

Review

## DECENTRALIZATION IN THE EGYPTIAN COASTAL MANAGEMENT

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### ABSTRACT

*Human impacts, coupled with global climate change are placing increased pressures on coastal environments. During the last three decades, in response to the growing problems of coastal zones, many countries have introduced Integrated Coastal Zone Management (ICZM) as a mechanism to effectively manage the coastal zone and the conflicts of interest arise from competition for coastal space and resources. However many ICZM schemes in the developing countries have failed at the implementation stage as a result of inadequate institutional and management capacity, as well as a lack of decentralization for the community in implementing local integrated coastal management. Hence, decentralization of ICZM is necessary to deal with the extensive geographical problems and the tremendous social and cultural diversity of communities.*

*Egypt provides an excellent case study of this experience. Since the mid-1990s several attempts have been made towards decentralization in Egypt, the process is still in its initial stages and needs support to enhance ICZM implementation.*

*This paper reviews ICZM process in Egypt focussing on discussing decentralization in planning and implementation of ICZM based on interviews with key ICZM actors as well as documentary analysis. It seeks through a critical evaluation to provide some practical recommendations that could help to enhance the implementation of ICZM in Egypt.*

**Keywords:** ICZM, Decentralization, Egypt.

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### INTRODUCTION

During the last three decades, in response to existing problems of coastal zones, many countries have introduced policies and programmes to try to manage these critical assets. For example, as an attempt to resolve the increasing pressures on coastal resources, the Coastal Zone Management (CZM) Act was developed in the USA in 1970s (Cummins, Mahony & Connolly 2004). This Act set the scene for what is acknowledged as the first national CZM programme, prompting countries of the developed world to take an interest in the quality and management of their coastal environments. Subsequently, a number of

countries worked on coastal management plans independently, without the use of a formal title (Atkins 2004). Further to this, the term integrated was added in the 1980s when it became clear that the effective management of coastal areas requires a cross-sectoral approach. In other words, the main difference between ICZM and the earlier CZM is that the former attempts a more comprehensive approach, taking account of all the sectoral activities that affect the coast and its resources, and dealing with economic and social issues as well as environmental/ecological concerns (Cummins, Mahony & Connolly 2004).

Concerns about integrated management and sustainable development of coastal and marine areas were again raised in 1992 at the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro (Mikhaylichenko 2006; Pedersen et al. 2005). As a result, ICZM now forms part for the strategy of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources, and has been adopted as policy principle to be actively promoted by such international bodies as the World Bank, the United Nations Environment Programme, and many national governments and agencies. For instance, Agenda 21 recommends that coastal states employ an integrated management of the coastal and marine environment to achieve sustainable development (Cho 2006). This was strongly re-endorsed during the World Summit on Sustainable Development, held in Johannesburg in 2002, when states committed to improving coordination and cooperation at all levels to address issues related to oceans and the seas, in an integrated manner. Thereby promoting integrated management and sustainable development of the oceans and seas (Borhan 2007).

In fact, Olsen (2002) asserts that coastal management practices evolves through three stages of development. Starting with Enhanced Sectoral Management which focuses upon the management of a single sector or topic but explicitly addresses impacts and interdependencies with other sectors and the ecosystems affected. In the second stage, CZM develops a multi-sectoral management approach which focuses upon both development and conservation issues within narrow, geographically delineated stretches of coastline and near shore waters. Finally, it is converted to ICZM which expands the cross-sectoral features of coastal zone management combined and integrated with ecosystem processes within coastal watersheds and oceans. It explicitly defines its goal in terms of progress towards more sustainable forms of development.

