

REHABILITATION OF FISHING COMMUNITIES IN THAILAND

Duration of Support:
12/2004 – 12/2006

Cumulative Budget:
CHF 4 Mio.

Line Agency:
Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Thailand International Cooperation Agency)

Partners:
Phang-Nga Provincial Authorities (Departments of Fishery and Education, Public Health)
Districts of Khura Buri and Takua Pa

Implementing Agency:
Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)
www.sdc.admin.ch

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Swiss Agency for Development
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BUILDING A SAFER FUTURE

FISHING COMMUNITIES IN THAILAND

Seaquake /tsunami
26.12.2004
Andaman Islands
Time UTC 00.58 h
Time CH 01.58 h
Magnitude 9.3



SWISS ASSISTANCE TO TSUNAMI VICTIMS

Switzerland responded immediately after the tsunami by providing emergency assistance to the people affected by the disaster, which included a number of Swiss nationals, and by assisting the Thai authorities in the difficult task of identifying victims. On a longer time-scale, Switzerland collaborated with the fishing communities of two islands particularly heavily hit by the wave by helping 280 families to restore their livelihood.



School under construction in Pak Chok



Fish farm in Tha Pae Yoi



Health centre in Tha Pae Yoi



Primary school in Thung Dap



Pier in Mueang Mai



Reconstructed Mueang Mai village



Kitchen garden



Long-tail boat

PAK CHOK

Pak Chok is situated at the northernmost point of Ko Phra Thong island and is the only village directly facing the open sea. This village, in which 88 families used to live, was completely destroyed. Since there was no public land and only little was in private ownership, and because the original location was not safe from further tsunamis, rebuilding was out of the question. Here, the local Lions Club purchased a tsunami-proof site near the old village and pressed ahead with reconstruction. The Club has a strong network and reputation in Thailand and is self-funded. The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and Swiss Solidarity supported the project with the construction of public infrastructure – a pier, roads and bridge – as well as a meeting hall and a school.

THA PAE YOI

The village of Tha Pae Yoi is the largest on the island of Ko Phra Thong. It is situated in a small bay in the lee of the island and was largely spared the onslaught of the flood wave. As early as the initial January 2005 discussions, the Thai authorities expressed a wish to establish a new health centre here. The old centre had been located in the neighbouring village of Pak Chok, which was completely destroyed by the tsunami. As part of a jointly controlled and supervised project, and in line with Ministry of Health requirements, SDC took over the planning dossier and undertook to construct the health centre and two staff houses. Medical staff are available here 24 hours a day for urgent examinations, while complicated cases are referred to the nearest hospital on the mainland. Only in exceptional cases do patients remain overnight.

THUNG DAP

Thung Dap, in the south of Ko Phra Thong, is a settlement with scattered buildings where the houses which are not directly on the coast were spared the effects of the wave. In contrast to Mueang Mai and Pak Chok, the families affected owned their own land on which it was possible to rebuild. Because this island is very flat, a two-level house type was designed. The upper storey provides private and communal spaces for the families, while kitchen and sanitary areas are located on the ground floor. The generous remaining area is used to shelter animals and as storage space. Other important reconstruction elements include the school, roads and paths, which further facilitated the families' early return. Another focal point of the settlement is the rebuilt meeting hall.

MUEANG MAI

SDC's coordinated concept has also been successful in the village of Mueang Mai on Ko Kho Khao island. Here, the government has made a new site available to the inhabitants of the decimated village to rebuild on. Because this is government land, the beneficiaries are given a lease limited to 30 years. As long as beneficiary families continue to live there, the lease will be renewed and can only be terminated in exceptional circumstances. The property, with an area of around 14,000 sq. metres, is situated on a slight rise safe from tsunamis, at the foot of a small hill some 150 metres from the sea. In this project, a local team of architects commissioned by SDC proposed various layouts and house types. Discussions with the inhabitants of the village led to the selection of a single-storey house type, which has a traditional layout with an entrance and living area, thus separating the two rooms from the kitchen and toilet. The reconstruction of the pier, transport paths and the meeting hall rounded off the coordinated solution.

