

REPORT ON EXPOSURE VISIT FOR COASTAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT IN THAILAND



From 26-6-2016 to 1-7-2012

INTRODUCTION

In Mon State and Bago Region, Helvetas, NAG and IUCN have been implementing the Community Led Coastal Management in Gulf of Mottama Project with the support of SDC. The objective of the project is to improve the livelihood of vulnerable women and men in targeted coastal areas in the GoM through fisheries value chain development, livelihood diversification, and equitable and sustainable management of resources.

The distinctive ecosystem and biodiversity of the Gulf of Mottama is important to the world's biodiversity; as such, the project aims to have the GoM designated as a Ramsar Site.

To learn mechanisms to effectively manage coastal natural resources and in-shore developments, a team led by ministers from Mon and Bago regions visited Thailand from June 26 to July 2. Other team members included, eight governmental representatives from Mon and Bago, a representative from the Department of Forestry in Nay Pyi Taw and four project partners. A full list of participants is included in Annex 1.

OBJECTIVE OF TRIP

The core objective of the trip was to learn about coastal natural resource management and in-shore development. The major outputs are as follows:

1. To learn about Thailand's coastal management experiences and lessons
2. To learn the benefits of becoming a designated Ramsar Site
3. To learn rules, regulations and management mechanisms of Thailand's in-shore management

KEY LEARNING

KHOK KHAM BIRD CONSERVATION CLUB

The team visited to Khok Khan environmental conservation center in Sa Mwit Sa Khone region on June 27, 2016. Khok Khan has many salt and fishery pro-



duction businesses and its natural resources are at risk of extinction since fishers began using advanced fishing technology in the nineties.

Roughly 13 years ago, a few local activists established the Khok Khan Bird observation and natural environment conservation team, which has now grown to include 200 members who work towards conserving the natural environment.

The Thailand Bird Conservation Society has been giving technical support to the team and a local administrative department has provided financial support to help raise awareness.

BANG KAEW MANGROVE RESTORATION COMMUNITY

The team also learnt about a community-led mangrove restoration project aimed to protect the community from the effects of land erosion. With 80 per cent of Bang Kaew community being fishers, major



challenges have been migration due to land erosion and gradual decrease of the fishery sector.

The project began with a community leader passion-



ate about restoring the mangroves and mobilized the community to become involved in the conservation project. He was later elected as a village administrator, which allowed him to work more effectively.

Typically, private companies carry out Mangrove conservation; however, this community-led initiative has



been successful working as a network. Bang Kaew community belongs to the Natural Environment Conservation Network in the upper part of the Gulf of Thailand and shares technical knowledge and advocacy strategies with other communities.

Every three years, the government of Thailand allocates budgets to prevent land erosion using bamboo sea fence to protect the land erosion and conservation of wetlands areas.

Local administrators organize calls for proposals from private companies to build the Bamboo sea fence. Throughout the construction process, public hearings are held to give community members an opportunity to voice their opinions and provide suggestions.

The soft structure with bamboo creates wetlands that promote mangrove forest growth, which in turn prevents land slides and ultimately helps revive the fishery.

MAE KLONG DELTA COMMUNITY (LEARNING ON LOCAL KNOWLEDGE AND NATURAL RESOURCES MANAGEMENT)

On June 28, 2016, the team visited Mae Klong Delta, where Mr Surajit Chirawate, former president of Na-

tional Traders in Thailand, explained the importance of acknowledging indigenous knowledge in natural resource management and including it in management programs.

In the past 60 years, Thailand focused on economic growth as their National Economic and Social Development Plan was geared towards increasing production. Seventy-two per cent of production is exported and the remainder is consumed nationally. Years of increased energy demand to meet production needs took a toll on the environment.

Named “Asia’s Venice” because of the 2500 water channels and rivers running through the city, Bangkok is a perfect place for agriculture. Many industrial zones were built around Bangkok as it became a trading centre. As construction grew, water channels disappeared leaving just 1500 in the city. With the rise of buildings and economic development, came increased flooding resulting in annual income loss. Other examples of environmental degradation for the sake of economic development exist throughout the area, including the deep sea port build near Puttayar Beach, which changed the current and lead to land erosion leaving the beach unsightly and unfit for tourism.



A good example of using indigenous knowledge can be seen in the fisheries as well as home gardening, where knowledge is passed down through generations. For example, according to local knowledge, fishing seasons, fishing grounds and equipment used all depend on the tide, wind, and other indicators such as the sun and the moon. In creating policies and programs, both indigenous and scientific knowledge should be considered.

DON HOI RAMSAR SITE

In the afternoon of June 28, 2016, the team visited the Ramsar Site at the estuarine of Mae Klong River and met with local administrators and village leaders. In 2001, administrators and village leaders designated the area as a Ramsar Site. The main livelihood of



the community in mudflats is collecting Razor clams and on average, they earn 1000 Baht per clam. After six years, they are finally seeing the benefits of being a Ramsar Site—after much community discussion, the government agreed to avoid installing a charcoal power plant in the community in order to preserve the Ramsar Site.



