

Overfishing around Mahoma Island



Issues:

- Collection of Giant Triton by local people
- Illegal trawling for tuna
- Collection of marine fish for the aquarium hobby

Introduction/Background Information:

- The local people, a group of diving women, regularly search the local barrier reef for Giant Triton to sell their shells to local tourists. The prolonged collection of the Giant Triton, a natural predator of the Crown of Thorns starfish, has resulted in an outbreak of these starfish. The starfish eat coral so are now destroying the local coral reef, causing an issue for the tourism industry, as it's been putting the tourist divers off.
- Illegal trawlers regularly come into the waters off Mahoma Island to fish for tuna. This has drastically reduced the breeding population of tuna, and as such, the local trawling fleet and tuna fishery are starting to lose money and could close down.
- The barrier reef also suffers as a result of the collection of marine fish from the reef for the global aquarium trade. Some of the attractive fish such as clownfish, anthias, tangs and angelfish as well as corals are collected from around the reef and sold to the Europe, USA and NICs in Asia. This has resulted in a huge decline in biodiversity and visible fish numbers. Divers have commented on this, and the hotels that rely on tourists visiting the reef are worried.

Key Terms:

- Giant Triton - a type of large sea snail that eats the Crown of Thorn's starfish.
- Crown of Thorn's starfish - a type of very dangerous, hard to kill, starfish that eat and destroy coral reefs.
- Trawler - a type of fishing vessel that uses large nets to catch fish.
- Aquarium - a large fish tank in someone's home.

Past Actions:

- The local government has tried to stop the spread of the Crown of Thorns starfish by collecting them using trained divers. However, the local female divers continue to collect the Giant Triton because it's part of their customs, a practice which has been handed down through the generations. The government did put a ban on the collection of Giant Triton, but it was just ignored.
- The government tries to send out the marine (water) police to stop the illegal trawlers from catching tuna off Mahoma Island. However, the fisherman ignore the police, or come up at night when they're not around. The problem is made worse as the government belief the police may be corrupt, and are accepting bribes from the illegal fishermen to leave their boats alone.
- No efforts have been made to control the sale of marine fish or corals as the business makes too much money for the island to stop it. However, the fish and corals are running out, so something will have to be done.