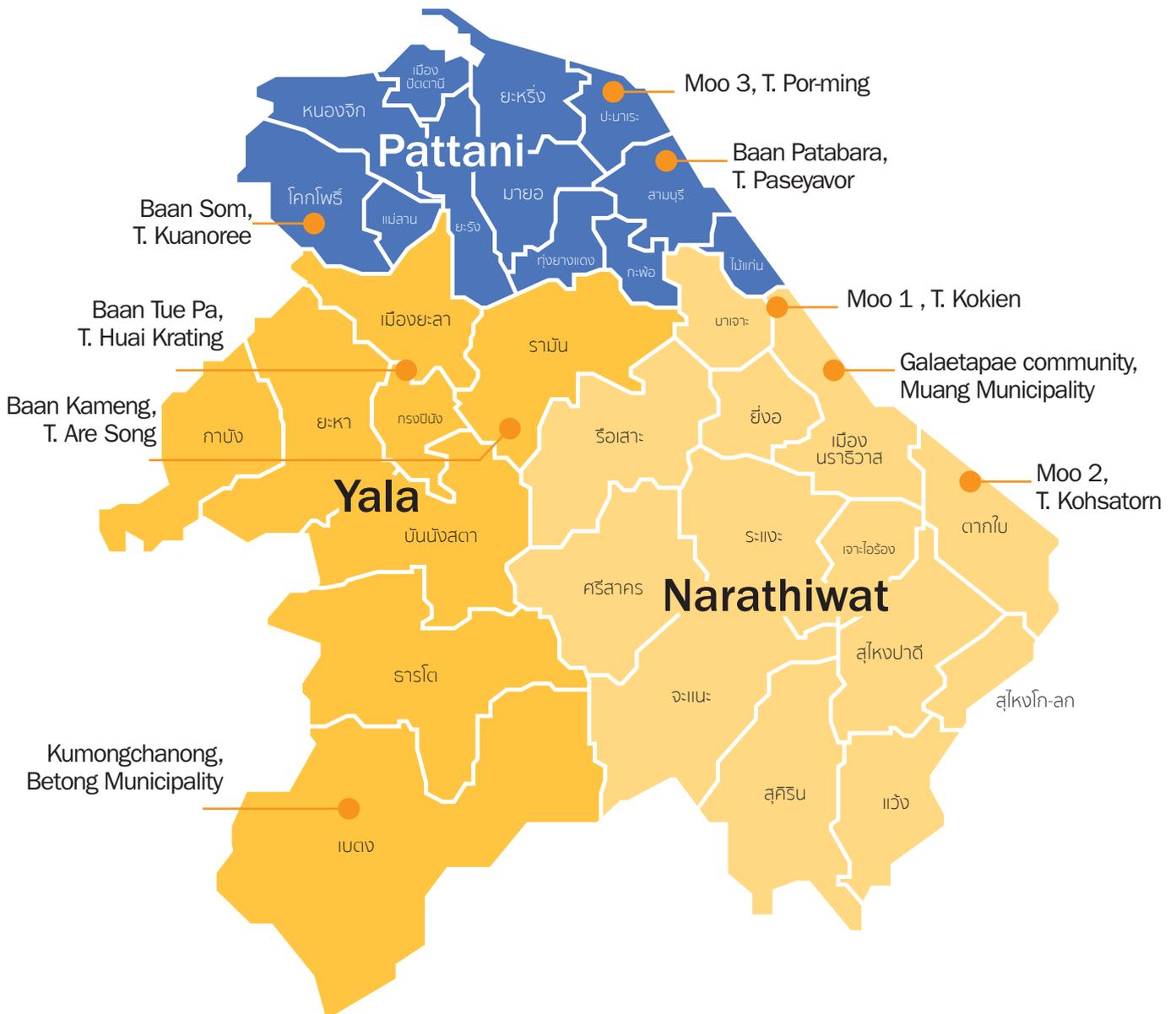


community leaders to help ensure “space” for the project to operate. Brochures in Thai and English are distributed to government agencies, civil society organizations and their networks, and the local media.

