



# COMMUNITY MANGROVE FOREST CONSERVATION OF BAAN BANG LA

Thailand



## Equator Initiative Case Studies

Local sustainable development solutions for people, nature, and resilient communities

# UNDP EQUATOR INITIATIVE CASE STUDY SERIES

Local and indigenous communities across the world are advancing innovative sustainable development solutions that work for people and for nature. Few publications or case studies tell the full story of how such initiatives evolve, the breadth of their impacts, or how they change over time. Fewer still have undertaken to tell these stories with community practitioners themselves guiding the narrative. The Equator Initiative aims to fill that gap.

The Equator Initiative, supported by generous funding from the Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD) and the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), awarded the Equator Prize 2017 to 15 outstanding local community and indigenous peoples initiatives from 12 countries. The winners were recognized for their significant work to advance nature-based solutions for sustainable

development in marine, forest, grassland, dryland and wetland ecosystems. Selected from 806 nominations from across 120 countries, the winners were celebrated at a gala event in New York, coinciding with Global Goals Week and the 72nd Session of the UN General Assembly. Special emphasis was placed on scalable, nature-based solutions to address biodiversity conservation, climate change adaptation, disaster risk reduction, gender equality, land rights, and food and water security to reduce poverty, protect nature, and strengthen resilience.

The following case study is one in a growing series that describes vetted and peer-reviewed best practices intended to inspire the policy dialogue needed to scale nature-based solutions essential to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals.





## PROJECT SUMMARY

In 2004, the Bang La village was protected from the worst effects of a catastrophic tsunami by its 192-hectare mangrove forest. Recognizing the importance of this natural habitat for disaster risk reduction, Bang La community residents formed an association to advance the protection of mangroves through co-management, community dialogues, and education programmes, which enabled them to resist the expansion of urban middle-class housing developments into the publicly owned land. The community has secured a Memorandum of Understanding from the provincial government, which provides them with the rights to establish a community-managed mangrove forest conservation area. The sustainable management of this area has triggered the return of the protected Phuket sea otter and placed this endangered species at the centre of awareness campaigns that engage women and youth in natural resource management. In order to enhance local well-being and livelihood options, the community has established a savings and microcredit scheme to support small business opportunities and retain the traditional character of the community.



*The designations employed and the presentation of material on this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of the Secretariat of the United Nations or UNDP concerning the legal status of any country, territory, city or area or its authorities, or concerning the delimitation of its frontiers or boundaries.*

## KEY FACTS

### Equator Prize Winner

2017

### Founded

1993

### Location

Phuket, Thailand

### Beneficiaries

3,908 people of the Baan Bang La, Baan Ka, and Baan Na Yoa communities

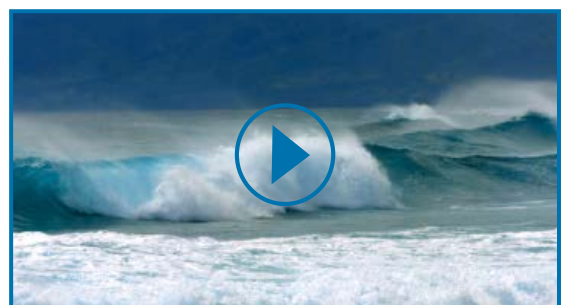
### Areas of focus

Environmental protection and restoration, sustainable use, access and benefit sharing, awareness and education, advocacy for land and water rights

### Sustainable Development Goals addressed



## EQUATOR PRIZE 2017 WINNER FILM





## BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Thailand's coastal and marine biodiversity is unique, with more than 200 native plant and wildlife species, such as senhouse horse mussel (*Arcuatula senhousia*), obtuse horn shell (*Cerithidea obtusa*), blue swimming crab (*Portunus pelagicus*), banana prawn (*Penaeus merguensis*). Lush mangroves cover approximately 36 percent of the coastline. A natural seawall, these forests contribute to community resilience, natural disaster preparedness, and adaptation to climate change impacts. This is significant, given Thailand's position in the top 10 countries most affected by climate change, according to the 2019 Climate Risk Index.

In addition, mangroves provide nursery grounds and habitat for various animals, as well as food and natural resources for Thai people, who benefit from these productive ecosystems. However, the forests are threatened by illegal wood cutting, shrimp farming, construction of residential areas, tourism development, and industrial factories.

