

## Restoring mangroves for *nak thale* (otters)

### Target beneficiaries

About half of the 956 households in the three target villages.

### Outputs

- ▶ Establishment of a working group and youth network with detailed action plans to protect local otters and manage the mangroves in Ban Bangla.
- ▶ Collection of ideas and insights from community leaders on using otters as a strategic tool to involve the wider public in mangrove management.
- ▶ A doubling of the fish catch, evidence of improving mangrove productivity.
- ▶ Community-based management of 192 hectares of mangroves.
- ▶ Establishment of an alliance of 365 students and other residents of Phuket to protect mangroves.

### Accomplishments and challenges

The demarcation of a mangrove conservation area served as an incentive for community members to restore habitats for otters. It also served to protect the mangrove forest from further encroachment.

After the project ended, community leaders reported that eight otters had been spotted in the mangrove forest. The return of these otters to the area reflects the recovering state of the mangroves. Further, the community identified three new mudflats with large crab populations which they also attribute to recovery of the mangrove forest.

Project leaders plan to propose the middle island and Phakcheed Canal as additional conservation zones in the area. The canal serves as a transport channel out to sea. Once established as a conservation zone,



Signposting the otter sanctuary, Pa Klor, Thailand © P. Pramdam



#### LOCATION

Pa Klor, Phuket, Thailand

#### PRIORITY POWS

- Knowledge for Management
- Civil Society Engagement
- Capacity Building

#### DURATION

May 2009 to November 2010

#### MFF GRANT AMOUNT

US\$9,404

### Objectives

The objective of this project was to build community capacity to demarcate and manage conservation zones for local otter populations and a community mangrove area.

### Background

The Phuket Women's Capacity Development Project was established in 1998 as an NGO supporting activities in coastal and urban communities in Phuket province. The Project aims to promote and manage campaigns on gender equality, self-sufficiency, and participation in managing coastal resources.

The Project secured a small grant from MFF to support its work to conserve and rehabilitate the remaining 192 hectares of mangrove forest at Khlong Tha Rua Mangrove Forest Reserve in Phuket by promoting participation with local community-based organisations. The small grant work focused on three villages in the vicinity of the Forest Reserve, Ban Phakcheed, Ban Yamu and Ban Bangla. The villagers in this area depend on goods and services from mangrove forests in Ban Bangla.

it would help to stop any encroachment on the mangroves by development projects or prawn farms.

The project will use its otter conservation strategy to link with other communities and agencies at all levels to promote replication and mainstreaming of its approaches. Women's and youth groups will play a major part in this effort.

The Learning Promotion Unit of Phuket Mangrove Resources Development Station selected Ban Bangla as a learning centre for indigenous knowledge about mangroves in Phuket province. Members of youth groups of various ages were invited to take part in community activities such as replanting and breeding of mangrove crabs.

According to community members, wastewater from neighbouring prawn farms has degraded water quality and harmed fish farming. The project shared its message about otter conservation with prawn farm owners, who expressed an interest in using the species as a focus for tourism.

### Challenges

Project leaders had to work hard to build local people's understanding of the need for

conserving otters and other rare marine and coastal species.

## Contributions to cross-cutting themes

### Gender equality

The women's group of Ban Bangla played an important role in implementing project activities, not to mention their everyday family responsibilities. The group's participation is a reflection of its members' growing capacity to plan and manage the sustainable use of natural resources.

### Lessons learned

Since otters are an indicator of the health of mangroves and coastal resources generally, communities see them as flagship species for conservation activities and a vehicle for promoting conservation messages in other areas.

### Partners and their contribution

The participating communities and grantee made cash and in-kind contributions of US\$6,667 and US\$23,334 respectively. The Thai Health Promotion Foundation contributed US\$8,334 in cash.



Traditional launching of the otter project, Pa Klorok, Thailand © P. Parndam

*“Where urbanization is gradually spreading, a critical question is how a concerned public can check or control environmentally destructive development.”*

— COMMUNITY MEMBERS

### CONTACT INFORMATION

Ms Rattanaphron Jaengjaidee  
Project Manager

Phuket Women's Capacity  
Development Project  
258/34 Moo Baan Charoensuk,  
Srisunthorn, Thalang,  
Phuket 83110, Thailand

Tel: +66 81 9705216  
Email: jaengjaidee@hotmail.com