



Words from Bodhi, Relief Director

Well, the last week has been a whirlwind of activity – assessment, short-term support, meetings, family aid, vegetable and fruit delivery, and so on. North Andaman Tsunami Relief (as we are now called) seems to be serving a much needed role – that of an organization not encumbered by bureaucratic inefficiency. We have been able to fill several gaps in the relief efforts, needs that were not being met by the government or aid agencies. There is also a gap in communication between the Thai organizations and the international relief agencies that we have been able to bridge. I will get back to you soon with more details, but for now, I must squeeze in a few hours of sleep before tomorrow's busy day: buying fruit and veggies for the sea gypsies on Surin Islands, arranging for a short-term labor program in Baan Talae Nok, meeting with the workers after their first day of mangrove restoration at Hat Praphat, and distributing family aid in Tung Dap.

I would especially like to thank all of the people that have been instrumental in making our efforts possible: our caring donors, Lucy Dixon-Clarke (whose willingness to help full-time in the first days has made a huge difference), Dick Sandler, Richie Ralphsmith, Christine Kolisch, Craig Lovell, Greg Voelm, Jane Atkins, Forrest Melton, Lee Krasnow, Bert Gerbrands, and everyone else who has been kind enough to share your thoughts, concerns, and creative ideas to generate awareness across the world.

Accomplished to date:

- Delivered 200 kilos of food to Moken community and other villagers of Bak Joke (some will also be delivered to Koh Surin). Delivery included limes, morning glory green, pumpkins, okra, mustard greens, onions, garlic, fresh and dried chili, fish paste, shrimp paste, cooking oil, baby milk.
- Distributed 500 baht for emergency needs to every family in: Ko Ra (38 families), Had Sai Kaew (166 families), Baan Talae Nok (66 families), and Bak Jok (88 families), and 1000 baht to all Moken extended families with relatives on Surin Islands). Will distribute to Tung Dap (64 families) on 15th January.
- Assessment of status of villagers from Bak Jok, Koh Ra, Hat Praphat, Had Sai Kaew, and Baan Talae Nok, focusing on immediate needs, long-term goals, and under-represented groups (please refer to NATR Village Assessment Report). Focus groups facilitated by Khun Jittin, an experienced community development consultant, who donated two days of her time.
- Met repeatedly with the chiefs of all villages mentioned above as well as Tapa Yoi and Tung Dap, and spent many hours talking with villagers about their hopes, intentions, and unmet needs.
- Hosted meeting of NGOs (15 participants, Thai and international groups) working on relief efforts in the area – arranged for specific action to be taken on providing short term labor. Provided summary of meeting to all groups. Repeatedly called for international and local groups to provide aid to the people of Laem Naew.
- Procured two laptop computers, three mobile phones, and portable internet access (provided courtesy of Lost Horizons and Dick Sandler).
- Clearing of debris and salvaging of re-usable material from the mangrove channel that separates Hat Praphat and Had Sai Kaew. Will employ 30-40 workers (from displaced communities of Hat Praphat and Had Sai Kaew), and 3 supervisors for 2- 4 weeks
- Identified key local stakeholders and forged links with Thai NGOs (including Seub Foundation, TRF, Association of Thai Fisherfolk, and WFI), and university professors who have been working in the villages for many years. These groups have a very



good sense of villager priorities, and rely on a community-driven development process. Also serving as liaison between Thai NGOs and ARC – the group that is providing funding for the replacement of boats to 14 tsunami-affected villages on the Andaman Coast.

- Created Operational Plan.

Projects beginning in the next week (all projects are based on needs identified by villagers, other tentative projects also scheduled):

Establish an office in Kuraburi (will move in on Tuesday).

Provide regular supplies of fruit and vegetables to the Bak Jok tent camp and the Moken living on Koh Surin.

Hire work crew of 30 people from Tung Dap for coastal forest and mangrove replanting (supervised by TRF).

Buy weaving supplies for Moken women living in Bak Jok tent camp.

Provide baby chickens to families Baan Talae Nok for raising and future resale.

Provide mechanism for providing the financial support to all workers from Golden Buddha.

North Andaman Tsunami Relief (NATR)

We would like to introduce the new name for the relief fund: North Andaman Tsunami Relief (NATR).

The purpose of NATR will be to 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 long-term community and environmental sustainability. The goal is to provide (short and mid-range) assistance to ensure that tsunami victims have access to housing, education, healthcare, and can rebuild and/or diversify their livelihoods. NATR will coordinate the use of funds for reconstruction and rehabilitation projects for the seven villages in the North Andaman area.

To date, NATR has produced an Operational Plan and an initial Village Assessment Report, as well as some specific projects based on the findings. Through a series of focus group discussions with villagers, Bodhi and Dick, greatly assisted by Jumbo and Jittin, have managed to analyse the situation and needs of villagers and identify niche areas where NATR can assist. There is a great deal of help coming into the area from the government and international aid agencies, so NATR will initially focus on needs which require a rapid response, and later on, develop long term community and environmental sustainability programmes.

We would now like to call on the voluntary services of an experienced web designer so that all the updates and information about NATR can be posted for public information. We were thanked by a lecturer at Bangkok University that www.goldenbuddhabeach.com was her primary source of information during and immediately after the tsunami. Already this shows the value that NATR and GBB has been to the community, and we would like to thank everyone involved, particularly Dave Hecker and Forrest Melton.

Volunteers

To date, we have had over 60 offers of volunteers. This is fantastic and we would like to thank everyone so much for their help and kind wishes. We envision that the voluntary work will take place over a series of three stages:

Stage 1 has already begun with needs identified in three main areas: the affected villages, the administrative centre in Kuraburi and Golden Buddha Beach. Bak Jok residents are keen to have help in clearing the rubble left by the tsunami and other villages may require supervisors for short-term labour projects. Golden Buddha Beach has requested for the assistance of about ten people on the island, to help with supervision, rubble clearing and the production of inventories. We have also established a temporary office at Kuraburi, on the mainland, for the administration of NATR and clerical staff are needed at this base. The administration of NATR will now take place separate from the Lost Horizons office in Bangkok. In addition, we are hoping to get the immediate assistance of Thai/English speakers to help with liaison at village and donor meetings.

At this stage of on-going development, we need self-motivated, hard-working people who don't mind roughing it for a while. There is some electricity, but no drinking water as yet on the island and we are not yet sure what is available in terms of accommodation. The accommodation in Kuraburi will be about 400B a night, which you will be expected to pay.

Stage 2 will focus on the reconstruction of the villages and the resort at Golden Buddha Beach. The government is helping with the reconstruction of houses for villagers, but NATR is able to identify gaps in the government response where we are able to provide immediate assistance, by financing projects and through the expertise of volunteers. We have had offers from a number of skilled carpenters who may be able to assist in boat building as well as the reconstruction of buildings on GBB, and we will also need other skilled plumbers, electricians etc.

Stage 3 will look at the longer term requirements of the villagers, so volunteer help from people with a background in community-driven development, environmental restoration and the production and distribution of handicrafts will be a great help.

Please continue to email if you or your friends are interested in helping out over the coming months. And if we do not reply, kindly resend as we have been having some email problems. Don't give up – we really value your support!

With love
Bodhi and Lucy