Between 1975 and 1993, the area of mangrove forests in Thailand was almost halved, mainly due to the large-scale encroachment of aquaculture ponds into forested areas for intensive shrimp production. The rate of mangrove deforestation in the country decreased significantly between 2000 and 2012 as a result of strong cooperation between the government, the private sector, and local communities. However, Thailand remains one of the largest aquaculture producers in the world, and its remnant mangroves require protection in order to mitigate further negative impacts.

Located in southern Thailand, and surrounded by the Andaman Sea, Phuket Province is the largest island of the country. Phuket's economy rests on two main pillars: rubber tree plantations – which make Thailand the biggest producer of rubber in the world – and tourism, with a thriving diving industry that attracts thousands of people each year.

Since the tsunami in 2004, all damaged buildings and attractions have been restored, and Phuket experienced an intensive period of tourist property development. In July 2005, Phuket was voted one of the world's top five

retirement destinations by Fortune Magazine. According to the 2010 census, there are over 520,000 people residing on the island, including 115,881 foreigners who make up 21.1 percent of the population. The number of tourists increased from approximately 3 million in 2003 to nearly 13 million in 2013. Given such an influx of visitors, Phuket's environment has undergone dramatic changes.

For the last 40 years, the coastal zone has been at the core of severe conflicts between small-scale fishermen and large commercial fishing businesses, as well as between local communities and investors in commercial fish farms, tourism, and other development projects. In many ways, the 2004 tsunami spurred a renewed interest in a more integrated approach to Phuket's development and environmental management, resulting in the rehabilitation of coastal ecosystems for sustainable livelihoods and disaster risk reduction.

Baan Bang La, or Bang La Village in English, is a small coastal fishing community on the eastern shore of Phuket Island, located about 20 kilometres east of Phuket town. Its 139 households earn their living from aquaculture, coastal fishing, and small-scale Pará rubber tree plantations.

In 1992, the Baan Bang La community saw the threat posed to the mangrove forests by investors, who were interested in developing the land for economic interests. In response to this, and as a means of protecting the mangroves, the residents of the village established the Community Mangrove Forest Conservation of Baan Bang La. In doing so, they were able to establish themselves as stewards of the mangroves and assumed the responsibility of sustainably managing the area as a model community forest.

During the 2004 tsunami, the mangroves protected the village from waves that devastated the Thai coastline, demonstrating the power of this nature ecosystem to protect the community from natural disasters. Today, mangroves cover approximately 509 hectares of the Bang La coastline. The most prominent species are the Burmese mangrove (*Bruguiera gymnorhiza*) and the rare oriental

mangrove (*Bruguiera sexangula*). Large areas of mangrove forests are covered with seagrasses, which provide breeding grounds and habitats for shrimp, as well as the giant mud crab (*Scylla serrata*) and the spotted babylon snail (*Babylonia areolata*), along with food for vulnerable species such as the dugong (*Dugong dugon*). As a result of conservation efforts, the oriental small-clawed otter (*Aonyx cinereus*) and the Indo-Pacific humpbacked dolphin (*Sousa chinensis*) – both listed as vulnerable on the IUCN Red List – have returned to the area after 30 years.

The Bang La community is made up of three sub-communities, Baan Bang La, Baan Ka, and Baan Na Yoa, with a total population

of 3,908 people, of which 1,344 are men and 2,564 are women. Approximately 75 percent of the population are Muslim, whereas 24 percent practice Buddhism.

At present 240 men and 250 women hold land tenure rights, while 130 men and 120 women hold fishing rights. Men usually fish in mangrove canals or along the seacoast, using boats and other fishing gear to catch crab, fish, and shrimp. Women, on the other hand, usually walk through the mangrove forest and canals to collect clams, mussels, and mud crabs with simple fishing gear. Due to the abundance of seafood in the area, it is locally known as the 'seafood supermarket'.

## Origin and structure

Community Mangrove Forest Conservation of Baan Bang La was established in 2004 after the devastating Indian Ocean earthquake and tsunami. This tsunami was one of the deadliest natural disasters ever recorded, with over 230,000 deaths across 14 countries. However, In Baan Bang La, the intact mangrove forests protected the village from the disaster. Since then, the organisation has promoted protection and restoration of the mangrove forests through community dialogues, co-management, and educational programmes.

Located within the Klong Tha Ruea National Mangrove Forest Reserve, the community mangrove forest is co-managed with the local authority of the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources, the government agency in charge of the seven national mangrove forest reserves in the country. It also receives technical support from a local non-governmental organization, Phangnga Bay Coastal Fishing Community Food Security Project.

