



Update 19

January 10th 2006

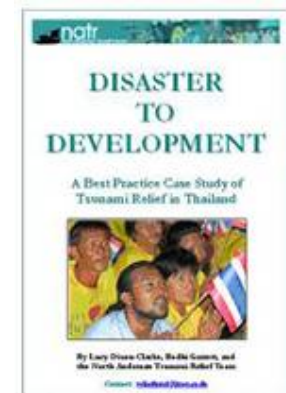
Bodhi's Ramblings

It has been one year since the tsunami, one year since the waves that have changed our collective lives. So much has happened in that time. Many have suffered greatly, but in the last twelve months, many have rebuilt—looking to the future with practical determination. The recovery process here in Thailand has been greatly assisted by the outpouring of support from across the world, including many kind-hearted volunteers who came to offer their blood, sweat, and tears. One of these volunteers, an American-Thai woman named Apple, returned to California to find that her teenage son has been diagnosed with bone cancer. NATR staff have started a collection to help Apple with the high costs of treatment, and we welcome anyone who would like to help out.

One Year Report – Disaster to Development

Just before the New Year, we sent out the final draft of our annual report. The report not only describes our work, but also provides an in-depth analysis of our successes and challenges, along with personal anecdotes from villagers.

NATR's Annual Report is now available to view at www.northandamantsunamirelief.com.



Project Updates

Community-based Tourism (CBT) Pilot Tour

Over the last five months, NATR has been running the pilot phase of a project that explores the potential for tourism to help in tsunami recovery and community empowerment. To conclude the pilot phase, the villagers of Tung Nang Dam, Ban Talae Nok and Ban Pak Trium welcomed over 50 guests from around the world into their villages. The 2 day tour offered a wonderful opportunity for the participants to learn about the lifestyle of these traditional fishing communities and their inspirational recovery from the tsunami. Guests joined villagers in daily activities such as squid fishing, cooking and making soaps, as well as snorkeling on the coral reefs, exploring the mangroves, and jungle treks to hidden waterfalls. After sunsets on the beach, the evenings were spent hearing stories from the village elders.



After the tour our field team conducted both one to one interviews and focus group discussions to find out from villagers how they evaluated the experience and what potential they see for the future of CBT in their community. Interestingly, both guests and participants often shared an interpretation of the obstacles that communities face. The consensus indicates that the villagers need support in developing skills for tourism (such as English, tour planning and guiding) and help in delivering meaning to tourism experiences.

The pilot phase of NATR's tourism project has demonstrated the viability of CBT as a source of income that can help these communities maintain their traditional way of life in a rapidly changing world. With the amazing hospitality and enthusiasm of the villagers as a solid foundation, NATR will be providing the further skills necessary to ensure success.

Photo shoot

NATR recently hosted a professional photographer, who produced a stunning compilation of photographs for Community-Based tourism promotion. Many thanks to Craig Lovell - his creative eye and sensitive approach has resulted in a collection of images which capture the “jai dee” (warm hearted) spirit of local villagers, the natural majesty of the North Andaman coast, and the great variety of activities on offer to visitors to the region, including mountain biking, kayaking, nature treks, environmental conservation, snorkeling and diving.



Koh Phra Thong Mini Olympics

On December 16th the children, teenagers and community members of Koh Phra Thong were brought together to enjoy a day of fun and challenging sporting events. The day began with a parade from the village centre to the activity site outside the newly built school in the village of Tapa Yoi. Activities included: three legged race, egg and spoon, shot put, long jump, long distance race, 50 and 100 meter run, sack racing, watermelon smashing and many more. The intermission was a football showdown between the teenagers from the villages of Tung Dap and Tapa Yoi. The smaller community of Tung Dap won the match 3-2. It was an action packed game from start to finish that had the crowd in an uproar. The day ended with a prize and awards ceremony. NATR hoped that this sports day



would serve as a way to increase confidence, self esteem, leadership skills and community spirit. It was a great success and NATR plans to host more community sporting events in the coming year.

Community Learning and Day Care Centre Opening (Ban Talae Nok)

The night before Christmas Eve Ban Tale Nok celebrated the opening of the Community Learning and Day Care Center - built, furnished, and staffed by NATR. Villagers of all ages came to share the occasion which was marked with a sumptuous feast. The local Imam (Muslim priest) blessed the building, the children danced, the boys played on the new computers, and presents were exchanged. The beautiful glass fronted building looked stunning, decorated with handmade garlands. Two newly installed computers were a source of great excitement amongst youngsters and adults alike. The Center will be a place of learning for all age groups, offering English and Computer lessons, community tourism training, handicraft production, and a child care service.



Training Resources and Education Centre (TREC)

December saw the official acquisition of the Kuraburi Training centre. TREC will ensure that the benefits of tsunami relief work done to date will continue to contribute to the long-term stability of the communities of the North Andaman. Each village is at a different stage of development and we have always prided ourselves in assessing their individual needs. The Centre will allow NATR to continue to provide a varied program of educational and income-generating activities. It will act as a handicrafts workshop and craft store as well as a learning centre for English, computing and business skills, environmental education, guide training and marketing. We anticipate a large amount of community involvement and ownership of the Centre and hope that it can serve these communities efficiently and effectively. The Grand Opening is scheduled for February 9th, 2006.

Handicraft Cooperatives

The Cooperatives continue to grow and expand. The Handmade Paper Collective in particular, has shown great professionalism and attention to detail, particularly during the mayhem of last-minute Christmas orders. They are an extremely motivated group who are always willing and ready to learn. They have also expressed great interest in moving to TREC, where they can set up their workshop, take advantage of the English, computer, marketing and business training available and, of course have their products on display in the craft store.

The Handmade Paper Collective voluntarily decided to attend the One Year Anniversary Memorial in Khao Lak along with the Herbal Soap Collective (**Ban Talae Nok**) and the Moken Boat Cooperative (**Bak Jok**). With many people in attendance the groups felt it was an appropriate opportunity to show the positive developments of the last year.

We also have a beautiful, but limited selection of Valentines Day cards available and ready to post. See the next page for a quick look at the new designs.

Visitors and Volunteers



Annalise Blum concluded her 3 month stay at NATR. While here, Annalise was an incredible English teacher who both taught lessons and significantly expanded our curriculum. Her experience as a TESOL-certified teacher and as a dedicated social activist allowed her to easily connect with villagers. Annalise's ability to continue with her teaching despite the scheduling challenges posed by the holy month of Ramadan was inspiring to all.

With much sadness, we bid farewell to Lucy Dixon-Clarke. As the co-founder of NATR there are no words to express how much Lucy has done for local communities since the tsunami. Her varying roles have included director, project manager, fundraising, veggie delivery, skills trainer, counselor, and best friend. Many tears were shed at Lucy's last staff meeting, but Lucy's ability to inspire and transfer capacity have left NATR with the skills to continue in her absence. Although we will miss her terribly, Lucy's magic is needed the world over – rock on Lu-lu!



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