



Update 18

30th November 2005

Bodhi's Ramblings

December is upon us. The final month of the year, it is also a month of transition. The monsoon rains lasted through November, and it seems that as the skies clear, the sunlight shines not only upon the North Andaman, but is also beginning to illuminate the choices communities must now make. These are choices about how to move forward and where to invest time and energy, choices about returning to old forms of livelihood or exploring new ones - decisions that can be made only by the tsunami-affected communities themselves. As such, NATR has spent a lot of time figuring out how to help villagers without unduly influencing the choices they make for their future. And we have realized that our strength lies not in making decisions for people, but enabling them to make the decisions themselves.

In these updates, we have often spoken of our community empowerment and education. These programs are the foundation of our next year's work. In order to move from disaster to development, however, the time has come to implement more serious skills development programs with accompanying employment opportunities. At the end of this update you will find a chart that outlines NATR's work for 2006. As you will see, it shows how our specific projects are an extension of our development philosophy: community-driven empowerment and education that allows for effective vocational training and community business development.

As this will likely be the last update before the new year, I want to again extend my humblest gratitude to all of NATR's friends and supporters. Sometimes I wish that all of you who read this update could see what we do here. The joy that we feel as we start each work day. The smiles returning to the faces around us. The satisfaction of seeing a community unite for a better future. To be sure, there is still much work to be done, but it is good work, and the path ahead is clearer every day.

And personally, I would like to thank you for giving me and the NATR gang the opportunity of a lifetime – to serve with our hearts and souls, to give until it hurts, to know the beauty that can rise from despair. Thanks for being a part of this.

Project Updates

Staff Retreat

The retreat, held at Golden Buddha Beach, was a perfect time to reflect on the past year of disaster relief and plan for the future ahead. The retreat program, with almost every member taking a facilitating role, represented our commitment to knowledge transfer, where we all have valuable skills and information to impart. We alternated between experiential learning, team-building activities and intensive brainstorming and planning sessions for our forthcoming programs such as ACE Expert Training, the Teaching Resource and Education Center and ACE Tourism Development and Marketing. The process renewed NATR's commitment to the North Andaman communities for the year ahead and set out a clear plan of action.



Left to Right: Bodhi, Iang, Charlotte, Lak, Lucy, Annalise, Jessica, Phylippa, Georgi, Jo, Tuch, Meth, Ben

Trail development in Tung Nang Dam

In preparation for the Community Based Tourism Pilot Tour (December 3-5), NATR in coordination with REST (Responsible Ecological Social Tours) facilitated a Nature Trail exploration day. This involved 3 separate tours in Tung Nang Dam.



- 1) Mountain Trekking
- 2) Beach and Wetland Ecosystems
- 3) Boat Tour: Mangrove and Island Exploration

The model of Tung Nang Dam was used as a motivating focal point in the feedback discussions, which was really great to see. This activity provided an amazing overview of the biodiversity within Tung Nang Dam, and laid a solid foundation that will be used during the Pilot Tour.

Guide Training in Hat Praphat

This 5 day training course was run by REST and provided a great foundation for the future of CBT and ACE tourism in this region. Our staff learned different types of facilitation skills which NATR will be able to use for future guide training. They spoke about the meaning of tourism and brainstormed many ideas. This is very much in line with NATR's philosophy that information and knowledge provides the tools for better decision making. By understanding the complexities of tourism growth in this area, the guides are in a far better position to make the decisions that are right for their communities. During the course, REST gave a great introduction and presented the guides with an important and extremely useful CBT framework.



Community Based Tourism (CBT) Workshop in Koh Yao Noi

As part of this preparation and knowledge building process for the development of community driven tourism, villagers from Bak Jok, Laem Naew, Tung Nang Dam and 3 NATR staff members, traveled south to the island of Koh Yao Noi, to participate in a CBT workshop organized by REST. It was a unique opportunity to experience first hand a working model of CBT and to meet a community who has successfully managed CBT on their island for 10 years. It provided a forum for discussing the advantages and challenges of CBT, as well as an exploration into the practicalities of managing tourism in a way that brings maximum benefits to the community and minimum impact on the environment and traditional way of life. The workshop included sessions on waste management strategies, community planning and organization, and homestays.

English

On November 23rd, Georgi and Annalise awarded 13 members of Tung Nang Dam certificates of achievement for completing 25 hours of English lessons. The small ceremony took place at a special food festival for which we had practiced appropriate phrases and vocabulary. These women are enthusiastic, dedicated and motivated students. They now have the skills to have basic conversations with tourists who come to their island. Many are continuing another 25 hours of study. Teaching English at Tung Nang Dam has helped to build the English curriculum that will serve as a model in our ACE Expert program.