The objectives of the Community Mangrove Forest Conservation of Baan Bang La are:

- To restore, monitor, and manage land use to obtain equal and sustainable benefits for all.
- To serve as the knowledge exchange centre on community-based mangrove management.
- To set up a community fund.
- To support the women and youth group in playing a key role in the management of the community mangrove forests.

The organisation currently focuses on the following projects:

- Coastal Youth Conserving Mangroves, which aims to engage young people in the protection of mangrove forests through learning and capacity-building activities.

- Women Empowerment for Food Security in Mangrove Forest, which aims to empower women as main stakeholders in managing the community mangrove forests.
- Restoration of Traditional Food by Using Mangrove Resources, which aims to conserve and sustainably use mangrove resources.
- Building Mangroves for Local Small-Clawed Sea Otter, which aims to protect and restore mangrove forests and the ecosystem to provide a habitat for the local otter.
- Building a Community Network for Managing Mangroves and Other Coastal Resources, which aims to rehabilitate and protect mangroves and coastal resources in Phangnga Bay by engaging people from all sectors.





- Climate Justice by Your Hands, which aims to promote the development of low-emission technologies and demonstrate the value of conserving mangrove forests as carbon sinks.

The group relies on nested layers of management to ensure that community members are well represented in governance and decision making:

- Advisory Team, which consists of relevant agencies such as officials from the Pha Klock municipal district, Tambon Administrative Organisation (TAO), Phangnga Bay Coastal Fishing Community Food Security Project, the village head, the subdistrict headman, and the Mangrove Management Office. These advisors are expected to share recommendations and support community activities.
- Management Committee, which consists of a chairman, a deputy, a secretary, and a treasurer. The committee has a total of 18 members, all of whom are women, who are responsible for supporting the organisation's activities.

- Member network, which includes all residents of the community, who according to the agreement automatically become members of the organization.
- Community network, which is comprised of 11 communities. The Bang La community is a member of a community network in Ao Phangnga, which promotes knowledge exchange on mangrove management at the local and policy levels.

In addition to the general meeting that is required to be held annually, smaller group meetings are organised regularly. Meetings are also frequently held by the Management Committee. There are no full-time staff, and the Committee runs the organization's activities without compensation.

Community Mangrove Forest Conservation of Baan Bang La has formulated a development plan, which includes activities in three areas: alternative livelihoods through community businesses, financial security through savings and welfare schemes, and sustainable natural resource management.





## LOCAL CHALLENGES

### Encroachment on mangrove forests

With the rapid expansion of real estate business and massive tourism in Phuket province, the Baan Bang La community has been fighting to protect their remaining 192-hectare mangrove forest from land encroachment. For over 20 years, mangrove deforestation and public land seizure have been driven by overexploitation for charcoal, shrimp farming, urban expansion, industrial expansion, pier and road construction, and agriculture.

During the tin mining era after the Second World War, most community members were engaged in farming and fishing, while some worked in mining industries in neighbouring communities to earn money for purchasing goods that were not produced in their own community. Between approximately 1957 and 1987, tourism and plantations of the exotic Pará rubber tree became the main drivers of encroachment. Bang La's community members began to claim community lands to grow rubber trees and pineapple trees or to sell them to investors from Phuket town, who ended up owning almost half of the community lands.

As the amount of land owned by the Bang La community reduced, so did the prospect of economic growth from tourism. Lands were often sold by community members in order to gain capital that they could invest in tourism, buy a van or a tuk-tuk for transportation, pay debts, or to survive in a tourism society where the cost of living had greatly increased and was reported to be among the highest in Thailand.

The 1980s in Thailand were marked by intensive black tiger shrimp farming, which remained almost unregulated until 1987, posing another large threat to mangrove ecosystems. Due to government subsidies, it quickly became an important export industry, placing the country on the list of world's largest black tiger shrimp producers. In 1987, mangrove forests faced yet another threat - trespassing for building yacht marinas. One example includes the construction of a marina a

few kilometres south of Baan Bang La, the authorization of which caused a broad controversy. Ongoing efforts by locals and conservationists to preserve mangroves and coral reefs have prompted authorities to review the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) for this marina project. An additional challenge of the past ten years has been the fast expansion of housing projects for the urban middle class into the Bang La village, which lead the local residents to worry about the impact of this expansion on their natural environment.