Since 1990 there has been a considerable increase in the number of developing countries involved in the ICZM process at both the national and local level (Kosiek, Bastard & Bănică 2003). However, Trumbic et al. (1999) pinpoint that the

majority of developing countries were at a pre-implementation phase. The reasons for this have been illustrated by many experts. Jorge (1997) argues that many government agencies in developing countries lack the necessary experience, resources, and institutional stability to fulfil their role in ICZM. Furthermore, often the national and local institutions in developing countries have little to do with each other (Hale 2000). Again Hale et al. (2000) argue that a lack of human and institutional capacity, coupled with a lack of local commitment to coastal management initiatives, is a major barrier to ICZM in developing countries. Above all, IACCARINO (2000) asserts that the main cause of ICZM policy failures in many developing countries is due to integration failures. Riancho et al. (2009) suggest that the Mediterranean developing countries have not fully implemented ICZM as a result of lack of stakeholder involvement and public participation and integration strategies. In fact many ICZM schemes in the developing countries have failed at the implementation stage due to difficulties typically found in most developing countries, such as information and communication gaps, restricted technical and financial capacity, centralization and limited democratic representation (Brugere 2006). Furthermore Olsen (2003) highlights that the number of ICZM initiatives in developing countries that have succeeded in making the transition from planning to implementation remains small or even non-existent. For instance Abul-Azm, Abdel-Gelil and Trumbic (2003) argue that developing countries are suffering from inadequacies in the capacity of local institutions. Furthermore, developing countries have not yet established clear and well-structured mechanisms that will ensure sustainable coastal environment, development and resource utilization. In most cases there is no authoritative body to coordinate these activities and there is no established mechanism for resource use conflict resolution (Masalu 2003). To sum up, developing countries have been involved in the ICZM process since 1990, however, according to many experts; developing countries have failed to implement ICZM due to integration failure. Needless to say, ICZM is everywhere a challenge to apply, but particularly

so in developing countries which suffer from highly centralized systems of governance and lack of effective stakeholder involvement and public participation (Caffyn & Jobbins 2003; Hale et al. 2000; Olsen, Lowry & Tobey 1999; Pedersen et al. 2005). As a result, there is a need for literature in the ICZM field to take the nature of the governance system in developing countries into consideration (Caffyn & Jobbins 2003). This paper reviews ICZM initiatives in Egypt as one of the developing countries focussing on discussing the decentralization. It seeks through a critical evaluation to provide some practical recommendations that could help to enhance the implementation of ICZM in Egypt. Therefore the paper is divided into four sections. First section develops a conceptual analytical framework based on the importance of decentralization of ICZM process. Then a brief overview of ICZM initiatives at both the national and local in Egypt is provided. The third section reviews ICZM process in Egypt focussing on discussing the decentralization of ICZM process. The data for this analysis is drawn from a detailed evaluation of all the projects and involved a critical examination of secondary data combined with primary data, including detailed semi-structured interviews with 30 different participants involved in the processes. Finally some practical recommendations that could help to enhance the implementation of ICZM are provided.

## DEVELOPING A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This section discusses the importance of decentralization of ICZM process as well as how its role will be investigated in Egypt.

Ribot (2002) defines decentralization as '*any act in which a central government formally cedes powers to actors at lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy*'. In fact, decentralization takes place when a central government formally transfers powers, i.e. authority and responsibility for public functions, to actors and institutions at lower levels in a political-administrative and territorial hierarchy or even the private sector and community associations (Satria and Matsida, 2004).

Institutional and legal arrangements are very important and have a great effect on addressing the issues of power distribution among levels of government – the disciplines operating from within and outside government (Siry, 2007). In this regard, Tobey and Volk (2002) argue that ICZM on the local scale will not flourish unless national government has provided national enabling conditions, including policy, legislation, political commitment and coordinating mechanisms. For example, in Malaysia, the lack of political will and commitment to support the decentralization of ICZM was the major constraint in implementation (Smith et al., 2006). Indonesia, on the other hand, has enacted a law that enables decentralization and thus is more likely to achieve its goals (Smith et al., 2006). Pomeroy and Berkes (Cited in Satria and Matsida, 2004, p182) define the goal of decentralization as '*greater participation and efficiency by getting people at lower levels more involved in the decision making processes and procedures that affect them*'. In the same way, Brugere (2006) emphasizes that the necessity for decentralization comes from two points:

- Increasing efficiency, as a central state authority usually lacks capacity to implement policies and programmes that reflect people's real needs and preferences.
- Improving governance, through enhancement of the accountability and monitoring of government officials and decision makers.