Selected Village Updates

Bak Jok Community Centre

The vision for the Centre was to empower the members of Bak Jok Village by providing the technical and institutional support necessary for them to take the lead in their own recovery. This vision was realized with unprecedented success. The Centre served multiple purposes, including a place to provide: educational programs, livelihood assistance, healthcare, environmental education and a meeting point and gateway into the community for NATR and other aid organizations.



Following the visit of Princess Sirindhorn in October, the people of Bak Jok have now begun the move into their new community in Ban Bek. This represents a whole new beginning as the villagers finally move out of their temporary housing and into their new permanent homes. This also represents an ending for NATR as the community centre has now been vacated.

Since its launch in June 2005, the Bak Jok Community Service Center has succeeded in addressing a comprehensive set of medium-term community needs. NATR plans to continue working in cooperation with the villagers of Bak Jok in order to provide appropriate ongoing support.

Tung Dap Recycle Bicycle Program

Fourteen Thai Moken children from the isolated tsunami affected Community and School of Tung Dap were waiting in great anticipation at their Village Pier last week for the arrival of the Thailand Cycling Club (TCC) with NATR to deliver and repair bicycles. Considering that the school is 2 kilometers from their village and most of the children were having to walk this each day, there was great excitement from the entire community when we finally arrived with the bikes and professional TCC mechanics.



We gathered together outside the Community Cooperative Shop and five TCC members worked tirelessly on assembling the new bicycles. A number of the Students and Community members watched attentively, and further helped to grease components, connect together pedals and seat parts during the assembling process. At the same time the younger group of students who had already received second hand bikes from the TCC relaxed on their new treadlies, under the pleasant shade of a cashew nut tree, and played happily in the bike boxes.

The following school day, students were up at 6.30am riding their bicycles up and down the one cement road throughout the otherwise sandy Tung Dap setting. The bike program has been a great success and we hope that the students have learned the possibilities of recycle and repair, but most importantly the value of a good grease and oil in maintaining their new mode of transportation to school and beyond.

Baan Talae Nok

One of the biggest challenges NATR has faced in their work with Baan Talae Nok has been outreach and communication. The village is approximately 37km away from Kuarburi, therefore careful planning and door to door visits are very important with all of our programs, meetings and outreach in Baan Talae Nok. The fact that they do not have mobile phone reception anywhere within 5km of the village means that information and warnings are extremely difficult to convey to these villagers. Therefore, NATR is extremely pleased to announce that Orange (a mobile phone service provider) has agreed to erect a mobile phone tower in Baan Talae Nok. This represents a huge step forward in communications for this village.

Visitors and Volunteers

This month we say a sad goodbye to Georgi Marshall. For the last 9 months, Georgi has been an inspiring, joyful, and tremendously effective program coordinator. She has exemplified the effectiveness of cross-cultural development work. Her ability to speak Thai, and her warm, attentive personality endeared Georgi to all of the communities and people with whom she worked. Her amazing ability to straddle the divide between East and West has meant that communities have felt comfortable to share their ideas, visions and concerns with her. She has been a great friend, incredibly motivating and driving force at NATR, we wish her the best of luck in all that awaits her in this next year.



The North Andaman Coast has been receiving increasing media attention and interest as the one year anniversary of the Tsunami approaches. For example, Yahoo.com came to visit NATR to research the lifestyle of the Moken and the Baan Talae Nok Soap Collective was featured in the Bangkok Post on November 15th. Also, BBC Radio Five Live are making a programme about people who remained in Thailand to help and volunteer in the aftermath of the Tsunami and have interviewed a number of our British volunteers. Tune in on the 26th of December from 9-10pm. The programme can also be downloaded from their website at <http://www.bbc.co.uk/fivelive>.

2006 Projects Overview

After the staff retreat, NATR agreed to focus on the following projects for the year ahead. We are currently seeking funding for many of these programs, if any of them resonate with you please get in touch.

<i>North Andaman Tsunami Relief – 2006 Projects Overview, by type</i>			
Community Empowerment	Community Education	Vocational Training	Business Development
Beautification & Waste Management	English for Communication	Guide Training (with REST)	Community Tourism Development and Promotion
Community Planning Workshops: SP Book	Computer Skills	Business Training (with KIA)	Tour Desk and Handicraft Shop
CBT Development: Village Trail and Model Building	Tsunami Info & Education	Community Dev. and Tourism Management	Small Business Management
Local Radio Production	Koh Phratong Mini-Olympics	English, Computer & CBT Training	Handicrafts Marketing & Sales
CBT Development: Tools for Tourism	Long-term Scholarships	On-site experience & Community Service	Handicraft Design and Production

Key:

Blue: Project already underway

Purple: Project scheduled to begin in January/February