These threats to the mangrove forests, the largest public areas in the Baan Bang La community, are exacerbated by legal gaps, ambiguity of the law, and outdated legislation around land titling and use. Various forms of land use are recognized by the government, including Possession Certificates (known as *Sor Kor 1*), Use Certificates (known as *Nor Sor 3 Gor*), and full land titles (known as *Chanotes* or *Sor Por Kor 4-01*). Land encroachment is often justified through two main instruments: the Possession Certificate and the Use Certificate (known as *Nor Sor 3 Gor*). The use of the Possession Certificate, which has been identified as a critical cause of deforestation, usually involves extended or false claims on land ownership and the seizure of state land or forest. Investors often purchase the document for other lands and later use it as evidence for issuing the title deed of national mangrove forests or for extending lands from 2 rai (0.32 hectares) to 22 rai (3.52 hectares). This *Sor Kor 1* is, therefore, expensive and highly coveted by investors due to the loopholes that it can be used to exploit.

Approximately 70 percent of landowners in Baan Bang La (full title deed holders) are investors from Phuket town and groups from Bangkok. The average amount of land held under by most community members (300 households) is one rai (0.16 hectares) per family, and only three families have ownership of more than 10 *rais* (1.6 hectares) of land. Most of the community lands are granted a Certificate of Use, *Nor Sor 3 Gor*. The total area of mangrove forests that the community manages is 1,200 *rais* (192 hectares).



## Climate change

With long coastlines, susceptibility to extreme weather events, and a fragile agriculture system, coastal communities in southern Thailand are amongst the most vulnerable to climate change impacts. Tropical storms, cyclones, floods, and coastal erosion have become more frequent and severe, causing increasing loss of life and damage to livelihoods, property, and infrastructure. Phuket has a tropical monsoon climate, with a rainy season from May to November, and a dry season from December to April, although it often receives some precipitation even during its dry season. Notably, over the past 30 years,

the entire country has experienced a marked increase in temperatures and changes in rainfall patterns.

According to the 2019 Climate Risk Index, based on data from 2017, Thailand was among the top ten countries most effected by extreme weather events. These include the excess rainfall in southern Thailand that lasted well into the dry season, causing several floods throughout the year as well as a tidal wave that claimed at least 18 lives and partially flooded thousands of villages.





# LOCAL RESPONSES

## Land rights advocacy

In response to the expansion of urban middle-class housing developments into its publicly owned land, the Baan Bang La community, along with the two adjacent villages of Baan Phakcheed and Baan Yamu, closed the roads in 1993 to advocate for the community ownership of forests. In order to draw attention to the situation, the protest was strategically held on the day when the former Deputy Prime Minister Suthep Thaugsuban visited the area to distribute full land titles (*Chanotes* or *Sor Por Kor 4-01*) to wealthy farmers as part of the land reform scheme that was meant to benefit poor farmers. This became known as the *Sor Por Kor 4-01* corruption scandal. The community appealed to the Minister to oppose the seizing of public areas by investors.

To address land seizures and trespassing, the Baan Bang La community declared itself an organisation dedicated to community forest management. The residents of the village worked to retain their land rights, and in 2007 secured a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) from the provincial vice governor to establish the Bang La Community Mangrove Forest. At the same time, strong networking efforts resulted in the community gaining allies among government institutions, the private sector, and local civil society groups. Today, the organization's conservation efforts are supported by local and provincial authorities, the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources, universities, NGOs, and local schools.

### KEY IMPACT

#### Land rights advocacy

- 1,200 *rais* (192 hectares) of community mangrove forests that grow along a key estuary kept intact.



## Community management of mangroves

According to the MoU, the Baan Bang La community will take due action to protect its natural resources. To achieve this goal, the local residents have established laws and regulations to guard natural resources, and have zoned areas of the mangrove forests for community utilities, strict conservation, and reforested zones, thereby ensuring that both the needs of the community and those of the environment are met. The members of the organization created management and restoration plans, and have been conducting ongoing activities for protecting the mangrove forest. For instance, in the community utilities zone, if villagers cut one tree, they must replant five.

