Sea Turtle Conservation at Redang Island, Terengganu, Malaysia

Problem: What problem is this project trying to address?

We are a non-profit organisation. Our conservation and outreach program relies so much from public/agency donations and the Sea Turtle Volunteer Program. Lack of funding making it impossible for us to conduct our awareness campaign to the other states in Malaysia. At the moment, we are only focusing at Redang Island and around Kuala Terengganu.

Solution: What is the proposed solution? Please be specific!

The conservation program at Redang Island conducted by SEATRU - Universiti Malaysia Terengganu aimed to collect biological data of sea
turtles, to monitor and protect the population of sea turtles at Redang Island and to protect eggs under incubation at Chagar Hutang beach from poachers and other predators, and as well as to increase the hatch success of hatchlings. It is hope that the effort will help replenish the current depleting sea turtles population in Redang Island. What unique and innovative about this conservation program is, we allowed the participation of local communities and public. We hire the local community at Redang Island to help us with the conservation program. We also organised an annual turtle camp especially for the children at Redang Island. Besides, through this conservation program we also introduce the first Sea Turtle Volunteer Program in Malaysia. This program was developed to provide volunteer assistance to the sea turtle conservation program conducted by SEATRU. It was introduced in 1998, and has become very popular, especially among local/international college and university students. To foster awareness among the public, this program is a good initiative. Having a chance to get closer to sea turtles as well as the marine environment creates an effective step into a sustainable ecosystem and a responsible community.

About You

Organization:
SEATRU - Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
Visit website

Section 1: About You
First Name
Juanita
Last Name
Joseph
Website
http://www.umt.edu.my/seatur

Organization
SEATRU - Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
Country
, TR

Section 2: About Your Organization
Organization Name
SEATRU - Universiti Malaysia Terengganu
Organization Phone
006096684317
Organization Address
Institute of Oceanography, Universiti Malaysia Terengganu, 21030 Kuala Terengganu
Organization Country
, TR

Your idea
Country your work focuses on
, TR
Website URL
http://www.umt.edu.my/seatur
Would you like to participate in the MIF Opportunity 2010?

Innovation
Do you have a patent for this idea?

Impact
What impact have you had on your clients and the tourism sector?
At the moment, it is too early to say whether we have increased the nesting population of green and hawksbill turtles at Redang Island because sea turtles need at least 20 - 50 years to mature and come back to their natal beach. One thing for sure, since 2005 when the beach was gazetted as Turtle Sanctuary, we had make sure that all sea turtle nests were incubated and protected. This year will be the 18 years we are running this conservation program and we are hoping that the first batch of hatchlings released back in 1993 will soon come back to Redang Island. Apart from increasing the sea turtle population in Redang Island, through our volunteer program and turtle camps we are also creating a stronger and firmer community with high enthusiasm towards ocean protection and wildlife conservation. Experiencing it hands-on make them realized the essential of our conservation effort. A week stay at our turtle sanctuary creates an individual that value and appreciates nature. In terms of environmental education on school children, the turtle camp produces young turtle envoys. These kids serve as a mediator to their parent to stop consuming turtle eggs which is an alarming scenario in Terengganu. From this program we help boost up the tourism sector for Redang Island
through eco-tourism.

Actions
In order to obtain more funding to support our long-term sea turtle conservation and outreach program, we also offered nest and turtle adoption scheme to public. We also offered CSR projects for local and international companies that are interested to support our conservation program. Apart from that, we also collaborate with local resorts to promote our conservation program to tourists at Redang Island. We also produce SEATRU souveniers/merchandise to raise fund to support the conservation and outreach program.

SEATRU also become consultants to agencies related to sea turtle research and conservation.

We had intensified our outreach program by the help of undergraduate from Universiti Malaysia Terengganu where these students act as our facilitators in most of the camps and campaigned organised by SEATRU.

Results
We have protected more than 6000 sea turtle nests at Redang Island, and had produced more than 400,000 healthy hatchlings that returned back to the ocean. Even after 18 years and Team Leaders had changed, SEATRU-Universiti Malaysia Terengganu has not lost its momentum and are still very much dedicated in saving the sea turtles.

