



Update 28

October 1st, 2006

Help NATR from the comfort of your own home:

All of these are part-time endeavors and would take at most a couple of hours a week.

For details see the bottom of the update, or email us...

- **Website marketing promotion**
- **Help generate Christmas Card sales for the Bak Jok Card making Group**

Bodhi's Ramblings

We have received a number of emails expressing concern for the recent military coup. The coup, however, has had very little effect on our work – less effect than the holidays mentioned below, in fact. For the most part, Southern Thailand had very few supporters of the recently deposed prime minister. Since NATR's mission focuses on community-level development, and since I am not a native son of Thailand, it is not our place to comment on the benefits or drawbacks of the coup. Instead, we will continue to help local villages strengthen themselves, so they may advocate for whatever form of government they see fit.



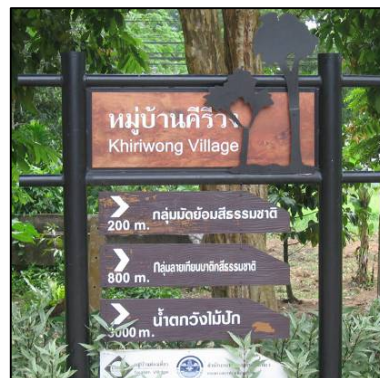
Muslim Men Praying

Ramadan began in September. One month of fasting during the day – no food from sunrise to sunset. Ramadan begins when the crescent moon comes closest to the morning star (hence the use of the “moon and star” symbol to represent Islam). It is a period when the Muslim community focuses on the spiritual side of life. Here in Southern Thailand, September is also time for the Buddhist *Duan Sip* festival – a day of honoring family ancestors. People take these holidays seriously, and NATR has had to adjust our work schedule accordingly – canceling community meetings, delaying some of our projects, and adjusting our study tours. While it may be tempting to see these challenges as an inconvenience, they are in fact a part of what makes living here so enjoyable. Work, development, and progress are not always the primary emphasis of life. People here have developed the rituals and ceremonies that allow them to nurture not only their physical wellbeing, but their belief system as well. I think this is a practice that many in the western world would do well to adopt as an antidote to the hectic pace of life, and the rampant consumerism that seems to define our daily existence.

Project Updates

ACE Expert Vocational Training

In September, NATR staff and the ACE Experts embarked on a three day study tour of the Kiriwong community in nearby Nakhorn Si Thammarat province. Seventeen years ago, Kiriwong was devastated by a flood, and nearly the whole community was destroyed. The residents banded together and, with very little external assistance, created a cooperative model of community development that allowed them to rebuild and thrive. They created a more robust economy, forming several handicraft cooperatives and a community based tourism program, along with their traditional farming practices. It was this model of self-empowerment and community leadership that the ACE Experts studied. The experts spent their time interviewing local residents, learning about leadership development, and discussing community organizing with the handicraft and tourism committees.



Kiriwong Village Sign

Handicrafts

NATR is slowly handing over responsibility for the Handicraft program to the villagers themselves. The handicraft cooperatives have developed the skills, resources, and network necessary to work independently. Suwanna, currently our Handicrafts Project Manager and a resident of Bak Jok, has been asked by groups to continue her efforts at marketing and development on a commission basis. They have been doing well so far, with international orders from China, USA, and Japan – thanks to the help of ThaiCraft, Moving Mountains, and Living Wage. They are also selling domestically to hotels in Phuket and Koh Samui, as the marketing trips there were a great success. Keep up the hard work Su; you're doing a great job!



Christmas Cards

[Buy Holiday Cards from Bak Jok - and get everyone you know to buy some too!](#)

Christmas and the holiday season are coming up soon. The Bak Jok women are busy making their cards for the festive season. NATR is trying to help them generate sales and give them a financial boost before they become independent and fly out from under our wing. Contact us at relieffund@inet.co.th if you are interested in purchasing some of these cards, or check out www.tsunamicrafts.com

Tung Dap Waste Management program

This project is NATR's first to have been conceived of, designed, and implemented entirely by the community itself. Pin, an 18 year old from the village of Tung Dap, decided to provide free lunch for the children of Tung Dap School in exchange for their help with waste management. She has undertaken the task of organizing children in her village to collect garbage on Saturdays and Sundays, recycle what can be recycled, and properly dispose of the rest. With NATR's help, she has provided school lunches and garbage collection materials, and aims to continue for the next six months. Great initiative Pin!



Tung Dap children with collected garbage

Community-Based Tourism

Kelly and Joy have been very busy with CBT this month, especially on the marketing side. They've been outreaching internationally to tourists interested in the village experience, as well as contacting international schools offering full customized community based service trips for their IB programs. As the University of Birmingham trip in July and August was such a success, we are hoping to replicate this with other school programs voluntouring in our CBT villages. Kelly has also been working on promotional materials for the CBT program and a brochure (which should come back from the graphic designer soon) will be used to promote our tours and services to tour operators in Thailand for international tourists located in Phuket, Khao Lak and Khao Sarn Road in Bangkok.