As an incentive for conserving ecosystem services and biodiversity, the Baan Bang La community applied an innovative strategy - identifying a flagship species to focus on. The residents focused on the rare oriental small-clawed otter, successfully bringing it back to the area after a 30-year absence. As biological indicators for ecosystem health, these otters can prove the success of this mangrove forest conservation and management initiative. Furthermore, the story of otters has encouraged local youths and other communities to learn about their ecosystems and take part in community activities such as replanting trees and breeding mangrove crabs.

Aiming to pass this effort to protect mangrove forests on to future generations, the Baan Bang La community created a youth group, *Dek Chai Le Rak Pachailen* (Coastal Youth Conserving Mangroves). Once the group was formed, 2 *rais* (0.32 hectares) of mangroves were allocated to establish a learning centre managed by young people, who design a range of activities relevant to the mangrove areas. The activities of the learning centre include the release of aquatic animals into the marine environment and the promotion of mangrove conservation through

traditional and modern culture, such as the traditional Thai dance *Hulu* and fashion shows.

The coastal community has also set the objective of building resilience to climate change, natural disasters, and rapid/unplanned urbanisation. One example is the Climate Justice by Your Hands project. Funded by the UNDP-implemented Global Environment Facility Small Grants Programme (GEF SGP), this initiative aims to protect the 192-hectare mangrove forest from land encroachment and raise awareness about climate change in the community.

## KEY IMPACTS

### Community management of mangroves

- 80 hectares of mangroves protected as strict conservation zone, including strict forest protection, which covers 10 *rais* (1.6 hectares) with 10,000 planted trees so far.
- 42.24 hectares allocated for community utilities to supply firewood, food, and construction materials.
- Alliance of 365 students and other residents of Phuket established to protect mangroves.
- Return of the oriental small-clawed otter (*Aonyx cinereus*), a protected species that had been absent from the area for 30 years.
- Doubling of fish catch compared to the past decade, which is evidence of improved mangrove productivity.



## Improving livelihoods

Recognizing the importance of improving livelihoods to maintain their way of life and retain their land, in 1992 the residents of the Bang La village established the Community Savings Group of Baan Bang La as part of a larger provincial savings network. The savings group focuses on: 1) alternative livelihoods through community businesses; 2) financial security through savings and welfare schemes; and 3) sustainable natural resource management.

The Community Savings Group charges two percent interest per month for all loans (short-term and long-term, small and large). Profits are distributed as follows: 30 percent is paid back to the members as dividends; five percent is paid to committee members; 10 percent is allocated to the group management fund; 30 percent is used to support a community business fund; 20 is set aside for the community land and infrastructure fund; and the last five percent is allocated to the community social and environment development fund.

The office of the savings group serves multiple purposes, including as a centre for peer-to-peer support. Located on the last piece of community's public land, the centre allows the group to mark its ownership over the land. For this reason, the community has been working on renovating the building, which would allow the group members to pursue their long-term development objectives. Today, the initiative receives technical support from the Phangnga Bay Coastal Fishing Community Food Security Project, which empowers communities and women to leverage the grassroots power of civil society.

In addition to managing and conserving the mangrove forest, in order to remain resilient, the coastal community of Baan Bang La has initiated various livelihood activities including ecotourism businesses, organic farming, and low-carbon emission and renewable energy technologies such as solar cells and biogas. Furthermore, a newly established artisanal crab and fisheries group provided a new source of income for some of the residents, who sell the products at the nearby fish and crab market centre.



## KEY IMPACTS

### Improving livelihoods



- The Community Savings Group membership increased from 36 to 86 households, with the savings fund increased from THB350,000 (approximately US\$11,360) before the tsunami to THB760,000 (approximately US\$24,667) at present.
- Artisanal crab and fisheries group grown to 250 community residents.

## Raising awareness and environmental education

Community members of different ages take up different roles in the initiative. Women and youth have played a key role in educational programming, and have used storytelling to raise awareness about forest conservation and coastal ecosystem services. The youth group plays an important role in protecting the community mangrove forest. Young people serve as ecotourism guides to the mangrove area, and have established a learning space in the mangrove forest and the re-plantation zone. As a result, some schools have already incorporated mangrove management into their curricula.

As a complementary strategy, the Baan Bang La women's group has created awareness-raising campaigns on food security and indigenous knowledge to promote traditional

food made from mangroves and marine resources. The women's group takes advantage of community events to demonstrate ways of preparing local mangrove-based food. In addition, women survey community food supply sources such as mangrove forests, seagrass beds, coral reefs, and oyster islands, to document and publish local food recipes. Every year the women's group shares knowledge on local food preparation methods with young people during the *Dek Chai Le Rak Pachailen* Network youth camps that aim to raise awareness of conserving the Phangnga Bay mangrove forests. The women use the results of the surveys to teach youth about food preparation and their local food culture. Together, these campaigns have proven to lead to the revival of local knowledge about mangrove foods among women and youth.