As clam resources diminish and local livelihoods suffer, community members see obtaining a Ramsar designation as one way to replenish resources and ensuring conservation remains a priority in the area. In developing the Ramsar Site, the plan would be designed by the local community and technicians.

MEETING AT IUCN REGIONAL OFFICE

On June 29, 2016, management committees from the IUCN office in Bangkok and the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) discussed developing Ramsar Sites in Thailand and shared their experiences.

At inception phase, Mr Raphael Glemet from IUCN introduced the idea behind the Ramsar sites and the Ramsar Convention, also known as the Convention on Wetlands. The Ramsar Site was named after an agreement on wetland conservation signed by 169



countries in Ramsar, Iran in 1971.

In implementing the Ramsar agreement, there are three major parts:

- (1) Sustainable use of natural resources in wetland
- (2) Enabling good governance after naming Ramsar site
- (3) International co-operation (particularly for migrant biodiversity and governance of geographically similar areas)

According to 2005 Ramsar agreement, Moe Ywin Gyi Inn and Inn Daw Gyi Inn were named as Ramsar sites. Ramsar focal person in Myanmar is Dr Nyi Nyi Kyaw, Deputy Director of Department of Forestry. Myanmar used to be a member of Indo-Burma Hotspot and now it is nominated to be a member of Indo-Burma Ramsar Regional Initiative (IBRRI) for close collaboration. There are four objectives of IBRRI:

- (1) Sharing science and technology knowledge
- (2) Designating Ramsar Sites
- (3) Collaborating among regional countries to better develop wetland policies
- (4) Building capacity and increasing knowledge

Ms. Nirawan from the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) gave a presentation on Ramsar in Thailand, sharing some experiences in conserving wetlands. In Thailand there are 14 Ramsar sites and nine have been designated as protected areas; the rest are municipal areas and public places. Thailand has an Environmental Act and based on the

act, a National Environmental Board (NEB) was organized. The prime minister of Thailand acts as the chairperson of the board and under NEB, the National Committee on Wetland Management (NCWM) was organized, with the secretary of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment acting as the chairperson.

Under the NCWM, there is a Technical Working Group on Wetlands led by the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Planning and Policy and members are experts from relevant departments, wetland management committees, and other NGOs. Management sub-committees are organized in each province and a Provincial Governor acts as a chairperson. Since 2000, to increase wetland resource conservation, a Cabinet Resolution Mechanism was developed. As a result, 69 International Important Wetlands and 47 National Importance Wetlands sites were designated.

PRED NAI COMMUNITY

On 30th June 2016, the team visited Pred Nai community and learnt about community-based mangrove conservation in Trat province. 'Pre Nai' means 'short cut' and it is the route between Thailand and Cambodia.



There are 165 households in village. They earn their living from farming, fishery, gardening, and rubber plantations. However, wealthy people from outside the area came to the community to fish in the mangrove area, which destroyed the environment.

To protect the natural environment, local people criticized the business people who took advantage of the area, and organized as a village tract to employ co-management strategies to protect the mangroves.

Every three years, amendments were made to improve the management plan; the current plan is the sixth edition. Pred Nai community is a member of the natural conservation network in upper part of the Gulf of Thailand and they collaborate with other communities to share knowledge, experiences, and ideas.

BANG CHAN COMMUNITY

In the evening of 30th June, 2016, the team learnt about Bang Chan community's Mangrove Integrated Aquaculture. The majority of the community is Chi-



nese migrants who have been there for years. People from different regions in Thailand come to Bang Chan for wood, since there is good marine transportation.



As a result, the mangroves are being depleted. The local community replanted the mangroves by themselves and now an integrated aquaculture system is the major occupation for local people.

BLACK SAND BEACH

On the morning of July 1, 2016, the team visited the community learning center and Black Sand beach. Black sand beach is one of the five black sand beaches



in the world. The mangroves near Black Sand beach were exploited by business people and used for fuel. The local community collaborated with DMCR (Department of Marine and Coastal Resources) to re-

plant the mangroves. DSMR founded the Community Learning Center, which is run by the director of DMCR.

Before 2013, DMCR managed the Community Learning Centre, however after 2013, the centre was co-managed by a committee with village representatives and DMCR.

LESSONS LEARNT, KEY FINDINGS AND SUGGESTIONS

The team discussed overall learnings from the trip as well as future plans.

