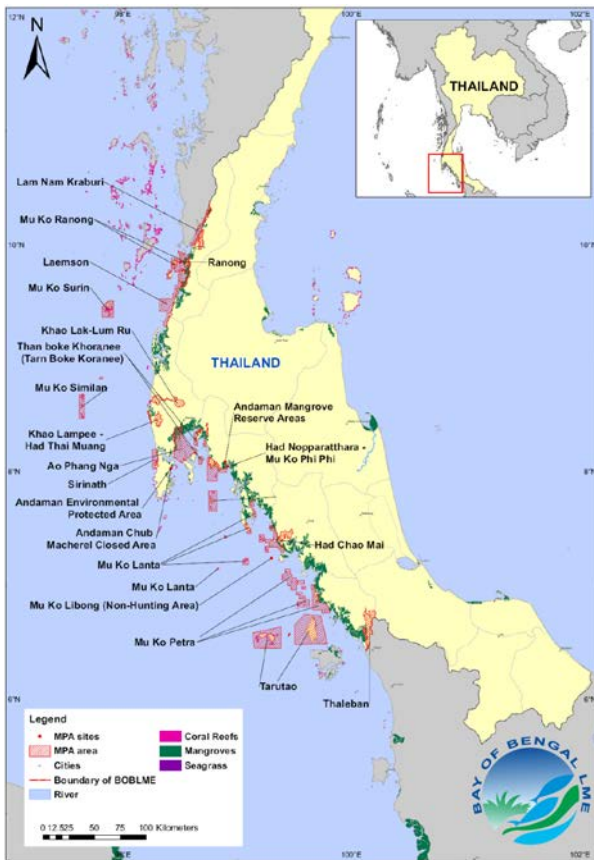
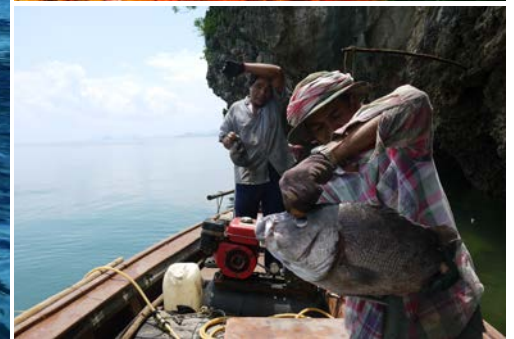


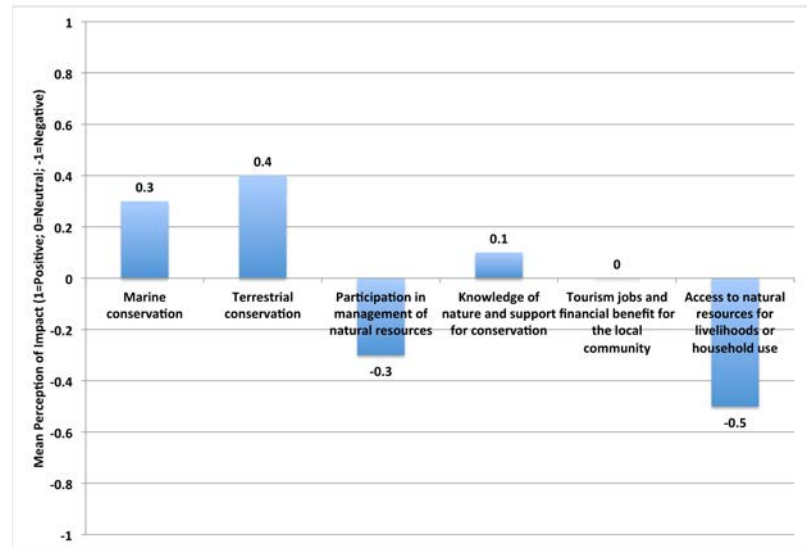


Improving Conservation Effectiveness and the Relationship between Marine Protected Areas and Local Communities in Thailand



Marine protected areas (MPAs) are important biodiversity conservation and fisheries management tools. They can also benefit local communities through safeguarding valuable ecosystem services and supporting the development of tourism economies. On the Andaman coast of Thailand, there are 18 National Marine Parks (NMPs) under the jurisdiction of the Department of National Parks. Technically, these NMPs are “no-take” MPAs where fishing and other extractive activities are not allowed. Yet there are numerous small fishing communities located beside and within the boundaries of the NMPs whose livelihoods are impacted by restrictive resource management policies and exclusionary processes.

Successful marine conservation initiatives require the support and compliance of local communities. In Thailand, local communities question the legitimacy of NMP governance, hold negative perceptions of management processes and feel that there are more negative impacts to livelihoods than benefits through tourism. As a result, local communities often ignore or actively oppose the NMPs thus undermining conservation outcomes. This policy brief summarizes results of a research project and recommendations for gaining local support and compliance and increasing MPA effectiveness through improving governance and management processes and providing support for development in local communities.



The chart above shows select results of a household survey in 7 communities located near NMPs. Survey participants held generally positive perceptions of potential marine and terrestrial conservation outcomes from NMPs. Yet they felt that NMPs had negative impacts on levels of participation in management of natural resources and led to less access to local resources. They also suggested that NMPs had no impact on tourism livelihoods.

Additional interviews were conducted with community members and representatives from government, universities and NGOs. These interviews showed that communities had very negative perceptions of Department of National Parks governance processes and management actions. Interviewees also felt that NMPs undermined both fisheries and agricultural livelihoods while providing little benefit from tourism and no support for engaging in alternative livelihoods.

Improving MPA effectiveness:

Achieving successful marine conservation outcomes requires better relationships between NMPs and local communities, through improving governance and management and supporting local development.

Improving governance and management:

- Increase the legitimacy of the DNP agency and processes through improving transparency in decision making, accountability of managers, participation of stakeholders, coordination with other agencies, and adaptability of processes
- Provide adequate resources and human capacity for effective management
- Increase management actions to communicate regulations, create outreach and education programs, improve participatory processes, incorporate local values and knowledge, equitably enforce regulations, build trust and resolve conflicts
- Implement a program to monitor ecological, governance and socio-economic indicators
- Cultivate managerial skills in facilitation, collaboration, communication, interpretation and conflict resolution
- Hire park superintendents based on skills and aptitude for a minimum 4 year term and monitoring their performance annually

Supporting local development:

- Create mechanisms to ensure local employment and economic benefit from tourism, including supporting financing, infrastructure development and capacity building programs
- Create policies and training programs to ensure local hiring into MPA management positions
- Recognize historical tenure and provide compensation for lost rights
- Use tourism to safeguard traditional livelihoods and cultural practices

For more information see:

Project IMPAACT
<http://projectimpaact.asia>

Bennett, N. & Dearden, P. (2014) Why local people do not support conservation: Community perceptions of marine protected area livelihood impacts, governance and management in Thailand. *Marine Policy*, 44, 107-116. Available [online](#).

Photos: P. Manopawitr/N. Bennett