## KEY IMPACTS

### Raising awareness and environmental education



- Five *Dek Chai Le Rak Pachailen* (Coastal Youth Conserving Mangroves) groups set up in 2011, with current membership of approximately 300 young people.
- 80 to 100 women participants in different events of the local food revival project.



# POLICY IMPACTS

## National policy impacts

The Baan Bang La Community Mangrove Forest Conservation Group has received many national recognitions. In 2001, the group became a Mangrove Protection Community Volunteer and was bestowed a Forest Conservation Flag and a fund of THB200,000 (approximately US\$6,380) from the Queen in recognition of its forest conservation activities. The community's involvement in the preservation of public lands enhanced the responsiveness of relevant agencies to the need of solving mangrove trespassing issues and setting up administrative and legal mechanisms to deter new trespassers.

In 2008, the community received an award from the Green Globe Institute of Petroleum Authority of Thailand (PTT). In addition, the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources (DMCR) recognized the community's mangrove forest as a community learning centre for research and studies, making it a part of the system of learning centres established in Thailand for educating people about the importance of mangroves, their restoration and conservation.

The policies supporting restoration and conservation of mangrove forests in Thailand have evolved over time. The experience of the Baan Bang La Community Mangrove Forest Conservation Group reflects not only its members' drive and commitment to the environment, but also an increasing trend to establish and strengthen community-based mangrove management, particularly along the Andaman Sea, since the 1980s.

The enactment of the Marine and Coastal Resources Management Act, which came into force on 24 June 2015, is an example of how Baan Bang La and the other communities have helped shape current Thai policy. This law ensures the participation of communities, local governments, and other groups in the restoration and conservation of mangroves. As a result, the establishment of multi-stakeholder platforms to develop management plans for marine and coastal resources, including mangroves, is now legally supported nationwide.

## Contributions to the global agenda

The efforts of the Baan Bang La Community Mangrove Forest Conservation Group contribute to the achievement of several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs): no poverty (SDG 1); zero hunger (SDG 2); gender equality (SDG 5); decent work and economic growth (SDG 8); reduced inequalities (SDG 10); responsible production and consumption (SDG 12); climate action (SDG 13); life below water (SDG 14); and life on land (SDG 15). Through their work to raise awareness of the role of mangroves in reducing disaster risk, they also are a powerful example of the role of nature-based solutions in climate change mitigation and adaptation. Tangible examples such as this can provide a vivid example of how work to achieve the Convention on Biological Diversity, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, and the SDGs is interwoven at the local level.







# SCALABILITY AND SUSTAINABILITY

## Replication

The Baan Bang La Community Mangrove Forest Conservation Group is constantly sharing and exchanging information and experiences with neighbouring communities along Phangnga Bay. This information sharing is enabled through different networks, including the Phangnga Bay Savings Group Network for Social Development, focused on community fund management, and Baan Ao Kung, a community movement network of mangrove conservation near Ao Phangnga National Park.

Activities held by Bang La community that have been replicated by other communities include:

- Selecting a flagship species as an incentive for raising awareness of the importance of mangrove forests and ecosystem management. Some communities use dugongs, local monkeys, or even local seaweed.
- Promoting the partnership of women and youth under the theme of food security and mangroves as a food source. Cooking demonstrations have proven to be a great communication tool to raise public awareness.
- Strengthening the Network of Coastal Children Protecting the Mangroves, which has more than 3,000 members.

The initiative has been replicated by the community of Baan Koh Maphrao (or Coconut Island), an islet just east of Phuket where floating restaurants and aquaculture are the main economic activities. Baan Koh Maphrao focused on promoting civil society awareness and participation in coastal decision making, as well as the support of environmentally sustainable livelihoods. The Phuket Provincial Office of Agriculture played a leading role in promoting agro-ecotourism in the village, while private businesses, such as hotels and resorts, helped through their corporate social responsibility (CSR) efforts.