LESSONS AND KEY FINDINGS

We carefully reviewed what we learnt and developed the following outputs:

1. Improvement of Civil society organizations sector and their roles
2. Change of practices of government and departmental organizations
3. Sustainable management systems/approaches

1. Improving civil society organizations and their roles

CSOs are taking a critical role in conserving natural resources. They were organized with systematic rules, regulations, and management systems. We found:

- Conducting village-based resource conservation practices requires active community leaders and a devotion to build the capacity of local communities.
 - Having networks among local organizations to share news, technology, and experiences helps organizations co-work to implement coastal developments.
 - There are regional community learning centers where communities can be educated (particularly younger generations).
 - Building soft structure made with bamboo helps prevent land erosion and creates mudflats suitable for mangroves.
 - Advanced agricultural and livestock breeding technical system for high production negatively impacts natural environments and gradually affects the livelihoods of the community. Organic agricultural systems are currently more popular.
 - More job opportunities could be created by Agro-Eco-Tourism.
 - Increase of mangrove sales and other community-based income generating activities led by the community has had positive effects
2. Change of practices of government and departmental organizations
 - The Department of Marine and Coastal Resources was founded ten years ago, is self regulated

and works to better manage coastal resources.

- There is a geographically systematic differentiation among agriculture, industry and coastal resources zones. In coastal resources zone, traditional livelihoods is allowed for earn livings.
 - The Royal family helps to announce royal decrees and regulations that benefit the community.
 - Regional administrator collaborates and allocates budgets for natural resource conservation activities.
 - In developing projects, the public has a chance to voice their concerns, opinions, and suggestions.
 - Committees in each province organized with members of CSOs, networks and experts are needed to create effective conservation plans.
3. Sustainable management systems
 - In Thailand, the lack of inclusiveness in their economic development planning resulted in negative consequences (for example, building harbors that destroyed beaches good for tourism)
 - Policies and management plans should be developed by both community and governmental departments, after combining scientific and indigenous knowledge
 - Building hard structure can only benefit for nearest area, but it can also negatively affect other areas. Thus soft structure is better for sustainable natural environment and biodiversity conservation while building hard structure is more costly as it builds barriers rather than eliminating unnecessary resources.
 - CSOs and active community leaders are very important in resource conservation
 - Local CSOs should share information, technology, and experiences regarding sustainable resource conservation with each other.
 - Developing plans that include public input could reduce conflicts and is helpful for local peace and sustainable development.
 - In Thailand, strong morality and good governance helps natural resource conservations activities improve hugely.

SUGGESTIONS

Lessons from the trip that could be applied in Myanmar include:

1. Economic development should not only consider industrial zones, but also take into consideration the natural environment, sustainable use of the resources, and meeting community's basic needs.
2. Since community-based resource management and conservation is a valuable approach, Myanmar's resource management and conservation practices—including Ramsar site conservation—should include community leaders who advocate for the com-

munity and for building the capacity of local CSOs

3. Creating a network of CSOs could help develop better plans for natural resources management
4. Community learning centers should be also founded in Myanmar to increase community knowledge
5. Building soft structure has less negative consequences, thus it should be one of activities for natural resource conservation in Myanmar
6. Food security, sustainable livelihoods, and sustainable economic development should be prioritized. In Myanmar, a pilot implementation of that practice should be conducted after reasonably educating the people.
7. The government and community should collaborate to create rules and regulations that benefit the community.
8. Working groups are an effective way of organizing people with similar objectives (for example Ramsar site coastal resource conservation activities).
9. There should be strong rules and regulations for coastal resource management and conservation.

Addressing an umbrella law for the whole coastal resource conservation is required.

10. The best resource management is an inclusive planning approach that considers the natural environment
11. Developing and implementing resource conservation plans that include multiple stakeholders should be compulsory
12. Parliament, communities and CSOs are required to conduct continuous research, develop and evaluate implementing activities, and monitor mechanisms of natural resource conservation and economic social development.

 FUTURE PLANS

All team members, including ministers, have agreed to organize a follow up workshop to discuss key findings and lessons learnt from the trip as well as the sustainable use of resources and socio economic development, including Ramsar Site conservation in Mon State and Bago Region.

ANNEX (1): LIST OF STUDY TEAM MEMBERS

No.	Name	Title	Organization
1	U Shwe Thein	Executive Director	Land Core Group
2	Dr. Min Kyi Win	State Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation	Mon State Government
3	U Htun Htay	State Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Transportation	Mon State Government
4	U Min Thein Myint	Director	Mon State Forest Department
5	U Than Chaung	Director	Mon State Department of Fishery
6	U Kyaw Min Sann	Regional Minister for Natural Resources and Environmental Conservation	Bago Region Government
7	U Aung Zaw Naing	Regional Minister for Agriculture, Fishery & Transportation	Bago Region Government
8	U Zaw Win Myint	Director	Bago Region Forest Department
9	U Sai Kyaw Myint	Director	Bago Region Department of Fishery
10	U Kyaw Moe Aung	Deputy Director	Nature and Wildlife Conservation Division, Forestry Department
11	U Yin Nyein	Program Manager Delta and Coastal Program	Network Activities Group
12	U Aung Kyaw Kyaw	Programme Officer	SDC
13	U Than Hteik Aung	CLCMGoM Project Manager	Helvetas Myanmar