Furthermore, decentralization is the bridge to increase local community's or people's participation in coastal management (Satria and Matsida, 2004). Hence, Siry (2007) argues that decentralization of ICZM is necessary to deal with the extensive geographical problems and the tremendous social and cultural diversity of communities. Siry (2007) goes on to argue that coastal zones in developing countries have clearly suffered as a result of inadequate institutional and management capacity, as well as a lack of decentralization for the community in implementing local integrated coastal management.

However, too much decentralization could cause damage to or over-exploitation of natural resources (Ribot, 2002). Thia-Eng (2006) argues that decentralization of coastal management in

East Asia countries has caused further fragmentation of efforts with many government departments often working independently. While the issues of coastal and marine management are complex and cross-sectoral in nature, the initiatives to address these concerns have thus far been sectoral and disjointed. In this respect, highly decentralized countries have more problems in preparing a national ICZM strategy. In some cases they may not even feel that it is their mandate. This especially appears to have been the case for Italy (IOI, 2006). Therefore, mechanisms for balancing national against local interests are essential. In this regard, Hale (2000) suggests that within a context of increasing decentralization it becomes ever more important that the national interest in the coast is defined and protected as well as a clear definition as to when national interests prevail over local interests. Therefore, Siry (2006) suggests that to promote the decentralization of the coastal zone, central government should play a crucial role. It must promote and provide training for all levels of government in a decentralized administration. Technical assistance is often required for local governments, private enterprises, and local non-governmental groups in the planning, financing and management of the coastal zone. For example, with decentralization and devolution of functions, such as in Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia, most local governments did not have the capacity to manage their natural resources. They were unprepared technically, financially and in terms of institutional capacity, to deal with the duties imposed on them. Thus, when environmental facilities were handed over to local government authorities to be operated and maintained, there was inadequate planning for the funding of this long-term duty in a sustainable manner, and the local governments also felt a weak sense of ownership for their new functions (Thia-Eng, 2006, Courtney and White, 2000).

Furthermore, the success of decentralized of coastal zone management also requires the involvement of the public, environmental protection organizations, user group representatives, and the local community. In other words the potential of decentralization to be

efficient and equitable depends on the creation of democratic local institutions with significant discretionary powers (Ribot, 2002).

To conclude, the transition from a centralized into a decentralized management is performed when the central government formally transfers powers to actors and institutions at lower levels based on a clear institutional and legal arrangements. These arrangements are very important and have a great effect on addressing the issues of power distribution among levels of government. Furthermore decentralization of responsibility coincides well with a participatory approach to the planning and management of coastal areas and will not succeed unless national government has provided enabling conditions to the local level on how to properly exercise the delegated functions and responsibilities.

Consequently the research will investigate the following questions in order to clarify the role of decentralization in the ICZM:

- What forms of decentralization in coastal management are there?
- Are they effective?
- Do the local actors have the capacity to manage their coastal zone?

## EGYPT OVERVIEW

This section gives an overview on the Egypt's marine environment and coastal zones. Egypt enjoys a vital strategic location between three continents. This gives it a special significance from the point of view of biodiversity. The coastal zones are sensitive and diverse ecosystems (Abul-Azm *et al.*, 2003). *Fig. 1* shows the geography of Egypt. The Egyptian coastline extends 3,500 kilometres along the Mediterranean Sea and Red Sea in addition to the Suez and Aqaba gulfs. The coastlines of Egypt are rich with ecosystems such as coral reefs, mangroves, sand dunes, sea grass beds, estuaries and coastal forests. Coral reefs are associated with a high diversity of assemblages of fish. However, at the same time the coast of Egypt is one of the most densely populated in the MENA region (EEAA, 2007).



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Geography of Egypt  
Source: (Google 2010)

The coast of Egypt with its internationally recognized biodiversity is also very important for the country's economy. But these areas require strong protection. Indeed, the marine environment and coastal zones in Egypt are under intensive pressure from industrial, urban and tourist development, and agriculture. These are causing shoreline erosion and flooding, water pollution and deterioration of the natural resources and habitats. Oil spills in the Gulf of Suez and the Red Sea are also a major concern (EEAA, 2007).

