



## Update 16

29<sup>th</sup> September 2005

### **Lucy's Little Bit**

In early September, we were woken up, shaken in our beds by another earthquake. Everyone came into the office, checked the television, looked up relevant sites on the internet and called the Phuket Emergency Centre. There was no information available and the Emergency Centre phone was jammed. In Baan Talae Nok, where there is no mobile phone coverage and the public phone (the only landline) was broken, the whole community ran uphill to the evacuation centre to wait for information. The chief drove towards the main road, where his phone works, and called the local government – but no-one had any information to reassure them that there was no tsunami danger.

The tsunami warning system still relies essentially on personal contacts – there is no specific organisation in this area where information is quickly and easily available and tsunami panics are a regular feature of life. This has led to our renewed commitment to provide tsunami education, which will include phone numbers of relevant information centres. The community we work with in Laem Naew has commented on how much the sea has changed – the high tide this month flooded many houses and washed all the fish out of the *krachang* (fish farms). It has never been like this before, and people are understandably frightened.

On a more positive note, we are constantly amazed by the generosity and continuing support of our donors. This month we have almost succeeded in securing enough assistance for the first two years of our Educational Scholarship programme. We have also received funding for the soap project in Baan Talae Nok, and the completion of the BTN Community Centre, the dog control project and the recycle bicycles. Huge thanks to everyone – without you, our work and the post-tsunami recovery in this area would certainly not be as effective.

## **Project Updates**

### **Community-Based Tourism Collaboration with REST**

The serendipity that is part of life at NATR, has been on our side again this month. After writing the proposal for *Community Empowerment, Vocational Training and ACE Tourism*, and preparing our Community Education programme, we discovered that a Thai organisation, Responsible Ecological Social Tours (REST) was interested in working in the North Andaman area to look at the potential for Community-Based Tourism (CBT). Their project has been funded by the International Labour Organisation as part of their *Post-Tsunami Livelihood Recovery in the Tourism Sector* programme. We are now working together in the communities of Tung Nang Dam, Baan Talae Nok and Pak Trium to evaluate the potential for CBT.



Over the next three months, NATR and other members of the working group (Raks Thai, Wild Animal Rescue and CODI) will provide the communities with English education, guide training, environmental education and logistical support. From 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> December, there will be a pilot tourist trip. We have five places available, so if any of our supporters would be interested in joining this trip, please email NATR straight away.

NATR staff attended workshops in the villages and had the opportunity to explore the potential tourist attractions in each area. Baan Talae Nok, for example, offers boat trips through the mangroves, forest hikes to a waterfall, a pristine beach, snorkelling around the

islands and the soap workshop where tourists can purchase locally made herbal soaps. A group of volunteers, organized through Go Differently in the UK, visited us to help with the handicrafts programmes and to test out BTN's ACE tourism potential. Sadly, the gusting monsoon washed them back into Kuraburi after a frightening night, rocking in the stilt houses... but their feedback was very useful in advising on the way forward for the local tourism. When the weather has settled, and the ACE tourism programme is more established, we will let everyone know, as the message we get, again and again, is that Thailand is keen to welcome tourists back to this region.

### **Sense of Place Workshop**

As a follow up to our earlier EVT workshop, and part of our Community Empowerment programme, we organized a successful activity where community members gathered in the NATR office to compile a booklet about their villages. They had taken photos and collected information about the history, culture and economic activities in their communities and the workshop gave them the opportunity to input all this information onto computer and publish a document. This will be translated into English and offered as a bi-lingual document to visitors.



### **Community Education Programme**



This programme weaves together four strands: English, computer skills, environment and tsunami education. The lessons take place in the communities and are therefore accessible to all. The curriculum is also adjusted to meet community needs. English lessons have continued and are about to be expanded to Baan Talae Nok, Pak Trium and Laem Naew and computer lessons are very popular at the Bak Jok Community Centre. Environmental education is set to start during October and we have been carrying out research on the most appropriate way to provide tsunami education.

### **Christmas Cards for Sale**

Our hand-made cards are now available for sale. If you would like to purchase an assorted selection of 20 cards, the cost is US\$29 or £20 including postage and packaging. The cards are produced by the women of Bak Jok, on hand-made paper and have been much admired by everyone who has seen them.



### **Educational Scholarships**

Having interviewed over 300 children, we have finally selected almost 100 families to receive long-term scholarships. Bak Jok, still in a temporary camp nine months after the tsunami, is receiving the majority of our support. The interview process explored the interests and ambitions of each child, as well as what they would like to contribute to their community. In addition, we were able to discover what work each family was currently involved in and whether they had chosen to return to their traditional livelihood or explore new income-generating opportunities. An interesting outcome for NATR, was to find out that the community members involved in our handicrafts programmes are now able to match their previous income, and some are looking to take on these activities in the long-term, and not just as a monsoon season alternative to fishing.

### **Koh Surin**

NATR was invited to attend the Pilot Andaman Project Meeting to explore the issues surrounding the Moken. This indigenous group continues to receive a great deal of attention, but some of the 'help' is actually having negative consequences on the community. The working group is supporting a school on Koh Surin and planning an appropriate curriculum which takes the Moken culture into account. In addition, it is hoping to prepare a Code of Conduct for donor groups who visit the village. As soon as the

monsoon comes to an end, NATR is planning a trip to the islands to re-establish the handicrafts programme and carry out some environmental education activities, particularly with the children.

In addition, we have been restoring two Moken kabang (traditional houseboats) at the Kuraburi pier with the help of local Moken craftsmen. The smaller boat is seaworthy and may be able to return to the Surins, while the larger one is being found a home at a local museum. There are plans for a Moken cultural centre to be established on Koh Phratong, but this may take some time.

### **The Infamous Tung Nang Dam Bridges**



In Tung Nang Dam, the bridges have become hilarious points of discussion. The main bridge to the village is now known as Saphan Phylippa since one of our volunteers fell through it, into the mangrove sludge, on her way back from teaching English. The tsunami and the monsoon season have reduced the wooden structure to a treacherous state and community members realise the necessity of replacing it before they can market their village for tourism. Phylippa's contribution as an advocate for bridge repair will long be remembered as we have now received funding and secured approval from the Department of Marine and Coastal Resources.

### **Sports Activities with the Community at Bak Jok**

Over the last month, we have been challenging our community members to a variety of sporting events – and have been severely thrashed on most occasions! The football match saw Bak Jok destroy NATR 4:1. We clawed back our pride at Ping Pong, with Mith winning and Touch taking 3<sup>rd</sup> position. Next up was badminton - a great social occasion attended both by community members from Bak Jok and Tung Nang Dam. NATR made it through the first round, but no further! These events have turned out to be such fun occasions, and the amount of laughter is testament to the strong relationship we have with everyone from the communities. The challenge is set to continue... maybe even with cricket!



### **Volunteers**

Mith has already reached the end of his time with NATR. He fitted in so effortlessly that it is hard to believe he was only with us for 3 months. He was responsible for marketing and entrepreneurial training for the Moken boat group, English teaching at Tung Nang Dam and financial management. The community members with whom he worked so appreciated his enthusiasm and kind heart that he has been showered with gifts. Come back soon!