At the provincial and community levels, facilitators and provincial coordinators hired by the project meet in large and small groups and individually with local officials and villagers to introduce and explain project objectives and operations. Once contacts are established, facilitators identify groups and formal and informal leaders within communities, and recruit between 10 and 20 volunteers to help conduct community surveys and other project-related activities. Extensive training is then provided to these volunteers.

2. *Social Preparation & Sub-project Planning.* Community volunteers, supported by the project-hired facilitators, conduct a participatory survey of the community. Data is collected on natural resources and economic and livelihood activities within the community and the social structure and relationships among community members from key informants and groups using various mapping tools. After data collection is completed, the facilitator organizes a participatory community analysis meeting during which villagers identify key issues, prioritize needs and reach consensus on which activities to develop into sub-project proposals. A Village Implementing Committee (VIC), comprised of about 15 voluntary members, is then formed to carry the process forward.

Figure 1: Communities Receiving Block Grants in Year





Given the newness of the approach, implementation of these first two steps of the block grant cycle took approximately five months to complete in the initial pilot communities. In future rounds, with valuable experience gained, the time allocated to these steps is expected to be reduced significantly.

3. Proposal Preparation. The VIC, guided by the community facilitator and informal, unpaid advisors (including local government officials) and assisted by other community members and technical specialists as needed, develops sub-project proposals to address the community-identified needs.

The grant can finance social and economic investments of almost any type, including infrastructure, livelihood development, training and capacity-building, except for those on a short negative list.¹ Proposals can include a mix of types of activities totaling up to THB 300,000 (or USD 10,000).



The sub-project proposal includes: 1) brief background and justification, 2) objectives and expected benefits, 3) description of beneficiaries, 4) implementation plan, 5) detailed budget, 6) expected outcomes and indicators, and 7) organizational responsibilities.

Prior to submission, the sub-project proposal is endorsed of at community-wide meeting or through consultation. For the initial nine communities, the sub-project proposal preparation process took an average of two to three months.

4. Proposal Consideration and Approval. Sub-project proposals are reviewed first by the relevant facilitator and provincial coordinator for completeness. A Project Reviewing Committee, comprised of local technical specialists, then appraises proposals based on the following:



¹The list of prohibited investments includes such items as: weapons and explosives, pesticides and similar potentially dangerous material, environmentally harmful activities, the purchase of land and vehicles, international travel, and political activities.

- Inclusiveness of preparation process;
- Equability of access to benefits (by gender, ethnicity, income level);
- Technical and financial feasibility;
- Community contributions to cost and operation and maintenance;
- Transparency of financial management procedures;
- Social and environmental safeguards; and
- Sub-project sustainability.

Within two weeks of approval, an agreement is signed with the head of the VIC. The VIC then establishes relevant subcommittees and opens a dedicated savings account. Installments are transferred based on the detailed, time-bound implementation schedule included in the proposal.



5. Implementation. Sub-project implementation is the responsibility of the VIC with assistance provided by facilitators and provincial coordinators as required. Depending on the specific implementation arrangements detailed in the sub-project proposal, VICs may contract for specialized skills and services. Procurement of any goods, services and works follows agreed guidelines.

To ensure transparency, particularly of the use of funds, the VIC posts and regularly updates information related to implementation on a centrally-located sign board and through village broadcasting systems and holds periodic community meetings.

6. Completion and Handover. Once activities are finished, the VIC prepares a completion report with the assistance of the facilitator. For sub-projects requiring operation and maintenance (e.g., small-scale community infrastructure), identified community members are trained and supported by sub-district committees.

In the initial nine communities, the first round of block grants is expected to take an average of one year to complete, with the duration varying by community due to the experience of facilitators, community capacity, and the conflict situation. Future rounds are estimated to take six to nine months.

