



**Update 15**

**29<sup>th</sup> August 2005**

### **Bodhi's Reflections**

The last eight months have been a whirlwind of tsunami relief. Often, there is little time in the day to reflect on the deeper significance of NATR's work, or the heroic effort of local people to get their lives back on track. There is even less time to reflect on the personal meaning of our work with local communities.

Many of NATR's staff and supporters lost friends and family in the tsunami. Our daily work is full of constant reminders of those that died, and the wave that took them. To be sure, this can be painful, but there are also positive aspects of having to face our loss each and every day. Often, people heal through self-nurturing and disengagement from the more troubling aspects of life. Here at NATR, we are exploring another way of healing – through service. By serving those that share in our losses, we are able to mitigate the suffering within ourselves. In choosing to help others to heal, there is an inevitable healing process within – a subtle transformation of despair into acceptance and then hope. We are discovering together that working for the greater good can transform sobs of grief into tears of compassion and lighten a heavy heart.

For the next two months I will be taking a much needed vacation to visit friends and family in America. During this time, NATR will be fortunate enough to have Lucy Dixon-Clarke at the helm. Her graceful cheer and limitless capacity to serve the local communities has been an inspiration for all of us, and will be well used in the coming weeks. As I depart for my holiday, I would again like to thank the NATR community all over the world for your interest, support, and care.

### **Project Updates**

#### **Paper and Card Making**

What started out as a small project at our Bak Jok Community Centre to make thank you cards for our donors, has turned into another potential income-generating activity. The creativity displayed by the women has been so impressive that NATR now has orders for the cards at gift shops in the area. We are putting together a catalogue of cards, especially Christmas Cards, so if you would like to order some, please get in touch with us (samples attached). In the near future, all the products produced in the local communities will be displayed on our handicrafts website.



#### **Community Empowerment, Vocational Training and ACE Tourism (EVT)**

Our EVT programme was publicly launched this month. All NATR's EVT staff and members from the local communities, took part in a workshop, in order to explore issues of community empowerment and community-based tourism. Community members were able to discuss openly how to make tourism work for them and develop their own long-term visions. As a follow-up, they were asked to take photos of the features in the villages that they most value, and will meet again in September to produce these into a brochure.



English lessons have also started, both at the Bak Jok Community Centre and in Tung Nang Dam. These are fun, collaborative, events which focus predominantly on the vocabulary that will be most critical for community-based tourism. They will also provide a venue for the introduction of Environmental and Tsunami Education and materials have been acquired for these elements of the EVT Programme.

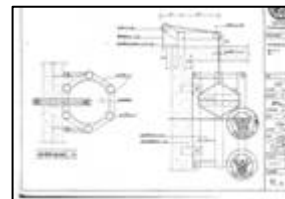
## Entrepreneurial Training

Three recent training events have been coordinated for our handicrafts programme members to give them skills in business management, marketing, accounting etc. NATR's ultimate aim is to see the handicrafts projects as totally self-sufficient entities where the members are able to produce, market and sell their own goods without external assistance. To this end, NATR has been running a weekly training for the Soap Project to give members confidence in keeping production and sales records, while also looking at packaging and marketing ideas. Ranong Community College visited Ban Talae Nok to present a three-day entrepreneurial training and representatives from each of the handicrafts projects attended a week long seminar in Khao Lak which aimed to give them the skills to run their own businesses. The attendees reported that these were both very motivating and well-targeted training events.



## Water Tower

NATR has taken on a large-scale project to coordinate the construction of a 10,000 litre water tower at Tung Dap, on Koh Phratong. This village was hard hit by the tsunami, so the water tower will also be built to double up as an evacuation tower. Land has been acquired, architectural plans are being finalized and construction should begin in October.



## Dog Castration Programme



With the dog population on Koh Phratong multiplying rapidly since their owners left the island, NATR requested the assistance of the Phang Nga Veterinary Office to carry out a neutering programme. This professional team succeeded in castrating over forty dogs in two days, but will need to return in a few months time to carry on the work, if we can secure funding for the programme.

## Launch of Naucrates' Education Centre

We attended a fun event on Koh Phratong to launch the construction of Ban Tao, the new Naucrates Education Centre. The place was filled with school children, who immediately got their noses into the story and reference books on wildlife of Thailand. Speeches were made outlining the purpose of the project, and the key was officially handed over to the headmaster of the Tapa Yoi School.



## Volunteers

This month has given us a double dose of sad goodbyes, as both Jo Birrell and Andrew Witt (along with his dog, TD), left for Canada and the States, respectively. Jo took responsibility for the continuing success of the Soap Programme while Andrew is the brains behind our sophisticated accounting system. They have both been such an integral part of NATR's development over the last 6 months that it is hard to imagine daily life without them – they will be sorely missed.

Fortunately, we have filled many of our needs with the arrival of three extraordinarily adaptable volunteers; Mithulan Jegapragasan, Ben Dwyer and Shamus Mossop. Mith has already got to work on coordinating and marketing the Moken Boats Cooperative. Ben has taken over the reins of the other handicrafts (soap and cards), as well as demonstrating his abilities in English teaching and Environmental Education. Shamus is working together with the handicrafts team to produce a handicrafts website and will also be coordinating village construction projects in Tung Dap and Ban Talae Nok.



The search is still on for someone with accounting skills, particularly with confidence in using QuickBooks, who could stay with NATR for a minimum of 4 months. Please contact us if this appeals to you.

If you do not wish to be on the Update mailing list, please contact us at [relieffund@inet.co.th](mailto:relieffund@inet.co.th)