



2023 TOP 100 GOOD PRACTICE STORY

Title: Marine & coastal resources restoration for better economic linkage from tourism: the case of crab bank project in Hua Hin

Destination, Country: Hua Hin City, Thailand

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In the category: Destination Management Environment & Climate Thriving Communities
 Nature & Scenery Culture & Tradition Business & Marketing

The Story in a picture:

The view of Hua Hin beach in the morning with tourists coming to release blue swimming crabs and horseshoe crabs back to the sea as a tourism activity



Summary:

Hua Hin city is one of the top beach & sea tourist destinations of Thailand with very high volume of tourists both Thai and foreigner. Besides its physical attraction, seafood is one of Hua Hin's tourism products that brings tourists to the destination, especially Blue Swimming Crab (BSC). However, recent years, there was very low number of BSC due to overfishing which affected to local fishermen. The local fishing village called "Ban Kao Takiab" organized the crab bank, sustainable crab conservation project to increase number of BSC by taking the caught gravid females BSC called "berried female crab" in the in rearing condition, allowing them to spawn and then releasing the zoea and young crabs back to the sea. The project is very well-recognized and well-supported by local restaurants and hotels. Moreover, it has become a famous tourism activity in Hua Hin where tourists can come to the releasing station to join the volunteers of the project for releasing the crab and other marine lives back to the sea. This project is not only able to restore the abundance of marine livestock, but also maintain and extend the economic benefits from tourism to the local fishing village, and tourist can enjoy another activity besides beach & sea.



Good Practice Story:

Destination description

Brief background of the destination.

Hua Hin city is one of the top beach & sea tourist destinations of Thailand from its great number of attractions and activities. It is located in Prachuap Khiri Khan province in western part of Thailand with around 3 hours driving from Bangkok. The city is a 22 km long coast along the edge of the Gulf of Thailand which has incredible beaches, mountains, viewpoints, temples, night markets, water parks, and fine diners that can be enjoyed at any time of the year. Hua Hin features a beautiful, powdery sand beach, numerous seaside seafood restaurants, a lively night market, numerous beach activities, and some great inland activities, not least of which is golfing at some of Thailand's most renowned courses. Just down the coast at Takiab Bay, visitors can take seaside horseback rides and visit a hilltop Buddhist Temple with a spectacular view. Accommodation along the beach and on the streets leading away from the sea ranges from simple guesthouses to luxury resorts and includes some of the finest spa-retreats in the world. Hua Hin is accessible via train, bus, or car and the seaside community of 60,000 residents is a fine example of warm and welcoming Thai hospitality. In 2019 before Covid19, Hua Hin received about 2.8 million Thai tourists and about one million foreign tourists.

Issues faced

Problems/issues solved with the Good Practice Story.

Hua Hin city is regarded as a very tourism-intensive city. Not only it is famous among holidaymakers due to its long and beautiful seaside but also its fresh and delightful seafood especially Blue Swimming Crab (BSC). The BSC (*Portunus pelagicus*) found in Hua Hin is usually suggested as one of the most delicious BSC in Thailand. The BSC has also become the important source of income of local fishermen in Hua Hin by selling it to local markets and restaurants. However, around a decade ago, due to overfishing, the number of BSC decreased dramatically. Although there was no exact number, the local fishermen felt that it was more and more difficult to catch the BSC in their fishing area. Anyway, it could hint that natural resource (BSC) was negatively affected by tourism. This circumstance might lead to the risk of the income lost among the local fishermen, as well as it could make the price of BSC higher due to low supply but high demand. Last but not least, it could affect to biodiversity of marine life around Hua Hin coastal area. So, to keep seafood as a destination's advantage while to maintain local economic linkage and local natural resource conservation, the local fishing village organized "Crab Bank Project", supported by the Hua Hin Municipality and local academic stakeholders, to cope with this problem.

Methods, steps, and tools applied

Implementation of the Good Practice Story.

1. By local fishing village community : The local fishing village called "Ban Kao Takiab" organized the crab bank which is a sustainable crab conservation project that involved the village in a pilot scheme for marine resources conservation. The crab bank is the program on taking the caught gravid females BSC called "berried female crab" in the in rearing condition, allowing them to spawn and then releasing the zoea and young crabs back to the sea. The villager has an internal MOU to have mutual agreement among fishermen that if anyone can catch berried female crabs, they have to send the berried female crabs to the crab bank. Furthermore, local restaurants and hotels also donate berried female crabs to the crab bank too whenever they have. After that, the crab bank will maintain the berried female crabs in a plastic tank container until the crabs had spawned. After spawning, both the crabs and crab larvae will be released back to the sea.

2. By Hua Hin Municipality : The municipality has supported necessary equipment to the Crab Bank Project and provided training to the project’s staff to improve its capacity to operate and maintain the crab bank by cooperating with a local university to help in this regard. In addition, the municipality has helped the Crab Bank Project to seek for CSR programs from private companies as an additional support to the project, for example, the new building of the Crab Bank Project was supported by Market Village Hua Hin (a shopping mall in Hua Hin), and upgraded equipment supported by Silpakorn University. Moreover, the municipality has tried to promote the crab bank as an educational field trip site and invited schools or institutes to come and do the crab releasing activity.

Key success factors

Critical elements that led to successfully solving the issues.