COOPERATION AND LONG-TERM SOLUTIONS

The area with which the project is concerned – around the two islands of Ko Phra Thong and Ko Kho Khao – lies far from the public eye and international media interest. It is hardly touched by tourism and the fisher families there live in very simple circumstances. Furthermore, these fishing villages represent a minority as regards their profession and life style. Here, the inhabitants of different villages know each other and share infrastructure such as schools, roads and health centres. Most of these villages are situated on the lee of the islands, where settlers established their villages in protected bay areas to shelter from strong winds and waves from the open sea. The fishermen use the traditional long-tail boats and operate exclusively in coastal waters. While they fish mainly for food, additional trade with the mainland finances new acquisitions. Reconstruction of these fishing communities required in-depth study of the ecosystem and close cooperation with all those involved. While the Swiss project focused on habitat and the way of life of the fishing communities, from the outset it also took into account the influences of nature and the environment. Various projects involving infrastructure reconstruction, minority rights, sustainable land use and livelihood were therefore carried out in joint working groups, thus bringing together the families concerned and the local authorities. While the project's integrative and participative approach represents a solid basis for re-establishing a secure future, completely recreating the traditional basis of life will take many years.



KO PHRA THONG

Ko Phra Thong island is situated in Phang Nga province, on the west coast of southern Thailand, and covers approximately 100 sq. km. The island's west coast is made up of 15 km. of fine sandy beaches. Apart from some small hills, the island's interior consists of sandy savannah. Its flora and fauna have remained intact and present a wealth of species. There are three villages on the island – Thung Dap, Tha Pae Yoi and Pak Chok. Most of the villagers are fishermen. Tourist development on the island, which was confined to two small resorts, came to a standstill after the tsunami.

KO KHO KHAO

Ko Kho Khao is situated to the south of Ko Phra Thong. The island's interior consists of grassland and is home for several species of wild animals. Kho Khao Island is better developed than Phra Thong and has surfaced roads as well as a car ferry to cross the channel separating it from the mainland, which lies a few hundred metres away.

ISLAND COMMUNITIES

Pak Chok
- meeting hall under construction (1)
- school under construction (1)
- pier (1)
- walkway (1)
- bridge (1)

Tha Pae Yoi
- health centre (1)
- staff houses and facilities (2)
- kitchen gardens (7)
- boats with fishing gear (25)
- fish farms (3)

Thung Dap
- meeting hall (1)
- school (1)
- sport field (1)
- houses (8)
- staff house (1)
- kitchen gardens (8)
- boats with fishing gear (32)
- fish farm (1)
- walkway (1.9 km)

Mueang Mai
- meeting hall (1)
- houses (16)
- kitchen gardens (8)
- pier (1)
- boats with fishing gear (16)

Legend

- fishermen village
- health centre (1)
- meeting halls (3)
- schools (2)
- houses (27)
- kitchen gardens (23)
- piers (2)
- boats with fishing gear (73)
- fish farms (4)

IMPRINT

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AN EXEMPLARY COLLABORATION

In response to humanitarian needs in the aftermath of the tsunami and as a token of thanks for the rapid assistance provided to victims (which included Swiss nationals), the Head of the Swiss Federal Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA), Micheline Calmy-Rey, visited Phuket and Bangkok on 2-3 January 2005 and offered Swiss support for the reconstruction of fishing communities. Thereafter, from 6-12 January, a fact-finding mission of specialists from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) travelled to Thailand to consolidate the Swiss "Rehabilitation of Fishing Communities in Thailand" project, which was welcomed and officially accepted by the Royal Thai Government on 25 January.

The project encompasses the rebuilding of social and economic infrastructures as well as the re-launch of fishing

activities, and was financed by the Swiss government, private enterprise and by a generous donation from the Swiss people via Swiss Solidarity – Switzerland's humanitarian fund-raising platform, led by the Swiss Broadcasting Corporation (SRG SSR idée suisse) and private media. The project implemented by SDC was planned in close collaboration with beneficiaries, local authorities and specialized organizations, and carried out by local architects and construction companies.

As a result of the exemplary collaboration between the Thai and Swiss people and authorities, a number of communities affected by one of the most devastating natural disasters in human history have been able to recover with dignity and with the prospect of a safer future.

SDC directed and carried out the post-tsunami project in line with the agency's fundamental values, focusing its efforts on quickly relieving the distress of particularly disadvantaged and vulnerable population groups. It ensured the effectiveness of its actions by taking into account the needs of the beneficiaries and by supporting their initiatives.

