



Update 13

North Andaman Tsunami Relief

15th May 2005

Bodhi's Ramblings

Having grown up in one of the world's last absolute monarchies, I never imagined that I would meet royalty anywhere but Nepal. So, I was reasonably surprised when the local district officials dropped by the NATR office to announce that we had a meeting with Thailand's favorite Princess, HRH Mahachakri Sirindhorn. Apparently, our repeated visits and close cooperation with local officials had been noticed, and NATR was chosen to present a gift to the Princess. Despite the pouring monsoon rain, the ankle-deep mud, and a last minute etiquette lesson, everything went well, and the Princess has agreed to support our handicraft programs.



Exciting news: I am proud to announce that NATR now has six full-time Thai staff members helping us to serve tsunami-affected communities – Iang, Meth, Hying, Touch, Lak and Nan. The presence of dedicated hard working local staff allows NATR to implement our programs much more efficiently and effectively.

I was speaking with a reporter the other day, and we had a long discussion on the importance of non-governmental aid. With corrupt officials levying up to a 40% 'commission' on any government payment to tsunami victims, the effectiveness of government aid has been seriously compromised. Thus, the non-profit groups in the area are seen as the mainstay of morally credible, practical-minded tsunami relief. Not to say that they are perfect, but the conversation did reconfirm my notion that compassionate, equity-minded aid is extremely important.

We have been continuing to hear from our friends across the world, including the many schools that are part of the NATR family, and we here at the Kuraburi office feel honored to be surrounded by such an amazing international community.

The Visit of HRH Princess Mahachakri Sirindhorn

The highlight of the past week must be our meeting with the second daughter of the King of Thailand. Despite the monsoonal rain, she traveled to many parts of Phang-Nga and Ranong provinces to see the tsunami-impacted communities. NATR was very lucky to be able to meet her in Baan Talae Nok as well as at Bang Bek, where we gave her gifts from our soap project and Moken boat project, respectively. Despite three hours of waiting in the rain, the NATR team was extremely happy to be recognized by such a humble and truly regal human being. It was a wonderful recognition of the work we have been carrying out in the area, as well as an opportunity to plan how we want our work to unfold in the future. (Please find a PDF attached of our representation to the Princess, which includes details on our soap project, Moken boat project, and proposals about the Moken and a North Andaman Special Tourism Triangle).



Programmes

- The **Community Centre in Bak Jok** is rapidly taking shape. As the people of Bak Jok face an uncertain future, including a lack of clarity on permanent housing, their sense of community is fraying. To counter this apathy with a sense of fun and unity, NATR has rented a building and



helped to furnish it. The centre will be used for meetings, medical services, English lessons, workshops and other community activities.

- The **Summer Camp at Tung Dap**, on Koh Phratong island, was a great success. The children took part in a variety of activities: art, handicrafts, English lessons, and games and sports, whilst also learning the value of teamwork. The camp was a great way to engage the children during their school holidays, keeping them physically and mentally active, whilst also having an excellent time.



- The school term has begun in **Laem Naew** and the new school boat is being put to good use. Although the generator we supplied is currently awaiting minor repairs, all the fishing equipment has been assembled, the wood deliveries are complete and all around the community, boats are seen under repair. NATR has recently conducted evaluations of our projects, where villagers talked openly about both the positive and negative effect of aid in the community. The village agreed on future educational scholarship support and continued boat repair as their main priorities.



- In **Tung Nang Dam**, we have helped to replace the fishing equipment and fish farms, 'krachang'. We are also supporting individuals who are taking up new livelihoods, such as vegetable farming and a metal repair business.

Website

NATR's new and improved website is taking shape rapidly. This will soon become our principle tool for keeping our supporters up-to-date with all our achievements and forthcoming projects. We would like to thank the experts who have worked for hours on this website – Bonnie Doyle and Mary McCarthy for linking the website with the database, as well as Dave Hecker and all the team at Rev Media for the design and hosting of the site. We could not have done this without you! Please check the website address www.northandamantsunamirelief.com. If the old information comes up, try clearing your cache by pressing Control and Refresh simultaneously!



Upcoming Programmes

We have been developing several new mid-term projects over the last few weeks: an Educational and Vocational Training Programme as well as the Special North Andaman Tourism Triangle. The educational programme will get started within the next two weeks, with a mobile unit teaching English and Environmental Education in some of the villages we have been working with. In the future, we are also planning to offer workshops and sponsorship for vocational training so that community members can explore supplementary or alternative livelihoods if they do not want to return to fishing

...which brings us on to volunteers...

Volunteers



It is with great sadness that we say goodbye to Shannon Binns, Chris Gish and Sarah Johns this week. They have been very dedicated members of NATR for the last 3 months and will leave behind many friends in the villages.

Our new volunteer needs are as follows:

- Marketing expertise – particularly for handicraft products as well as community based natural resource management/eco-tourism
- TEFL trained teachers – to develop a curriculum for our education unit which can then be replicated in all the villages
- A website expert (familiar with asp scripting, MS Access database and website design) to help us continuously upgrade and improve the information we are putting online.