The first round of block grants is financing a variety of activities totaling THB 2.5 million (USD 78,000) in nine communities, including career development in dessert making and tailoring, the production and promotion of organic fertilizer, and the construction of a childcare center, community center, and community library.

Peace-Building Partnership Fund

The Peace-building Partnership Fund (PPF), offers grants of THB 150,000 to 300,000 (USD 5,000 to 10,000) to community-based organizations, civil society organizations, and civic networks working in the conflict-affected areas. The PPF aims to: 1) strengthen civil society to promote peace and development activities, 2) provide support to protect vulnerable groups, such as widows and youth, and 3) improve communication and public information dissemination through various media.

Eligible organizations may be registered or unregistered, but must be comprised of at least ten persons, have a proven record of good management, and have at least one year of experience implementing development activities in the target area.

The Peace-building Partnership Fund process follows a series of steps similar to the block grant process: 1) institutional preparation and information dissemination, 2) proposal preparation and submission, 3) proposal screening, 4) proposal appraisal, and 5) approval.





Proposals for PPF grants may be submitted throughout the year and are considered every six months. Between August 2009 and April 2010, 105 proposals were submitted for PPF financing.

2. Proposal Preparation and Submission. Interested civil society organizations and their networks prepare proposals and submit them to the local project office. PPF grants can finance activities that meet the Fund's objectives and adhere to the key principles of simplicity, broad-based participation and group decision-making, and transparency. Informed by the study phase of the project, focus target groups and areas are expected to be women, youth and alternative media and strengthening civil society organizations.

The proposal for PPF funding includes: 1) background and rationale, 2) objectives, 3) target group and implementation area, 4) implementation plan, 5) activities, workplan and detailed budget, and 6) information on the applicant organization.

3. Proposal Screening. Soon after the required submission date, the project's provincial coordinators together conduct a preliminary screening of all submitted proposals to ensure completeness and relevancy. For those organizations whose proposals pass the screening, the provincial coordinators conduct a meeting to advise on additional details required. Once re-submitted, these proposals are forwarded to the Project Reviewing Committee with a recommendation from the provincial coordinators to approve or not approve.

In order to help build capacity, those organizations whose proposals were screened as not eligible are invited to another forum aimed at increasing understanding of project objectives and approach and enhancing proposal development.



4. Proposal Appraisal. LDI recruited a group of local technical specialists from government, academia, and civil society to assist with the review and appraisal process. Project Reviewing Committees, comprised of LDI management staff, the provincial coordinator, and relevant local technical specialists and organized along the themes of the sub-project proposals, review screened proposals for project relevance, feasibility and institutional capacity.

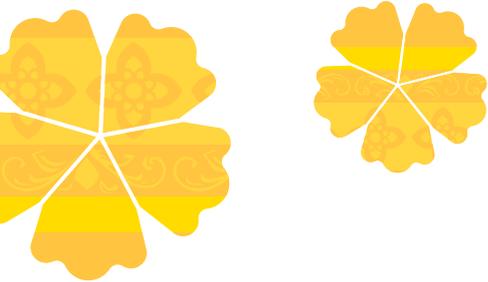
- Specific appraisal criteria include the following:
- Participation of group members and beneficiaries;
- Inclusivity of different groups (economic status, religion, gender);
- Technical and financial feasibility
- Community contribution;
- Transparency;
- Social and environmental responsibility; and
- Sustainability.



The appraisal process involves a consultation between the review committee and applicant organizations. Applicants are asked to make a presentation (10 minutes), followed by a question and answer session (40 minutes), and a joint summary (20 minutes). Finally, the review committee consults among its members (10 minutes) and agrees to approve the proposal or request revisions.

5. Approval. For approved proposals requiring no further information or clarification, a contract is signed within two weeks. Adjusted proposals are to be resubmitted within two weeks, and if found to have incorporated requested changes, contracts are signed. Once a contract is signed, funds are transferred directly to the applicant's bank account.

