

Thailand Approaches Coastal Management through Environmental Education

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Thailand, with the coast line of about 2,600 kilometers are facing with various problems along the coast. Some of these problems are very serious and need urgent solution to cope with. Depletion of natural resources on coastal fisheries is having a wide impact on local people whose livelihood are depending upon and it seems to be the primary problem which the country urgently need to improve the situation. Not only from exploitation of resources by some devastating techniques introduced into the communities, but even the newly accepted international law of the sea also playing a very important role due to the fact that the fishing grounds they used to operate legally in the international are now being under the exclusive economic zones which they cannot fish there without official agreement, therefore most of the fishing vessels have to operate only in the Thai waters and all of these caused too much pressure to the coastal fishery resources. On top of that, various coastal ecosystems, such as mud flats, mangroves, coral reefs, seagrass beds, are deteriorating as the result of all types of activities. Destruction of mangrove to convert into shrimp ponds which would be abandoned after 3 – 4 years of utilization had been evidenced through out. Coastal erosion from deduction of sediment transport into the sea due to damming the river caused strong erosion to many important mudflats as well as sandy beach erosion from coastal constructions caused the loss of habitats. Destruction of coral reefs and seagrass either from illegal fisheries performances or coastal construction are destroying important habitats for coastal fisheries. Above all, land use on the coastal areas does play a very important role to the coastal water quality as well as physical characters of the coastline. Industries and settlements would contribute major pollution to the coastal water without adequate treatment facilities. Even with treatment procedure, for example domestic waster treatment but it can turn to be the source of nutrients which would cause eutrophication to the coastal water. In order to mitigate these deteriorations to the coastal areas, effective management is a vital process to do. It is rather difficult to manage any thing without the participation of

stakeholders. Hence, environmental education to all level of stakeholders is necessary. Top decision must be convinced about the proper policy to be set which needs them to be educated in environmental management. All levels of stakeholders have to be educated to understand about the impact their activities had been introduced. Participation has to be a squire to all the levels in environmental management process. In Thailand, some examples of these activities are evidenced. Vision and policy on coastal utilization could be seen in some areas to work towards sustainable development. Private as well as government sectors had in some circumstances work together for proper management. Local Villagers have been joining together to rehabilitate the mangroves or protect their reefs or seagrass beds. All these are happening from the basic fact that environmental education could convince them that they have to be concern and take action on the matter. In many schools, students are carrying on their activities in coastal resources conservation and rehabilitation of coastal ecosystems which would assist them in preparation their for brighter future.