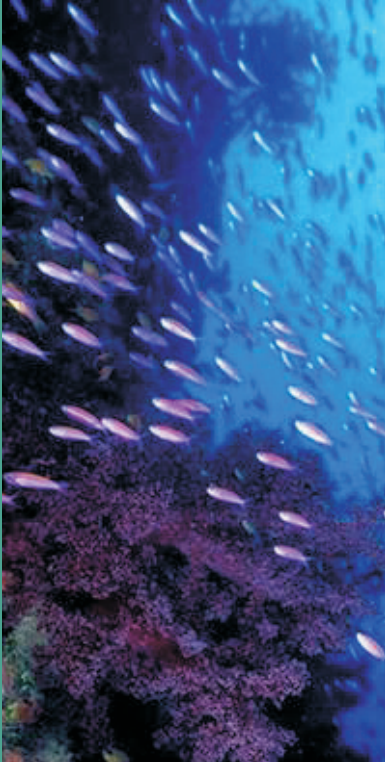




Thailand

Establishment of the Pathiu Coral and Environmental Protection Group



Background

The Pathiu district of Chumphon Province in Southern Thailand is home to 63 villages and an estimated 43,000 people. Coastal communities are dependent on small and medium sized fisheries for their livelihoods, and supplement incomes through rubber plant cultivation, tourism and aquaculture.

In 1989 Typhoon Gay swept across the district devastating houses, land, and other assets. An estimated 80% of shallow water coral surrounding Pathiu was destroyed by the Typhoon, and later further impacted by the 1998 global coral bleaching event. As a result, 260 hectares of fringing reef along the Pathiu coast was severely affected, spelling long term impacts to the livelihoods of the Pathiu people.

Recovery of Pathiu's natural resources has been hindered by a range of human induced threats. Unsustainable fishing pressure from commercial trawlers, and local fishing activities, coastal development, loss of vital mangroves through land conversion activities, and wastewater pollution from industry and aquaculture continue to impact the coral reefs.

Objectives

This project aimed to build capacity and improve the awareness of communities in the importance of marine and coastal resources, and their roles in the conservation of those resources, to aid the recovery of the impacted coral reefs.

Outputs

Conservation Coordination - The Pathiu Coral and Environmental Conservation Club was established as a focal centre for the conservation of Pathiu's coral reef and environmental resources. Developing linkages with the fishing community, local government agencies and the private sector, the Club has worked to influence local level marine and coastal resource management, and to change the attitudes and behaviours of local community leaders in regards to their use of resources.

Mobilising Youth in Conservation - Study camps for youths focussed on the need for coral reef and coastal resource conservation, marine protection and sustainable use, were implemented. Over 1,000 youths attended from schools and communities across the Pathiu district, with a resultant increase in the

student membership of the Club. The role of local youth as champions for environmental conservation was promoted, and involvement in local issues increased. 10 participants were known to choose environment related subjects at university following the course.

Training Courses - Capacity building courses for Fisherfolk and local youths involved in tourism activities, were implemented to develop their skills as local guides, improve knowledge of best management practices, and to promote environmentally sensitive tourism. Site visits were conducted to reinforce the knowledge of local fishermen in wise use and the mitigation of damage to the reef, building relations with the fishing community.

Information Dissemination - Information on local environmental issues and Club activities was communicated through newspapers, radio programs, television broadcasts and the Internet, raising awareness and encouraging the participation of local people in conservation. The Club assisted the development of the Marine Nature Museum at the Pathiu-Witthaya school as a centralised information conduit providing essential resources for local students, and offering a location for study trips by groups from within and beyond the Chumphon Province.

Conservation Network - The institutional strengthening undertaken by the Club has led to a linked network of organisations, providing information and media for dissemination, and working as a watchdog against intrusion, destruction and environmental issues in the Pathiu district and wider area. The network has facilitated financial and management support for the continuation of the Clubs activities beyond the scope of this grant.

Impacts

Support from the GEF SGP has built a strong community orientated resource conservation organisation with excellent capacity for advocacy and awareness raising for conservation.

Actions have resulted in a broad and cross sectoral increase in awareness across the Province, and an improved likelihood of natural restoration of coastal resources through the promotion of wise tourism, improved fisheries practices and stricter enforcement of regulations.