

Community Involvement in Coral Reef Restoration Projects in the Gulf of Thailand

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A lesson learned from Mu Koh Chang Coral Reef Demonstration Site, Trat Province, Thailand under UNEP/GEF Project on Reversing Environmental Degradation Trends in South China Sea and Gulf of Thailand during 2005 – 2008 was implementation of a demonstration site for coral reef restoration at Koh Mapling. The project worked in collaboration with local fishermen of Klong Son village, Association of Marine Biodiversity Conservation and Education (AMBCE), an NGO conservation group led by marine scientists, and certain volunteer groups in Trat Province. The demonstration site for coral reef restoration was carried out in a limited area where it can be easily controlled and managed for the benefits of ecotourism, education, raising public awareness, ecosystem restoration and research. It showed significant improvement of coordination among local communities, NGOs, private sector and government agencies to work actively in the planning and implementation processes. The AMBCE played a major role in providing scientific knowledge for coral reef restoration. A long-term cooperation mechanism between local communities and volunteer scientists was developed to ensure sustainable uses of coral reefs in the Gulf of Thailand. Several demonstration sites for coral reef restoration were established by local administrative offices, government agencies, NGOs, local communities and private sector. They participated actively in the planning, implementation processes and monitoring for their direct and indirect benefits from the demonstration sites. Coral fragments on coral reefs were used in order to increase the survival of natural coral fragments that might otherwise have had low survival because they were susceptible to being buried. A low cost coral reef restoration method, additional substrates for coral recruitment and attaching coral fragments by using clusters of designed cement blocks, was selected to show at the



demonstration sites. The local administrative office was a key agency to encourage and strengthen collaborative management for long-term benefit at each demonstration site. Good practices from demonstration sites for coral reef restoration were applied to establish several coral reef restoration sites in the Gulf of Thailand. A prominent case study was the modification techniques for coral reef restoration of Mu Koh Kood project which were transferred to Ao Mai Rood area to develop a demonstration site for coral reef restoration in coastal area of Trat Province. These activities better coordination among local communities, NGOs, private sector, government agencies and relevant organizations to work actively during the planning and implementation phases for coral reef conservation. A major concern for coral reef restoration projects is that techniques and methods used in the projects should be kept simple and use cheap materials available in local areas.