

Data collection for the development of cultural protected area and for solving Moken statelessness, Surin Islands, Phang-nga Province (Phase 1)

Abstract

In the past, the Moken are an ethnic group that lived their lives on the islands and coastal areas of the Andaman Sea. In the dry season they lived in boats, gathered fish, sea animals, seashells, etc. to exchange them for necessary items. When the rainy season approached, they stopped traveling and built shelters in the bay to shelter from the wind. During the rainy season, they often went to the forest to make use of trees to build houses, make boats, and gather forest food.

Because the Moken migrated frequently in the past; in addition, the communities were often located on islands far from the mainland, that is why they were far away from government services. Most of the Moken have no nationality; as a result, many are without basic rights. After the tsunami of 2004, the Moken became more visible. There are many agencies, both public and private, to help in various fields. Including the application for legal status. Up to the present, there are still a number of Moken who still do not have Thai nationality. The obstacles come from language barrier, the remoteness of communities, the difficulty and high cost of travelling to shore especially during the monsoon season, few or no witnesses who certify the birth, cultural way of counting and recognizing kinship which is different from what we are used to; moreover, the local office is understaffed and unable to continuously focus on the Moken nationality work.

This project aims at data collection for the development of cultural protected area together with developing work process of providing assistance to the Surin Islands Moken in terms of legal status. The purpose is to develop cultural protected zone and to solve the problem of statelessness and create human security for the Moken. This particular project has a duration of 144 days.

Data collection for the development of cultural protected area started with the use of household questionnaire for the Moken that lived on Surin Islands at the time (April 23-30, 2022). A total of 92 household questionnaires were used, revealing the population of 362. Preliminary findings covered the issues of income, expenditure, consumption, household belongings, migration, livelihoods and personal ties to Surin Islands, attitudes on natural resource utilization and opinions on the future. The findings will be analyzed with qualitative data to be collected in the future phases of the project.

The work on development of Moken legal status requires the cooperation of several parties, namely Undergraduate Program of Laws, Department of Sociology, Faculty of Social Sciences, Srinakharinwirot University, Hill Area and Community Development Foundation (HADF), Plan International (Thailand), in collaboration with the Bureau of Registration Administration (BORA), the Bureau of Internal Security Affairs, Department of Provincial Administration (DOPA),

Phang Nga Provincial Administration, Khuraburi district Office, and volunteers from Moken community.

The working group from several parties has visited the Moken Village to accept request forms on personal legal status and nationality. A total of 89 request forms were completed and the officers from Department of Provincial Administration prepared a document delivering a list of names and supporting documents to Khuraburi district staff who will carry out actions in accordance with their duty and authority. The working group will do the follow up in order to provide necessary assistance in the future in order to solve Moken statelessness problems.