### **Egypt's coastal management initiatives**

Recognizing the growing development pressure and a growing awareness of the environmental quality combined with external pressure from donors and international agencies has led Egypt to take some initiatives designed towards introducing coastal zone management. These efforts were designed to promote ICZM. Subsequently since the mid-1990s several

attempts have been made to promote ICZM in Egypt (see Table 1), although none have, as yet, achieved their goal of having an ICZM plan in operation.

ICZM initiatives in Egypt can be divided into two phases. The first started in 1995 with the setting up of the National Committee for ICZM (NCICZM). This led to the preparation of a national ICZM framework and the development of two local projects. This phase lasted until 2001, when largely because of a lack of international donor funding, combined with inactivity within the NCICZM, the experiment ceased to be active (DAME, 2004). The second phase started in 2005 following an amendment of the national environmental regulations. This enhanced the power of the Egyptian Environmental Affairs Agency (EEAA) by giving it the power to approve or refuse any new, or extension to projects in the coastal zone based upon the results of a required EIA. About the same time, three new local ICZM projects were started, supported by international donor agencies

actively promoting sounder and more sustainable development of Egypt's Mediterranean Coastal Zone which was under intense environmental pressure. In 2007 the EEAA took a lead in trying to re-establish the NCICZM and started in 2008

to prepare national ICZM strategy to provide a framework for local action.

Table 1 Egypt's ICZM initiatives

| Egypt's ICZM initiatives  |                         |                |   | Time line            |
|---|-------------------------|----------------|---|----------------------|
| ICZM first phase initiatives  | From 1995 to 2005       | National Level | Setting up the National Committee for ICZM (NCICZM).                | Setup in 1995        |
|   |                         |                | Preparing a national ICZM framework                                 | Stop working in 2001 |
|   |                         | Local Level    | FUKA-Matrouh Coastal Area Management Programme (CAMP).              | Prepared 1996        |
|   |                         |                | Started in 1993   | Completed in 1999    |
|   |                         |                | Red Sea Coastal and Marine Resource Management programme (RSCMRMP). | Started in 1994      |
|   |                         |                | Completed 2002  |                      |
| ICZM second phase initiatives   | From 2005 until present | National Level | Re-establishing the NCICZM.   | Re-established 2007  |
|   |                         |                | The new environmental regulations (Law 9/2009).                     | Enacted 2009         |
|   |                         | Local Level    | Preparing the National ICZM Strategy for Egypt.                     | Started 2008         |
|   |                         |                | Not yet completed   |                      |
|   |                         |                | Alexandria Lake Maryut Integrated Management (ALAMIM).              | Started in 2006      |
|   |                         |                | Completed in 2009   |                      |
|   |                         |                | Plan of action for an ICZM in the area of Port Said.                | Started in 2006      |
|   |                         |                | Completed in 2009   |                      |
| Integrated Coastal Zone Management between Matrouh and El Sallum (MSICZMP). | Started in 2006         |                |   |                      |
| stopped end of 2007   | Not yet completed       |                |   |                      |

### Evaluating ICZM initiatives in Egypt

Decentralization makes participation effective, as it allows civil actors to localize issues and find local solutions to local problems (Handoussa, 2004). This section discusses decentralization in Egypt. To be more specific, the work in this section is based on answering these questions: What are the forms of decentralization in coastal management? Are they effective? Do the local

actors have the capacity to manage their coastal zone?

Borhan (2007) claims that real decentralization in Egypt will take decades before becoming a reality as a result of the dominant historical culture among officials, mistrust between officials and citizens, the lack of personnel capabilities and the existing institutional and legal frameworks.

On the other hand, it is undeniable that there are a few on-going efforts within the context of

Egyptian environmental management to decentralize the management. As a step towards decentralization of activities, the Environmental Management Units (EMUs), has been set up in each of the governorates as well as the Regional Branch Offices (RBOs) (EEAA, 2005). However, the World Bank (2005) emphasizes that the division of legal mandates and responsibilities between RBOs and EMUs has not been fully clarified. Indeed, in 2001, the Chief Executive Officer of the EEAA issued decree number 17/2001 that defined the tasks of the RBOs. Despite this, one of the interviewees noted that *“although guidelines for dividing mandates between RBOs and EMUs have already been prepared by the EEAA, their implementation has still to be worked out through practical experience”*. In this regard, it is clear from the interviewees’ comments that there is an overlap in practice between both EMU and RBO, that is, both of them do the same job without any coordination between them.