English – From the Classroom to the Trail



ACE English/Community Trail

This month ACE Expert English left the classroom to explore the “community trail”—a guided tour of village highlights—for additional English practice. This effective learning technique places students in real-life village settings, providing an excellent opportunity to practice the English vocabulary and language that they'll encounter as guides and tourism professionals. We intend to continue this type of lesson through the remainder of ACE training, in conjunction with classroom conversation and speaking using all the relevant language covered in the course.

Feedback forms were recently given out to the students of all English classes to get a sense of content relevance, what students enjoy the most, topics they want to learn about, and any questions or comments students have. The response has been overwhelmingly positive, with plenty of good ideas that the team has already implemented to design engaging lessons (i.e. tour guides created their own precise map of points of interest and practiced accompanying new vocabulary). A

suggestion box has also been implemented so that students can continue to give feedback and ask questions anonymously.

Finally, the English team would like to extend a deep appreciation to the College Writing Programs Department at the University of California at Berkeley for their generous donation of three boxes of ESL textbooks and resources. This extensive collection of new media and will enable us to further diversify our lesson content.



Absolute Beginner English

Websites – CBT and Handicrafts go Global!



Tsunami Crafts website

It's been a busy month for our volunteer webmasters! The fruits of many months' worth of planning and late night work were realized this month with the much-anticipated launch of two new websites. Just in time for holiday orders, our Tsunami Craft Shop (www.tsunamicrafts.com) is now online and open for business. Check out the beautiful assortment of hand-crafted soaps, tie-dyes, model boats, and cards, and help make a difference in the lives of tsunami-impacted villagers.

We also launched the beta version of Andaman Discoveries (www.andamandiscoveries.com), our community-based tourism website. This fully-searchable site offers visitors extensive information about our new tourism program, including village descriptions, activities, itineraries, and homestay descriptions. Finally, NATR's website (www.northandmantsunamirelief.com) just got its first significant makeover to better reflect the evolution of the organization towards sustainable community programs and education. Please check out the new sites and send us your thoughts!

Website Marketing and Promotion

With the imminent launch of our handicraft and community based tourism websites, we would much appreciate guidance from anyone who can help our sites achieve higher visibility.

Computers

On September 10th Dear finished his General computer class. He will start a new intensive class in the near future and hopes that some of the same students return for more practice and deeper knowledge. The ACE Expert class has moved on to email and how to take information from the internet and put it into a MS Word document. Two of the ACE Experts came on a trip with NATR to Phuket on September 25th and made beautiful PowerPoint presentations for their program donor, Mr. Niklaus Siegrist of AIG Private Bank in Switzerland.



Computers Class graduates

Phone Numbers – *please take note!*

The phone systems have changed in Thailand recently. As of now, an extra 8 must be added to the beginning of the phone number (after the 0 if you are dialing from within Thailand). So, our office number is now +66 (0) 87 917 7165. This has already come into effect but there is a grace period so the original number still works at the moment. Please make the necessary changes in your contact details for NATR. Thank you!

How you can help -

See the above mention of opportunities to order Holiday Cards and help with website marketing and promotion. Volunteer postings are now available on the [NATR website](http://www.natr.org).

Visitors and Volunteers:



This month we bid farewell to Ben Dwyer who has been with NATR for over a year. Even before he arrived in Kuraburi, Ben had held a benefit concert for NATR in Australia – “Reggae to the Rescue!” Upon arrival, Ben happily took over management of NATR’s handicraft programs. Since then, he has been an inspiration to the entire team, and a good friend to all. His patience and perseverance with the handicraft groups has allowed them to better understand the principles of business. His tireless marketing efforts have provided the groups with beautiful promotional materials and a strong client base. Ben also leaves a legacy of fun – his intrepid exploration led him to discover the six sacred pools, one of NATR’s favorite hiking destinations. NATR thanks Ben for all of his contributions, and will miss him dearly.

New Staff

NATR extended a warm welcome to four new Thai staff in September.

Maew (Nichapha Innuphat) is now heading up the ACE Experts program. Joy (Nuchjarin Weanthong) is helping Kelly with CBT Development and Marketing, as well as working with Maew to get ready for the Kuraburi Tourism Conference with the ACE Experts at the end of October. Tui (Thamrong Chomphusri) is hard at work translating in the office and running back and forth between projects to make sure communication is kept up between all farang and Thai staff, as well as with villagers, and Nat (Nattaya Sektheera) has joined Tui in translating as well as taking on the arduous task of editing and managing the Sense of Place booklet. Welcome to our team!



Maew



Joy



Nat



Tui