The fishermen of Ko Phra Thong and Ko Kho Khao are among the poorest victims of the tsunami, and the nomad ethnic minorities that have been residing on these islands for generations still receive only limited consideration and enjoy only restricted rights. By supporting the reconstruction of their homes, boats and social infrastructure, the

project has ensured the survival of these communities whose existence was all but wiped out in a matter of minutes.

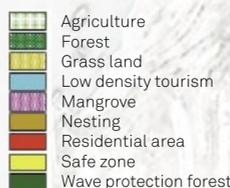
At the project's outset, SDC quickly mobilized the various technical and social skills required to integrate aspects as diverse as habitat and regional planning, social equity, the construction of buildings capable of withstanding a tsunami and the promotion of earnings. To this end, the agency recruited and deployed qualified personnel on site, where it was also able to benefit from the experience of other public and private partner organizations brought in to support the relief project.

SUSTAINABLE LAND USE SOCIAL ISSUES, ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

While the destruction of most of the settlements on the coast had disastrous effects on the economy and on individual lives, it also paved the way for new land-use planning ideas to be implemented, specifically in Ko Phra Thong where the location of the island's education and health infrastructure, its land and sea transport networks, and the balance between nature conservation and land development could be totally rethought and reformulated. As many of the victims – mainly the poorest – did not own their land officially and were using it subject to a tacit agreement based on traditional rights, the relocation of private houses was instrumental in the preparation of a new land-use plan.

The Swiss project mandated the World Conservation Union (IUCN) to provide advice and guidance regarding the project's environmental impact, propose preventive measures for the protection of the island's bio-diversity, and plan the sustainable rehabilitation of its ecosystem.

For this purpose, in cooperation with the Thai Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment, IUCN drew up a master plan which defined the future use of certain areas of the islands. The plan was designed to involve a large proportion of the various stakeholders, such as the villagers, tourism promoters, local and provincial authorities, and legislators. The population of the island thus became more aware of and reached a consensus on the dangers of illegal occupation of their forests, bush fires, and the destruction of the savannah represent for this unique environment.



Many aid organizations contacted us after the tsunami. SDC built schools and helped us with roads, buildings and a health centre. It contributed so much to the people here, even providing them with fishing gear and kitchen gardens. I am deeply impressed. SDC offered very generous help that improved the lives of so many people. However, some people here are still suffering – they dearly miss their loved ones who died. But all the people have received help.



Surath Acharavirojkul
50, Prefect of Khura Buri district

MINORITY RIGHTS A SPECIFIC APPROACH FOR THE SEA GYPSIES

For decades, two distinct communities of sea gypsies – the Moken, nomads of the Mergui Archipelago and the Moklen, littoral nomads living along the coast of Phuket and Phang Nga provinces – have been living as ethnic minorities on the island of Ko Phra Thong. These minorities do not possess Thai citizenship and therefore enjoy only limited rights. For instance, they do not have access to land ownership, and the schools in the villages where they reside are not always adequately staffed. They are mainly fisherman, usually in debt to their fish collectors, and have little interaction with the local Thai community. When the rehabilitation project was first implemented, it became clear that a specific approach was needed to understand their needs and to effectively campaign for their rights. A team of anthropologists with expertise on the Moken and Moklen communities was therefore brought in on the project, the intention being that they should collect and share information which would allow the sea-gypsy communities to express their interests and vision of their future on the island.

Thanks to the project, the school at Thung Dap – a Moklen settlement with 22 families – was rapidly rehabilitated and re-opened, and a teacher was appointed. Furthermore, as the Moklen use smaller fishing boats than the local population – which are also equipped differently – the project provided them with the type of boats they are accustomed

to, appropriately equipped for greater efficiency. To help them diversify their sources of income and minimize their dependency on loans, the Moklen also benefited from material and technical support to start kitchen gardens and fish farms, and set up a boat-repair workshop. To draw attention to the sea-gypsies' cultural values and to lobby for their rights, the research team's work was compiled in a book, published in Thai and English, that has since been widely distributed.



