

# The Importance of Governance

## *In Integrated Coastal Area and River Basin Management Programs*



*Habitat protection and management are critical in all coastal management programs—both national and local.*



*Capturing lessons from experience, sharing them with other practitioners, and taking action to improve ICARM offer the opportunity to improve its effectiveness, reach and cumulative impact.*



*Good governance practices help ensure that ecotourism can support the economic development of local communities while protecting the marine ecosystem on which it depends.*



### What Do We Mean By Governance?

Integrated Coastal Area and River Basin Management (ICARM) links principles of Integrated Coastal Management (ICM) and River Basin Management to ensure the stability and productivity of the aquatic ecosystems in a given coastal region through sustainable economic and social development of the region and its associated river basin.<sup>1</sup> Governance in integrated coastal and river basin management implies more than “government” alone; it refers to the way in which public, private, and civil society actors organize themselves and coordinate with each other to make decisions, develop rules of behavior, and distribute rights, obligations, and authority regarding shared water and coastal resources. Good governance practices foster strengthened leadership, accountability, participation and equity, and transparency in information gathering and decision-making. A sound governance approach to ICARM ensures that the range of political, institutional, administrative, social, and economic systems is in place to sustainably develop, manage, and protect water and coastal resources at multiple levels of society, at scales appropriate to the resources to be managed, and in a proactive manner.

### Good Governance Enhances the Effectiveness of Integrated Resources Management

USAID recognizes that using good governance practices will help to ensure effective outcomes in ICM and ICARM; however, this may require significant changes in existing interactions between stakeholders and various levels of government. USAID promotes good governance within a development framework<sup>2</sup> that consists of three focus areas:

- Enhancing the **Enabling Environment** to foster the development of a shared vision, the participatory design and implementation of improved ICARM policies and legislation, and incorporation of sound science into the decision-making process;
- Supporting an **Institutional Framework** to provide the organizational structure and capacity to implement ICARM at local, national, and transboundary scales; and
- Facilitating the use of **Management Instruments** for transparent and informed decision-making and implementation of best practices, including the sustainable financing of programs.

<sup>1</sup> UNEP Collaborating Centre on Water and Environment, [www.ucc-water.org/Freshco/Docs/Issuepapere.pdf](http://www.ucc-water.org/Freshco/Docs/Issuepapere.pdf), page 14.

<sup>2</sup> See USAID's *Framework for ICARM Governance* for additional information.



*Governance encompasses the processes in which public, private and civil society actors organize themselves and coordinate with each other to make decisions, and distribute rights, obligations and authority for the use of shared coastal resources.*



*Sustainable development in coastal areas strives to encourage social well-being and economic growth and prosperity, while minimizing the negative impacts of economic activities on the ecosystem.*



*Capacity building requires more than human development through education and training—it requires institutional development and development of enabling frameworks.*

### Good Governance: How Do We Get There?

While there is no prescribed set of rules to follow in applying practices of good governance to ICARM, in each situation practices can be tailored to fit the unique conditions of each project phase or management issue. Using good governance practices will help to ensure effective outcomes in ICARM, but may require significant changes in existing interactions to harmonize policies, laws and regulations, and to enhance interaction between institutions and civil society regarding the use of water and coastal resources. For example:

- Environmental laws and regulations are often developed without consultation with all sectors of society they are meant to protect. As such, the laws may be out of date or irrelevant to certain stakeholders, and in need of revision to reflect stakeholder input and buy-in. Clearly articulated policies, regulations, and consequences for non-compliance provide transparency and an *enabling environment* for stakeholders to openly re-evaluate regulations and identify options.
- Cost recovery policies applied fairly and consistently also support an *enabling environment* in which the “user pays” approach can promote sustainable resource use.
- Ensuring that both men and women gain equal access to and benefits from coastal and aquatic resources creates an *enabling environment* for community empowerment and participation in ICARM. In addition, designing low-cost, consensus-based ways to deal with conflict can pay large dividends for ICARM in the long-term.
- Transboundary dialogue with neighboring countries can help establish the needed *institutional frameworks* and harmonize management goals of shared coastal areas and river basins.
- ICARM practitioners can help coordinate efforts and identify roles and responsibilities of community groups, national and local government, and private entities to strengthen the *institutional framework*. An important principle is that of “nested governance”, operating simultaneously at multiple scales and levels.
- The use of *management instruments* such as public awareness campaigns and participatory environmental monitoring programs are examples of good governance practices that lead to management success through stewardship and a strengthened environmental ethic.
- Participatory data collection and assessment of resources and use patterns can be used to create a Coastal Atlas, a *management instrument* used by many communities to help guide strategic planning and decision-making. Sound science is an essential precursor to sound governance.