



## Environmental Cooperation-Asia (ECO-Asia)

# Post-tsunami Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Program



Suman Sanghewi

*Cash-for-Work, such as mangrove re-planting, provides relief to over 300 villagers in need*

**BACKGROUND** The tsunami of December 2004 devastated Thailand's entire Andaman coast. A total of 392 villages and some 54,500 people were affected, with more than 5,000 deaths recorded and many others missing. The disaster devastated the local economy by crushing fishing boats, along with engines and gear. Homes, public buildings, and coastal infrastructure, including roads and bridges were also destroyed. The tsunami had its greatest impacts on rural coastal communities, many of which were already poor and economically vulnerable with few livelihood options. Recovery is especially difficult because many of those that survived lost the means to practice their livelihoods.

The USAID Regional Development Mission/Asia responded with a demonstration program that helps coastal communities in Southern Thailand rehabilitate livelihoods, become more resilient to future natural disasters and adopt livelihood practices that use natural resources more sustainably. ECO-Asia assists coastal communities to achieve economic self-sufficiency, preparedness in the face of natural hazards and protection of their natural heritage.

**APPROACH** Five tsunami-affected villages in Ranong Province were selected for ECO-Asia's demonstration initiative. Located within Laemson National Park, these villages have a population of 5,000 and are dependent on fishing and agriculture for their livelihoods. This relatively small, compact area makes it suitable for modeling an integrated approach to coastal disaster rehabilitation. As a model project, the knowledge and lessons learned will be transferred to other at-risk coastal communities in Thailand and other countries in the Asia region.

**PROJECT ACTIVITIES** The program has five major program components:

**Build a common vision for action.** ECO-Asia works closely with local government authorities and community leaders to build local ownership and establish a common vision for rehabilitation. Key activities include quarterly village meetings, nomination of Village Volunteer facilitators, weekly meetings with local government authorities, monthly donor coordination meetings, and local distribution of the Kamphuan in Action Newsletter.

**Reestablish and diversify livelihoods.** ECO-Asia provides small grants, technical assistance, training, cash-for-work activities,

and small loans to help entrepreneurs and families rebuild livelihoods, as well as promote new, diverse and alternative livelihood opportunities. Village microfinance groups have been established, with over 250 loans disbursed in the first year of operation to support livelihoods in low-impact aquaculture, fish processing, agriculture, retail trade, food sales, and other areas. ECO-Asia also demonstrates new, appropriate technologies to diversify economic opportunities in the coastal villages. For example, a small catfish hatchery will expand catfish aquaculture, while new mushroom farming techniques will diversify agricultural production. Cash-for-work activities help hundreds of families get back on their feet, and make a noticeable difference in areas such as water supply, sanitation, mangrove replanting, solid waste management, road repair, and landscaping.

**Enhance community readiness and resilience to coastal hazards.** In collaboration with the U.S. Government Indian Ocean Tsunami Warning System Program, ECO-Asia assists coastal communities in the mapping of areas at risk of inundation, delineation of evacuation routes, training events, village disaster management planning, evacuation drills, and First Aid training.

**Build capacity for planning and decision-making in the coastal zone.** ECO-Asia provides training and facilitates planning with local and national partners in such areas as integrated coastal management, disaster management, tourism, and solid waste management.

**Share experience and best practices.** Regional learning workshops are convened to share lessons learned with others in tsunami rehabilitation and disaster preparedness. The workshops bring together tsunami rehabilitation professionals from affected countries and catalyze replication of good practices.

The flagship activity of the program is the construction and programming of the multi-purpose Kamphuan Learning Center. This building will primarily serve as a small business development center, but also promotes environmental stewardship and governance. The building itself is a good example of how environmental practices can be applied to the construction and surrounding landscape.

**IMPLEMENTING PARTNERS** Coastal Resources Center/  
University of Rhode Island, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT)  
and University of Hawaii-Hilo



*Training in fish seedling production introduces the villagers' opportunities to diversify fishery livelihoods.*

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