1. Strong community : It is undeniable that the fishing village community has played a crucial role in this effort, because the crab bank is quite labour-intensive to maintain the system such as daily feeding and maintenance of the cages of containers as well as releasing (the crabs and crab larvae) routine. Actually, the crab bank project like this is not new in Thailand, but only a few can achieve and maintain its operation. Thanks to the community’s determination to decide to maintain and improve their livelihood by conserving this natural resource rather than keep catching and ignore the consequence.
2. Government support : The municipality has also played an important role in this project. To support the crab bank to be improved overtime, it has attempted to connect with several donors to raise funds, as well as connect with universities to conduct study and research to find the way for improve the yield and introduce useful knowledge and technology to the crab bank project.
3. Tourism involvement : The crabs and crab larvae releasing to the sea has become a tourism activity with free of charge. The fishing village leader and volunteers will bring prepared crabs and crab larvae in containers carrying to station point by the sea every morning at 9am. It welcomes all type of tourist both Thai and foreigner to join the activity. This is also a key success because once this crab bank has connected with tourism, project has been promoted with words of mouth and social media. Now it has become one of ‘don’t-miss-out’ tourism activities in Hua Hin.
4. Business engagement : Local restaurants and hotels are also important players. Local restaurants and hotels’ restaurants have supported the crab bank by donating berried female crabs which are sometimes found in their purchasing process to the crab bank. Moreover, the hotels also put the crabs and crab larvae releasing activity as a recommended activity for their guests, and sometimes provide service to their guests to bring them to releasing station point. The hotels said their guests very enjoy this experience, according to the feedback.

Lessons learned

Challenges faced while implementing the Good Practice and their solutions.

As said above that “crab bank project” is not new in Thailand, but only a few that survive. One big problem of crab bank project is that there is not enough berried female crab to be in the process of breeding in the project which makes the project not feasible to continue. The crab bank project in Hua Hin also concerned about this point. Luckily this fishing village has relatively huge amount of fishing boats. So, the crab bank communicated to all local fishermen once they can collect berried female crabs from the sea, please give or donate them to the crab bank project and educated the local fishermen how important of such action (donating the berried female crab) to their long-term benefit. In return, the crab bank project gave assurance to the local fishermen that the crab bank would do its best to breed the BSC efficiently and effectively to release back into the sea for the local fishermen, so they can have more sustainable and enough resource to make a living. This finally shows how both parties support to each other. The crab bank project could not survive without

sizeable berried female crabs donated from local fishermen, in vice versa, the successful crab bank project will ensure that the local fishermen are going to be able to set sail for fishing whenever they need which gives more chance to catch berried female crabs to donate to the project again.

Achievements and Results

Direct and indirect results of the Good Practice.

1. From October 2018 to May 2023, more than 150 million crab larvae were released, representing an economic value of over 1,000 million THB (approx. 28.5 million US dollar), calculated from the total number of 3 billion crab larvae released, with a survival rate of 5% and the average price of blue crabs in the market at that time.
2. The local fishermen has a sustainable source of income. Due to the success of crab bank, now the local fishermen can harvest the BSC all year around, unlike before that the harvest was seasonal. This makes the local fishermen are still able maintain their career to make a living. It is also because the BSC is very popular seafood and connected directly to tourism industry in Hua Hin, so the local fishermen can enjoy this benefit through tourism even more. According to research conducted by Silpakorn University, it suggested there are 308 (fishermen) households that directly benefit from the success of the crab bank project.
3. In term of natural resource conservation, the crab bank has also played a part of environmental conservation. It can help restoring the biodiversity and the abundance of aquatic animal under the sea in the Gulf of Thailand.
4. It has become a famous tourism activity in Hua Hin. Especially during weekends, there will be a lot of tourists waiting to release the crab back to the sea. The crab project also takes this opportunity to promote the project and educate tourists about the BSC and the importance of the crab bank. Now the activity has been extended to include other marine lives to be released as well such as horseshoe crab (Limulidae).

Tips for other destinations

Suggestion for other destinations wishing to implement the same or a similar solution.

1. Using social media

Because the crab bank project started with very low budget, mostly volunteer-based, there was very lack of resource for its operation. It required not only a fund and equipment, but also berried female crabs to operate the breeding process. As luck would have it meaning, the crab bank project caught the attention of a local Hua Hin, so he made a Facebook for the crab bank project called Blue Swimming Crabs Bank Hua Hin (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/bscbhh/>). After that, the story of the crab bank in Hua Hin has been widespread. Moreover, Hua Hin is one of the most popular seaside destinations in Thailand, it has attracted many people not only visitors, but also businesses, restaurants, and hotels, which made them willing to support the crab bank, for example, as CSR or donation, or in-kind volunteer. The crab bank project has successfully taken the advantage from being a famous tourism destination with social media to promote the project and activity to be able to get support from outside to keep the project operated.

2. Connecting with tourism directly

As said, crab bank project is not new in Thailand, however only a few has survived. The crab bank and the fishermen village here in Hua Hin, on one hand, it is lucky that they are located in one of the most popular seaside destinations in Thailand, on the other hand, the crab bank and the village have grabbed this chance very well. Definitely, they can benefit from tourism as the crab bank gets support from local tourism businesses, and the village can sell seafood to those businesses. Yet the crab bank takes another step connecting with tourism directly by turning it into tourism activity. Although the activity is free of charge, it has expanded the opportunity to be known and get support from outside, and make its operation more steady. Moreover, when it has become routine tourism

activity, on the releasing site, there are more and more local people come to open small kiosks to sell goods to tourists. It extends the economic linkage of tourism to local community. According to this case, if there is any community-based project in a tourism destination, just try to find the way to connect with tourism discreetly without hesitation.

Recognitions and Additional references

Recognitions and awards the Good Practice received and supporting evidence.

1) Runner-up - 2019 Sustainable Municipality Awards by Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (<https://www.huahin.go.th/new/news/detail/353>)

2) Facebook Blue Swimming Crabs Bank Hua Hin (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/bscbhh/>)

3) Youtube

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FP1nBP8djCc>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=evvdcGTmmxQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZlvjT6AHY04>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8JygJEUJUFA>