Furthermore, DAME (2004) argues that the RBOs and EMUs still need additional staff, training and office and technical equipment in order to fulfil their responsibilities. One interviewee commented that *“we have RBOs and EMUs but they have no real capacity to practise decentralization of coastal management”*. To be more specific, all the eight initiated RBOs stand on an equal footing whether they have a coastal zone or not. Each branch office comprises four departments without any specific department for managing the coastal zone, namely:

- Environmental Information and Education Department,
- Environmental Quality Department,
- Environmental Development Department,
- Financial Affairs Department (Helmy, 2007).

Moreover, neither the EMUs nor the RBOs have any specific person who deals with coastal zone management issues (Kafafi, 2007). For instance, one of the interviewees emphasized that *“with the absence of a regular evaluation of environmental status for the coastal zones on the local level by the RBOs or EMUs, it is impossible to progress coastal management”*. Another interviewee acknowledged that *“there is a great need for coastal evaluation and management units in each coastal governorate to support the*

*implementation of ICZM”*. In the same way, one of the interviewees, who concurred with the observations of several others, commented that *“decentralization is needed through supporting and enhancing the establishment of regional and local enforcement environmental units which is not available at the moment”*.

In this regard, the World Bank (2005) emphasizes that decentralization of decision-making mechanisms requires good planning and understanding at different levels. In other words, decentralization of environmental management functions would require strengthening the staff through external training or local training by the local universities and research institutes, and gradually increasing responsibilities with the assistance of local experts from the local universities (Ibrahim, 2009). Indeed, the local level of environmental monitoring and control and enforcement must be made effective if the coastal zone management goals are to be realized (Helmy, 2007). Professional and technical staff must be attracted to work in the governorate by defining increased responsibilities and clear procedures for the work of the regional and local environmental offices (EIECP, 2002, EEAA, 2007). For instance, one of the interviewees, who reflected the views of several others, noted that *“The decentralization of coastal management functions requires support for the staff at the local level and increasing gradual [sic] responsibilities with the assistance of local experts. However, the EEAA has no capacity to do this. In addition, they have contracted new temporary staff to prepare the local ICZM projects in Cairo without any involvement from the local stakeholders”*. In addition, although the three workshops for preparing the national ICZM strategy concluded that each coastal governorate should prepare its ICZM plan, the EEAA has not developed any strategy to enhance the capacity of those local governorates in order that this can take place (EEAA, 2009).

Furthermore, many of the interviewees asserted that Egypt in general still suffers from centralization and all the decrees and good intentions towards decentralization need to be practiced in reality. In the same way, El-Quosy (2009) emphasizes that, although a government decentralization policy was issued in 2005,

nothing has materialized on the ground. DAME (2004) clarifies that the dominance of the centralized approach and related attitudes in Egypt are still considered a real barrier to integration and coordination among sectors, even within the same sector. In this regard, Nawar & Kashef (2007) stress that the ICZM practice in Egypt is still suffering from centralization in the management. Moreover, another interviewee noted that *"If you want to apply ICZM as a process in Egypt you need to seek at least the auspices of the prime minister, otherwise there is no support for ICZM as we are living in a centralized country"*. In the same way, one of the interviewees, who confirmed the views of several others, noted that *"we are really centralized and no decision could be taken on the local level without the approval of the central government"*. For instance, according to the new environmental law (No. 9/2009), all EIAs studies should be prepared by the investors and submitted to central government to be reviewed by the EEAA in the department of EIA in Cairo (Ibrahim, 2009). Another example is illustrated through the Shore Protection High Committee (SPHC). According to Prime Ministerial Decree No. 1599/2006 this committee was established in Cairo to define the width of the Setback Zone and other conditions for development and issue the related licences to the investors (Nazif, 2006). To be more specific, one of the interviewees argued that *"any investor who would like to invest in the setback zone in any governorate should apply to this centralized SPHC to gain the licence and there is no regional or local branch for this committee"*.

