The southernmost provinces of Thailand are host to one of the longest-running sub-national conflicts in the Asian region. Since flaring up again in 2004, it has claimed more than 5,000 lives. And in spite of recent efforts at peace talks, the insurgency is still active and varying levels of violence persists.

Central to the Bank’s engagement in southern Thailand has been the *Piloting Community Approaches in Conflict Situations in the Southernmost Provinces in Thailand* (CACS) project. Implemented between 2009 and 2013, the project centered on community development approaches and building civil society capacity as a means to foster a deep understanding of local issues and effectively engage with the state. The Bank, alongside its main implementing partner the Local Development Institute (LDI), focused efforts on establishing a rapport with relevant interlocutors including government, local communities, civil society and the business sector. Over time, the role of the Bank developed into that of a trustworthy and neutral convener, which formed the basis of a constructive working relationship with authorities and allowed for an active field presence.

A recent beneficiary assessment of the CACS pilot project found that “The project is capable of operating in heavily conflict-affected areas with limited apparent interference. This is a significant result as other projects have reduced their operations in these areas”. Based on this transformative approach, the government and LDI requested further assistance to expand its participatory community development programs. This led to the launch of *The Expanding Community Approaches in Conflict Situations in Three Southernmost Provinces in Thailand* project (ECACS) in July 2013.

With SPF support, ECACS is able to capitalize on the credibility, built by its predecessor, and expand its participatory local governance efforts. ECACS is building capacity to formulate inclusive policies and deliver services to promote confidence building and address ‘vertical’ state-society conflict dynamics. In addition, the project is stepping up support for civil society networks that can offer creative platforms for exploring governance issues and transformative methods of conflict resolution. Notwithstanding such encouraging prospects, the project is still being implemented in a high-risk environment.

While accounting for such risks, both SPF funded projects clearly demonstrate effective community-based approaches to conflict situations in middle-income countries. Building on the Bank’s engagement in Thailand, the Thai government is looking to results and lessons from the SPF project in considering significant investments and government financing for the south.