



USAID
FROM THE AMERICAN PEOPLE

THAILAND

CASE STUDY

Volunteers Make Recovery Democratic

Villagers elect volunteers to mobilize community engagement



Photo: USAID/Suzanne Ross

Teams from the seven village clusters of Kampuan, in Suk Samran district join US officials, including US Ambassador Ralph Boyce, center, in an awards ceremony.

“We are learning how to think logically through our problems, assess our resources, and leverage possible solutions. We couldn’t have done this without being a part of this process,” said Samran Laonumao, a team leader from one of seven Kampuan village clusters.

Telling Our Story
U.S. Agency for International Development
Washington, DC 20523-1000
<http://stories.usaid.gov>

Challenge

After the December 2004 tsunami, many skilled individuals came to the forefront to offer assistance in helping rebuild their communities. Although they were also victims, they wanted to contribute to the greater good. Despite their good intentions, in village after village, lack of coordination and confusion in the tsunami’s aftermath made it difficult for communities to take advantage of their skills.

Initiative

USAID created a model to strengthen local capacity for self-management and self-government through participatory processes in five villages. The model focused specifically on the environmental and economic recovery process. USAID helped villagers, local authorities, and community groups in Suk

Samran district collaborate in identifying priority concerns, developing a shared vision for the future, and mapping action time lines. Each of the villages where the model was adopted elected one man and one woman to a village extension team. The teams worked to identify and implement long-term development needs. They became the village’s external relations representatives, acting as liaisons with the Thai government, USAID and its partners, and their communities to coordinate recovery and development activities.

Results

By taking an active role in designing and creating transparent decision-making systems, village extension teams are leading their communities to a recovery process that takes into consideration everyone’s needs and views. Through regular interaction with authorities, they strengthen linkages between the government and the governed, mobilize resources to achieve priority goals, communicate village needs to international donors, and secure cash-for-work funds for immediate impact projects, such as refuse collection or mangrove replacement. Through this democratic process, villagers are influencing their economic recovery.