Furthermore, reviewing the ICZM local project documents and the interviewees' comments highlighted the fact that almost all the local projects were prepared by central government without any participation from local officials and there were no practical steps for empowering the local level in order to achieve decentralization of coastal management. For example, the EEAA, as the lead agency for ICZM in Egypt, signed, in September 1993, an "Agreement on the Implementation of the CAMP Fuka-Matrouh". One of the main appointed tasks assigned to the EEAA within this agreement, was to coordinate this local ICZM project (El-Raey, 1999). However, the EEAA as a lead agency, but

from central government, was not able to fulfil this role of leadership at the local level and was not able to clearly identify the end-users. They were not involved with the design of the project (Trumbic et al., 1999). Thus the project did not reflect people's real needs and preferences (IH Cantabria, 2007). In this regard one of the interviewees *"To have an effective ICZM, especially at the local level, participation of local stakeholders is a must. Unfortunately in Fuka-Matrouh project this was not the case. The project was prepared in Cairo without any participation from the local actors"*.

Again, the same scenario has continued in the second phase of ICZM. For instance, the EEAA, by collaborating with IH Cantabria, initiated the MSICZM project in 2006 (IH Cantabria, 2007). In fact, based on the MSICZMP documents and the interviewees responses, it is clear that the project was prepared in Cairo as a high centralized technical process without any participation from the RBO on the north-west coast or the EMU in the Matrouh Governorate (IH Cantabria, 2007). Furthermore, the local stakeholders were not also involved. In that respect, one of the interviewees stressed that *"The MSICZM was initiated by the leadership of the EEAA in Cairo, without any participation from the local stakeholders"*.

Another example is illustrated through the Port Said project which was initiated by two central Egyptian partners, IAS in Cairo and the University of El-Zagazig in Al-Sharkia Governorate and two international partners, without any participation from the local stakeholders in the Port Said Governorate (IAS, 2008, SMAP, 2006, SMAP, 2011).

On the other hand, the ALAMIM project gives a good example of decentralization. Indeed, to prepare the proposal for this project, MEDCITIES and CEDARE conducted a number of preparatory visits to Alexandria to meet with the high officials at the Governorate of Alexandria, the RBO and EMU in Alexandria in order to discuss the actual needs and requirements to be included in this project (ALAMIM Team, 2007, El-Refaie and Ragué, 2009, Parpal, 2006).

To conclude, there are few on-going efforts within the context of decentralization of the

environmental management. However, Egypt in general still suffers from high level of centralization and all the decrees and good intentions towards decentralization need to be practised in reality. Further to this, the local stakeholders, including the RBOs and EMUs, have limited capacity to provide effective decentralized services and manage their coastal zone. However, the focal actor has not taken any effective steps to empower the local stakeholders to develop and manage ICZM initiatives in practice.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

Exploring decentralization as a factor that affect ICZM implementation disclosed that decentralization of responsibility coincides well with a participatory approach to the planning and management of coastal areas and will not succeed unless national government has provided enabling conditions to the local level on how to properly exercise the delegated functions and responsibilities.

The review of the Egyptian ICZM initiatives highlighted that Egypt in general still suffers from centralization and all the decrees and good intentions towards decentralization need to be practised in reality. Furthermore, although there is some evidence of moves towards decentralization in Egypt, the process is still in its initial stages and needs support to enhance ICZM implementation. This means that the ICZM structure and roles in Egypt lack clarity and a systematic approach. As a result, local government, administrative decentralization, civil society and stakeholder consultation are all limited, and decision-making processes are opaque.

Based on the previous evaluation for the Egyptian ICZM initiatives some recommendations could be developed in order to enhance the ICZM implementation:

- Egypt needs to develop a proper framework to enable the coordination of different sectors and different stakeholders at different levels by using a balanced approach instead of a top-down approach.

- Egypt needs to establish an ICZM coordinating bodies at all levels of governance.
- There is need to actively involve local communities, NGOs, politicians, people from the media, and judiciary in the process. This will enhance and raise the awareness about coastal management issues which will support the decentralization in ICZM process.

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