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US IOTWS Small Grants Program

Road Map for Preparedness

CAPACITY BUILDING OF COASTAL COMMUNITIES ON COASTAL MITIGATION



A coastal village in Muang Kluang in Ranong, Thailand. The mangroves serve as a breeding and nursery ground for aquatic organisms and protect against coastal hazards.



Discussing critical community plans on coastal mitigation in Ranong Province

US IOTWS Small Grants Program

The US Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOTWS) Program has funded 17 small grants in India, Indonesia, Sri Lanka, and Thailand as part of its \$16.6 million two-year effort to support the development of an end-to-end warning system in the region. The grants program catalyzed and promoted pilot activities that contribute to community and bottom-up results in disaster mitigation, preparedness, and response.

Capacity Building of Coastal Communities on Coastal Mitigation

The Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) initiated this multi-disciplinary project to build the coastal mitigation capacity of local leaders from Kapoe District in Ranong Province, Thailand, by integrating social, ecological, environmental, and technical approaches. The project drew on sustainable natural resource concepts, such as the importance of mangrove and coral reef ecosystems as a cornerstone of building resilient livelihoods for coastal communities.

Several AIT faculty members pooled their knowledge and resources to enhance disaster preparedness among the communities, local government units (LGUs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) by conducting a training course on coastal mitigation and providing direct technical assistance to develop a coastal mitigation plan. The training covered issues such as the role of communities, LGUs, and NGOs in coastal mitigation; integrated coastal zone management (including coastal planning); renewable and alternative energy sources; and the design and construction of coastal protection infrastructure.

Project Achievements

Twenty-eight people participated in the workshop, including community leaders, local government officers, and NGO staff from Ranong. Afterwards, participants presented their coastal mitigation plans to the communities for their feedback and approval. These communities recognized that the coastal mitigation plan serves as a guide for each community to develop their own action plans.

Two initial community workshops were held during March 29-30, 2007, with technical support from AIT to assist with community planning. Several participants from the AIT training workshop have applied their new knowledge and skills in their ongoing activities to assist the communities to develop a mitigation plan in Muang Kluang Sub-district.



Ranong officials working on a community coastal mitigation plan

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Lessons Learned

This project has shown that an integrated, multi-disciplinary approach using social, ecological, environmental, and technical tools is very useful to the community. Community leaders have expressed that they gained a deeper understanding of disaster risk reduction and coastal management, and they plan to use these lessons in developing coastal community mitigation plans.

Community members were already well aware of the inter-linkages between activities in various sectors, but the planning process helped them identify the necessary institutional linkages at the local level to go forward in implementing mitigation measures. In addition, because a truly participatory process often requires multiple discussions over an extended period, technical guidance should be available beyond the project lifecycle.

Next Steps

Coastal mitigation plans for each community are being developed through the leadership of the NGO Raks Thai. The finalized plans are expected by the end of 2007. To sustain the project, AIT is seeking partnerships and additional support for community activities. This will enable the AIT team to provide further technical assistance to communities in Ranong, as well as other tsunami-affected provinces along Thailand's coast.

The integrated multi-disciplinary approach and the training materials developed during the project will be used in similar training programs in Thailand and other countries, through links already established by AIT. Furthermore, AIT students will use these materials in short-term programs and degree courses in the Integrated Coastal Management curriculum, which is currently being revised.

About Asian Institute of Technology

AIT promotes technological change and sustainable development in the Asian-Pacific region through higher education, research and outreach. Established in Bangkok in 1959, AIT has become a leading regional postgraduate institution and is actively working with public and private sector partners throughout the region and with some of the top universities in the world. The AIT mission is to develop highly qualified and committed professionals who play leading roles in the region's sustainable development and its integration into the global economy.

For more information on activities or partnership opportunities with AIT, visit: www.ait.ac.th.

About the US Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System (IOTWS) Program

The US IOTWS Program is part of the international effort to develop tsunami warning system capabilities in the Indian Ocean following the December 2004 tsunami disaster. The US program adopts an "end-to-end" approach—addressing regional, national, and local aspects of a truly functional warning system—along with multiple other hazards that threaten communities in the region. In partnership with the international community, national governments, and other partners, the US program offers technology transfer, training, and information resources to strengthen the tsunami warning and preparedness capabilities of national and local stakeholders in the region. For more information please visit www.us-iotws.gov.

