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THAILAND

CASE STUDY

Making Tourism Sustainable

A province begins to strengthen its coastal tourism industry



Photo: K/Asia/Richard Bernhard

High school students in Phang-nga sign up for training in sustainable tourism.

The next generation of tourism industry professionals is developing skills that not only promote the preservation of natural resources but also generate more profitable livelihoods.

Telling Our Story
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Challenge

Before the December 2004 tsunami, Thailand's Phang-nga province counted on its robust tourist economy to bring in 46 percent of its revenues. But after the tsunami, tourism ground to a halt. The province suddenly learned how critical the tourism industry was to its long-term growth and stability. In fact, almost half of the province's people depend on income from tourism. Seeing their livelihoods disappear overnight, people began asking themselves: was Phang-nga's tourism industry sustainable over the long run?

Initiative

To help Phang-nga get back on its feet and ensure long-term growth in tourism, USAID supported a program to train people in marketing, entrepreneurship, and sustainable tourism. Participants learned the principles of sustainable tourism and how to leverage the province's hotel association, chambers of commerce, businesses, schools, and local government in marketing the province to tourists. The program also trained college instructors in entrepreneurship, and they are now teaching others the skills they learned. Learning centers have been established in community colleges, where select high school students are developing basic computer skills and learning about entrepreneurship. Most students are already working in community or family businesses, where they are applying their new skills.

Results

One year into the program, students presented the professional brochures they designed to highlight the province's attractions. The next generation of tourism industry professionals are developing skills that not only promote the preservation of natural resources but also generate more profitable livelihoods.