The first round of PPF grants elicited 58 proposals of which seven sub-projects (totaling THB 1.8 million or USD 56,000) were approved.





Activities financed include the production of a movie to help widows and orphans affected by the crisis, promotion of occupational support and saving group formation, an exchange among civil networks in the three provinces on experiences with peace-building projects, community action research on community processes and mechanisms, and culturally-sensitive drug rehabilitation activities.

The second round elicited 35 proposals of which three passed the screening process. These activities are all targeted to youth, and include the implementation of nature activities, the establishment of a knowledge and technical center, and a literature program involving young Thai and Malay writers.

Learning and Monitoring and Evaluation

The project is designed as a learning activity to develop and refine effective local development approaches that can be adapted to other affected communities. Learning opportunities have been created at multiple levels and for stakeholders. At the local level, the community participatory processes provide opportunities for all stakeholders in communities, tambons (sub-districts) and provinces to discuss various aspects of the project and sub-projects, thus enabling the application of lessons learned from operations to improve local and provincial planning. The project steering and advisory committees are from for representatives from government agencies, the private sector, and civil society organizations to discuss relevant policies, partnerships, implementation progress, and impediments and lessons. A series of local, national, and international consultations is planned to process and disseminate lessons more broadly.

Such learning is supported by a robust monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system designed to track implementation progress and assess impact. The M&E system relies predominately on the routine collection of data embedded in the sub-project planning and implementation process, and supplemented by periodic qualitative assessments of specific aspects or features of the project.

Project Management

The management of the CACS Project is the responsibility of the Local Development Institute (LDI), a non-governmental organization that aims to promote community, local, and civil society strengthening. Multiple mechanisms at the central and local levels have been established to support implementation.

A Project Advisory Committee, comprised of seven representatives from government agencies and civil society organizations with special interest and responsibilities in the conflict-affected provinces, meets annually to provide policy advice at the national level.

A Project Steering Committee (PSC) consists of seven leaders of key organizations (government agencies and private foundations) with experience implementing and/or supporting development activities in the south. The PSC meets every three months and provides operational guidance on all aspects of the project.





LDI maintains offices in Bangkok and in Pattani staffed by managers, financial management and procurement specialists, and information assistants. Community facilitators and provincial coordinators, hired by the project to work in participating communities and sub-districts, are supported intensively by LDI staff.

Also at the local level, a network of more than 35 specialists in the southern provinces in fields such as environment, gender, education, health, and livelihood development, has been formed to appraise and approve block grant and PPF proposals as well as provide practical advice to participating communities and civil society organizations. These specialists are provided a stipend (THB 1,000 or USD\$33) and transportation costs for participating on the grant selection committee (up to one time per year for block grants and twice a year for PPF grants).

Community facilitators are the key mechanism for ensuring implementation of the community-driven development approach.

Provincial coordinators, one for each province, mentor community facilitators as well as establish relationships with staff of local government agencies and civil society organizations in the area.

Village Implementing Committees, as described above, prepare block grant proposals, oversee implementation of block grant activities, and share implementation progress and results and lessons learned. They are supported by sub-committees which manage specific activities. All members serve on a voluntary basis.

Community volunteers assist the VICs in arranging and conducting the community assessments and other participatory processes within the community.

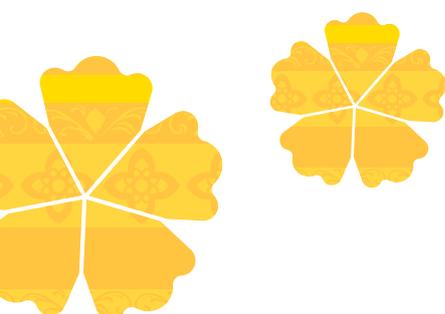
Tambon/Municipality Committees, comprised of no more than 15 informal leaders within the tambon, such as religious leaders, representatives of group or organization in the tambon, and respected community members, will be proposals, help ensure linkages to the Tambon/municipality development planning process, and help avoid duplication with government projects.

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