



Thailand

Thailand responded positively to the launch of the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD) by linking it to His Majesty the King's Sufficiency Economy Theory. This theory encourages people to lead a sustainable way of life in harmony with local resources, culture, environment and social issues in order to alleviate poverty and improve land management. In addition, the Thai government is committed to educational reform which aims to promote Thailand as a knowledge-based society based on the principle that "education builds the nation, empowers the individual and generates employment." Subsequently, the country's education system is being reformed to ensure quality education for all, with the introduction of modern technology within the classroom, familiarising children with computer-aided learning and the Internet.

Formal and non-formal educational settings play a vital role within Thai society, particularly to reach the poor and disadvantaged, like those living in remote rural areas, children of construction site workers, street children, child labourers and women and children without birth certificates.

Projects/Initiatives

Integrated Pest Management in Curriculum

One example of ESD in non-formal education is the response to improper use of agricultural chemicals in the Northern Thai province of Chiang Mai. With the use of modern farming technology being encouraged in the area to cope with the increasing population, local farmers started using pesticides and chemical-based fertilizers without proper training. This resulted in many people suffering from chemical-related health problems. The local drinking water and air quality was also affected. The Thai government responded by setting up a youth learning programme allowing youth to learn about the dangers of improper agricultural chemical use by interviewing affected farmers and observing the side effects. The youth were encouraged to act as advocates within their own communities to encourage the reduction of the use of chemicals in agriculture. The Thai Education Foundation has now incorporated Integrated Pest Management within the existing curriculum of a course on ecological systems in rice fields and vegetable patches as well as within a course on organic farming.

Information pack on landslide occurrence

Over the past few years Thailand has faced severe natural disasters, with the tsunami of December 2004 having the most devastating effect. As a result, the Thailand Environment Institute (TEI), in close collaboration with UNESCO Bangkok and communities in northern Thailand, produced an information pack containing a VCD recorded in the northern Thai dialect, and a poster and information leaflet written both in Thai and English, which focus on how landslides occur, how to recognize an imminent landslide and how to protect oneself. Using this non-formal education pack, entire communities in landslide prone areas can be targeted and informed.

Chok Madah Nature-Culture Trail

The Moken village in Bon Bay on South Surin Island was devastated by the tsunami. In response to this, UNESCO Bangkok's Education for Sustainable Development unit, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), Chulalongkorn University's Social Research Institute (CUSRI) and the Marine National Park Division of the National Park Office joined together with the Moken to help rehabilitate the community and its environment. This collaboration has produced a live example of ESD in action in the form of the Chok Madah Nature-Culture Trail. It is an 800 metre long trail that runs through the rainforest from

Bon Bay on the east to Chok Madah on the west side of the island. The aim behind the trail is to give visitors a better understanding of how the Moken community has been practising sustainable management of natural resources, part of their traditional way of life, through fishing, foraging, hunting, and trading with other communities. There are 20 points along the trail providing information on specific topics and insights into the world of the Moken. By combining the four pillars of ESD – society, economy, environment, and culture – the Chok Madah Nature-Culture Trail serves as an example of how UNESCO’s vision of ESD is translated into action.

The Ministry of Education proposes national seminars and workshops on ESD for teachers, educators and officials. With the outcome of these workshops, the Thai government will launch medium and long-term strategies for ESD at national, regional and local level plus issue a situational analysis of their own on Education for Sustainable Development within Thailand. This will serve as a guideline for government agencies, education institutions and other partners in establishing the best ways forward for the promotion of the DESD in Thailand.