Through the years, we had conducted countless Turtle camps to the children at Redang Island and as well as to schools all over Malaysia. About 3000 local and international volunteers had participated in SEATRU Volunteer Program.

We collaborate well with resort operators and the local people of Redang Island.

Numerous research especially on sea turtles were conducted and being published/presented both locally and internationally.

What will it take for your project to be successful over the next three years? Please address each year separately, if possible.

Year 1: To make a strategic plan to raise more fund so that conservation, research and outreach program can be conducted efficiently and sustain for long period of time. New ideas should be developed for an attractive awareness program. Education materials such as poster, brochures, etc should be made and distributed to the public to increase their knowledge and awareness in sea turtles conservation.

Year 2: To work very closely with the Government especially in promoting sea turtle conservation and the making of new regulation to protect nesting and foraging grounds, and to control trade of any turtle products in Malaysia.

Year 3: Diversify collaboration with other International Organization throughout the world. By doing so, the conservation, research and outreach program can be improved.

What would prevent your project from being a success?
The success of this project will depend so much on the management team. The Team Leader must be competent, full of dedication, creative, can inspire the other team members and as well as the public.

Effort to obtain more funding is also essential in order to make sure that this unit will sustain for a long term period.

How many people will your project serve annually?
100110,000

What is the average monthly household income in your target community, in US Dollars?
$100 1000

Does your project seek to have an impact on public policy or introduce models and tools that benefit the tourism sector in general?
Yes

Sustainability
What stage is your project in?
Operating for more than 5 years

In what country?
. TR

Is your initiative connected to an established organization?
Yes

If yes, provide organization name.
SEATRU - Universiti Malaysia Terengganu

How long has this organization been operating?
More than 5 years

Does your organization have a Board of Directors or an Advisory Board?
Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with NGOs?
Yes

Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with businesses?
Yes
Does your organization have any non-monetary partnerships with government?
Yes

Please tell us more about how these partnerships are critical to the success of your innovation.
The partnership with resort operators at Redang Island is very important in making our conservation program a success. Berjaya Redang Beach Resort have been sponsoring the conservation program from 1993 - 1997. This resort also partially sponsored our annual turtle camp (1996 - present). Laguna Resort had been giving us complimentary return ferry tickets (1998 - present) to bring our volunteers and researchers from the mainland to Redang Island. Without their support, we will not be able to conduct this program for long period of time.

We also have full support from the government in conducting our conservation, research and outreach program.

What are the three most important actions needed to grow your initiative or organization?
1. A good and dedicated management team.
2. We must have a strategic plan to be financially sustain.
3. Diversify collaboration with government, NGOs and private sectors.

The Story

What was the defining moment that led you to this innovation?
Out of the seven species of sea turtles, four species can be found nesting on the Malaysian beaches/rookeries. Apart from that, the Malaysian waters also provide foraging grounds for the green and hawksbill turtles. Malaysia has long history of sea turtle conservation, started since the early 1950s but sadly the sea turtle nesting population still declining drastically. For example, the nesting population of leatherback turtles in Terengganu are now in a brink of extinction. Because of that, SEATRU - Universiti Malaysia Terengganu embarked on a mission to save the sea turtles in Malaysia, especially those in Redang Island.

Tell us about the social innovator behind this idea.
The idea of the conservation program was first initiated by Dr Chan Eng Heng and Assoc. Prof. Liew Hock Chark. They were the founder and former project leaders of this unit and had come-up with all these brilliant ideas. Their patience, dedication and determination have been exemplary and in setting up SEATRU, they have made a difference in the survival of sea turtles in Malaysia.

In 2009, SEATRU was handed over to the new management team upon the retirement of the former project leader. Most of my team members are consists of young graduates. They are very determined and dedicated in conserving the sea turtles. They have also injected new ideas especially in our outreach campaigns. I believe SEATRU will be more success and progressive in the future.

How did you first hear about Changemakers?
Email from Changemakers

If through another, please provide the name of the organization or company

50 words or fewer

Source URL: https://www.changemakers.com/coasts/entries/sea-turtle-conservation-redang-island-terengganu#comment-0