



Update 4 - North Andaman Tsunami Relief

6th January 2005

There are many other questions yet to be answered, and as time goes on, answers will emerge. For now, here is a brief strategic plan for the relief fund. Please let me know your thoughts, concerns, and insights.

BACKGROUND

There are three villages on Koh Phratong: Tapa Yoi, Bak Jok, and Tung Dap. Of these, Bak Jok and Tung Dap have been completely destroyed. Other severely affected villages in the area include Baan Talae Nok and Hat Praphat. The villagers have lost not only homes, but their fishing boats - the main source of food and income for most families. These families rely almost completely on the sea for their survival, there is very little farming, cottage industry, or tourism in the area. Apparently the tsunami victims all now have some access to food, drinking water, and clothing. However, they are all huddled in the temple, and will need better housing soon. There is also concern about the mid-term, and long-term well being of the villagers, as many of the aid agencies may pack up and leave soon. Presently, some needs of the communities are known, and other cannot be assessed until the chaos has subsided. In cooperation with long-time local residents, such as Lory Follador and Khun Sompot (of the Hat Praphat Research Station), we will identify and address the most pressing issues, with attention to the long term well-being of the communities.

PURPOSE

The Tsunami Relief Fund will provide assistance to tsunami impacted coastal communities on and near Koh Phratong. In doing so, it will emphasize a community-driven process, and cooperate with other parties involved in the relief effort in working toward the long term sustainability of these communities.

GOAL

Provide (short and mid-range) assistance to ensure that tsunami victims have access to housing, education, health, and can rebuild their livelihoods.

OBJECTIVES

1. Assessment (first priority, information is already being gathered): Assess which villages are most in need, which governmental and non-governmental groups are working in the area already, and what plans have been made by the communities. Determine priorities by meeting with diverse groups of local villagers.
2. Coordination and Cooperation: Work with all stakeholders, including government agencies and non-governmental relief groups, to promote effective, non-redundant aid in the villages. Continually assess what local needs are not being met, identify responsible parties, and provide solutions.
3. Housing: Assist with the short and long term housing needs for victims whose houses have been destroyed by the Tsunami
4. Livelihood: Work with families of those that have lost their livelihoods, including employment at the resorts and fishing. Assist with the procurement of long tail boats and fishing gear. If preliminary reports are correct, fish stocks may be depleted for some time, and economic alternatives to fishing may need to be explored by the communities. The relief fund would support this effort.

5. Education: Help to rebuild schools (if appropriate), provide educational materials, books, supplies, and possible grief counselors. Provide temporary teachers for education while schools are being rebuilt.

6. Health: Monitor health situation in the villages and temporary housing areas, ensure they are receiving adequate access.

Notes: It is not the intention of this relief fund to simply hand out money to people. Instead, the funds will be used to invest in the future of these communities, in a way that empowers local people to retain autonomy. Thailand is a complex country, and care must be taken so the fund can help people to help themselves.

For one month after I arrive in Thailand, I plan to cover all of my own expenses. After that, I would like money for simple accommodation and food, and expenses that are directly and solely related to the relief fund. At no time will I compensate myself for anything else.

Regards,
Bodhi