After the tsunami, I was totally down. The first few months I didn't want to go back to the island. Now my life is better than before the tsunami. Without the Swiss project, I would be barely surviving. We received boats and fishing gear, and now we have incomes and can pay back loans and are not up to our eyes in debt anymore. We are a very happy people here. Now, nobody wants to go back to living in shelters on the mainland, where life is too expensive and hectic. Life here on the island is easy. We don't need much.



«Mai»
Somchai Klangthalay
45, Leader of Thung Dap village

INFRASTRUCTURE HOUSING, EDUCATION, HEALTH, TRANSPORT, COMMUNITY BUILDINGS

Construction work cannot begin until the authorities have completed the appropriate investigations and granted permission. In this area, the critical issues are defining requirements and selecting locations. Here, since the government decides when and where public buildings and infrastructure are to be rebuilt, a regional plan was developed in close cooperation with the various ministries.

From the outset, SDC has provided coordinated, comprehensive support based on the premise that children should be able to return to school, that basic medical care should be re-established and that the fishermen's living and working environment must be regenerated.

To achieve this, the reconstruction of the fishing villages was planned in close cooperation with their inhabitants. Residential housing, meeting halls, public spaces, streets and harbours were rebuilt, thus providing families with a solid foundation for the future and making it possible for them to attain a higher standard of living through their own initiatives.

In addition, basic infrastructure such as education and health facilities, was defined in collaboration with the authorities and the people responsible for the villages, and recreated at precisely defined locations. All construction work was carried out by Thai companies.



Apart from sand and water, almost all the materials needed had to be brought to the islands by boat. The standard of construction and finishing is simple but of high quality, and the buildings are adapted to local conditions, with particular attention being paid to earthquake and tsunami safety. Thus, for example, the residential houses in flat areas are built on two levels (Thung Dap village), while those on higher ground protected from tsunamis have only one level (Mueang Mai village).

I came here from Northern Thailand to help. The word had spread that people on the islands need teachers. The new school at Thung Dap is a good example of how to provide help. The government wanted to build the school on the mainland and bring the children there. But the families here are very close knit and did not want to be separated from their children. Now that the school has been rebuilt here, families can stay together.



«Jan»
Chatnakrop Phungsumlee
29, Teacher at Thung Dap school

LIVELIHOOD BOATS AND FISHING EQUIPMENT, ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF INCOME



Most of the old fishing boats were destroyed by the tsunami, depriving whole villages of their livelihood. One of the projects' first tasks was to immediately begin building new traditional long-tail boats for the victims who had lost theirs. In all, 73 motorized boats equipped with the appropriate fishing tackle were constructed, and by November 2005 all of these were in service.

The establishment of clear criteria and benchmarks en-

abled the Swiss project to deliver boats to the people in need and gave beneficiaries the opportunity of individually selecting the equipment they needed.

As well as the earnings resulting from traditional fishing, fishing communities also need alternative sources of income. To this end, in cooperation with the Thai Department of Fisheries, fishermen are now learning how to breed fish in aqua farms. As a result, they have become less depen-

dent on sea stock, which has decreased significantly over the years. The farms are worked between fishing trips and designed to produce fish for selling during the tourist season when demand and prices are higher.

Fishing, however, can be a sustainable enterprise only when appropriate regulations are implemented. Thus, in partnership with the Department of Fisheries, the Swiss project is supporting the creation of four groups of volunteers responsible for manning coastal-resource protection patrols. These groups use a special motorized boat equipped with navigation equipment. Their task is to patrol and check that commercial trawlers and traditional fishermen comply with protection-zone regulations.

In the area of alternative income, the World Conservation Union (IUCN) is helping to raise villagers' awareness of the natural environment. For instance, villagers are learning how to produce environmentally-friendly liquid organic fertiliser. Furthermore, the promotion of kitchen gardens not only provides the islanders with a good source of vitamins but also serves as a productive occupation during stormy weather, thus increasing their autonomy and ensuring they have a more balanced diet.

I love my garden, I am always tending it. We have already eaten fresh vegetables grown here, and they were delicious. On the market, fresh vegetables are too expensive. Now they are growing right behind our houses. I am still learning how to take proper care of the garden. I am very grateful and happy to be a part of this Swiss project. Our garden serves many families here.



Joy Klangthalay
35, Kitchen garden beneficiary in Tha Pae Yoi village