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PHOTO & CAPTION

Building Consensus and Creating a Unified Vision for Action



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After the tsunami, local authorities lost their decision making responsibilities to centralized government mechanisms leading relief efforts. Tsunami affected villagers reported that they often didn't know who to turn to for answers, how to apply for assistance, were frustrated that their needs were not being met and wanted to establish more equitable terms for beneficiaries. Villagers hoped that recovery would involve better coordination and communication in order to reduce stress and conflict.

USAID Integrated Coastal Management Project is implemented through a partnership with the University of Rhode Island, the University of Hawaii at Hilo, the Asia Institute as well as local NGO's and government. Unlike other donor support, this project strengthens good governance practices through participatory planning processes. Villagers and government join to construct democratic and transparent procedures and practices that diffuse conflict while catalyzing change and stability in their communities.

community tensions heightened by monsoon rains, limited resources and compromised livelihoods. Town hall meetings with thousands of community members and local government encourage cooperative decision making approaches through Participatory Assessments. The Participatory Assessment process engages all community members to identify and validate priority community needs and activities. By fostering democratic decision making processes, USAID helps communities learn how to construct decision making instruments and map a course of action. For example, villagers nominated and elected one male and one female representative who is responsible for representing community concerns in working groups as well as responsible for ensuring information sharing among all members of the community. Communities also developed a contract prioritizing criteria for beneficiary eligibility, and transparent measures that aim to mitigate community conflict in the process of rehabilitating tsunami struck villages.