Engaging the private sector in nature conservation

IUCN – Marriott Partnership in Thailand

Young rhizophora tree © IUCN/Siriporn SRIARAM

Background
As part of Marriott’s global commitment to sustainability and IUCN's Business and Biodiversity Programme, Marriott Hotels & Resorts Thailand and IUCN are working together to protect the environment and support Thailand’s local communities through mangrove reforestation, the use of sustainable seafood sources, and local procurement practices. Through this initiative, IUCN aims to support Marriott Hotels & Resorts Thailand in its efforts to contribute to the conservation and restoration of biodiversity, while at the same time encouraging the mainstreaming of sustainable business practices in the Southeast Asia region.

This engagement falls under the wider umbrella of Marriott’s “Spirit to Serve” initiative. On the IUCN side, the partnership contributes to the organization’s goals to increase private sector investment in biodiversity conservation, and to support businesses in adopting more sustainable practices.

IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature, is the world’s oldest and largest global environmental organization, with more than 1,200 government and NGO Members and almost 11,000 volunteer experts in some 160 countries. In Thailand, IUCN is currently working on a number of national and regional projects related to coastal protection, transboundary water issues, climate change adaptation, and helping local communities to create sustainable livelihoods. www.iucn.org/thailand
Main initiatives
There are three main elements to the IUCN-Marriott partnership:
1. Marriott collects donations from its guests to support IUCN’s mangrove restoration activities, and raises awareness of the importance of mangrove forests.
2. IUCN and Marriott work together to identify opportunities for sourcing of sustainable souvenirs and gifts from local communities.
3. IUCN supports Marriott in locating sources of sustainable seafood for their hotels.

Motivation
In the last four decades, more than half of Thailand’s mangroves have been lost. After the 2004 tsunami, a renewed determination to replant mangroves in Thailand was marked by the symbolic planting of a mangrove by former US President Bill Clinton in Phuket and the launch of the Mangroves for the Future programme (MFF) in 2006. Co-chaired by IUCN and UNDP, MFF is a partnership-based initiative promoting investment in coastal ecosystems for sustainable development.

Mangroves play a critical role in protecting coastlines from severe storms and sea level rise. In addition, mangrove forests are important for conserving biodiversity and storing carbon. Through this partnership, IUCN and Marriott will assist in rebuilding Thailand’s mangroves and support nearby communities.

Key Locations
IUCN has identified several key target locations for mangrove restoration and for supporting local communities under its partnership with Marriott.

In Central Thailand, IUCN has selected Bang Kachao near Bangkok due to its importance as a major green area close to the city (the “green lung of Bangkok”). Bang Kachao has been recognised by His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej as part of a Royal Project to conserve green areas near the capital, and to improve the local communities' livelihoods and environment while maintaining their culture and lifestyle.

IUCN and Marriott are also working on mangrove restoration in a number of coastal sites in Thailand, including selected sites in Samut Songkhram, Rayong, Phang Nga, Koh Samui and Hua Hin.

IUCN’s Business and Biodiversity Programme
IUCN Asia’s Regional Business and Biodiversity Programme seeks to mobilize the private sector and the environmental community to work together in mainstreaming conservation in business. Asia’s high economic growth rates mean that environmental conservation and sustainability issues are an increasing challenge in the region. Responding to this challenge and guided by a clear set of principles that respect mutual roles, the Programme works with more and more Asian businesses and business sectors on conservation and sustainable development issues.

In recent years, IUCN Asia has worked with a number of major companies including Holcim, one of the world’s leading suppliers of cement and aggregates, on the development of a Biodiversity Action Plan for their cement plant in Hon Chong, Viet Nam; with Danone Waters, one of the world’s leading bottled water brands, on restoring the Jiaquan watershed in China; with Tata Steel, a leading steel manufacturer, on Integrated Management of Biodiversity in India; and with Dilmah Tea on biodiversity conservation in tea estates in Sri Lanka.

Contacts
Dr Chamniern Vorratnchaiphan, Country Representative
Chamniern.VORRATNCHAIPHAN@iucn.org
Angela Jöhl Cadena, Senior Programme Officer
Angela.JOEHLCADENA@iucn.org
Kanokwan Homcha-aim, Field Coordinator South
Kanokwan.Homcha-aim@iucn.org

Websites
www.iucn.org/thailand
www.marriottthailand.com
www.mangrovesforthefuture.org