## Scalability

The work of the Baan Bang La Community Mangrove Forest Conservation Group has demonstrated great potential for scalability. At a regional level, it has been highlighted internationally by two initiatives aimed at sharing experiences and knowledge in Asian countries: the Mangroves for the Future (MFF) initiative and the Hope and Dreams for Disaster and Environmental Education + Creativity – HANDS! Project. Both of these projects were funded by the UNDP-implemented GEF SGP.

MFF is a partner-led initiative that promotes investment in coastal ecosystem conservation for sustainable development. Co-chaired by IUCN and UNDP, MFF provides a platform for collaboration between many different agencies, sectors, and countries which are addressing challenges to coastal ecosystems. Aiming to promote an integrated ocean-wide approach to coastal management and to build the resilience of ecosystem-

dependent coastal communities, MFF builds on a history of coastal management interventions before and after the 2004 Indian Ocean tsunami. It initially focused on the countries most affected by the tsunami (India, Indonesia, Maldives, Seychelles, Sri Lanka, and Thailand). More recently, its operations have expanded to include Bangladesh, Cambodia, Myanmar, Pakistan, and Viet Nam. To date, MFF has provided significant technical and financial support to the conservation efforts of the Baan Bang La community and has served as a forum to share experiences and lessons learned with other communities facing similar challenges in the region.

The Hope and Dreams for Disaster and Environmental Education + Creativity – HANDS! Project is a biannual exchange programme that aims to nurture a sense of community among the peoples of Asia by supporting youth from India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, Myanmar,

Nepal, the Philippines, and Thailand in finding creative solutions to social and environmental issues. Among other destinations, in 2016 the youth participants of the HANDS! Project visited Baan Bang La as part of their study tour co-funded by the Japan Foundation and UNDP Thailand. Hosted by the local NGO, Ao Phangnga Coastal Fishing Community Food Security Project, the young people participated in research tours, lectures, and workshops to learn about disasters and the environment. Fifty community members and local authorities, 40 HANDS! fellows and their team members, the Japan Foundation's coordinator and senior advisors, as well as advisors of

Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's Special Task Force, came together to learn about the Baan Bang La Community Mangrove Forest. The visitors joined a community dialogue on sustainable mangrove forest management and the Baan Bang La Community's experience in building resilience against the tsunami and other disasters, namely storm surge, sea rising, flash floods, and forest encroachment.

Projects such as these provide a key mechanism to scale up the work of Baan Bang La through government policy and non-governmental organization programming across the region.

## Sustainability

To date, the Baan Bang La Community Mangrove Forest Conservation Group has received generous contributions from the UNDP-implemented GEF SGP, MFF, and the Thai Health Promotion Foundation (an autonomous state agency), among other donors. In 2008, the initiative also set up a fund for mangrove conservation, which is

financed by the dividends from the community's savings group. This fund increases every year while the savings group is in operation. Since its inception, the fund has generated nearly THB500,000 (approximately US\$16,228) for conservation purposes.

## FUTURE PLANS

- The mangrove protection group will continue its forest watch and reforestation activities.
- The community mangrove forest will serve as a learning site for school and university students, particularly through the Historical Museum of the Baan Bang La Mangroves Conservation and Learning Centre.
- The initiative will discuss the opportunity of expanding its focus to other issues related to public land rights, such as green urban areas and climate justice.
- A forest watch will be set up to warn against encroachment of marina projects, such as the recent case in Baan Ao Kung (Phangnga Bay Network).



## PARTNERS

- **Absolute Hotel and the Hilton Hotel:** Conduct mangrove plantation and reforestation activities in the area as part of their corporate social responsibility strategy.
- **Coastal and Mangrove Research and Development Institute (Andaman):** Provide technical advice on mangrove, coastal and marine resources.
- **Mangrove Management Unit 23 (Phuket):** Provide technical advice on mangrove forestation and seedlings.
- **Par Khlork Sub-District Municipality:** Co-manages the 192-hectare community mangrove forest and became a member of the Baan Bang La Conservation Group committee.
- **Phuket Provincial Administrative Organisation:** Engage in the community conservation activities.
- **Phuket Artist Network:** Teaches children artistic skills as a creative tool for raising awareness about conservation.
- **UNDP Thailand:** Supports the organization's conservation work. Since 2006, the Baan Bang La Community Mangrove Forest Conservation Group has been supported by the UNDP-implemented GEF SGP, the South-South Grants Facility (SSGF), and the Mangrove for the Future – Small Grants Facility (MFF-SGF) in collaboration with IUCN, implemented by UNDP Thailand.

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