



Update 40

October 2007

October was a month of festivities for people of all religious backgrounds in the region. Kuraburi came alive with the sights, sounds, and smells of the Vegetarian Festival, as the Thai Chinese Buddhists celebrated this colorful event. For Muslims, the end of Ramadan saw whole communities coming together to break their fast. The Surin Moken Sea Gypsy community came to town asking for donations for their Tenth Month ancestor worship ceremony. A similar Buddhist ceremony took place at the local temple, where whole families came together to pay their respects to their ancestors. Despite all their differences, the people of the region live together in an atmosphere of harmony and acceptance, something that's rare to find nowadays. Andaman Discoveries is honored to be working with these communities and hopes to share just a few of their inspiring stories with you.

## Project Summaries

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## Wise words from a new generation:

*Not everyone has the chance to study. This makes me sad, because it is unfair. Opportunity should not depend on how rich your parents are. I want to be a teacher when I'm older and teach poor children so they have a chance like me.*

Rojjana Krabithong  
Age 11  
Scholarship student

## Tung Dap Conservation - Villager's Account



"A long time ago, my Mom and dad told me they didn't have to go far out to sea to find fish to eat. In recent years, we had to go very far to find anything. This is why we start the mangrove conservation and monitoring project, because we know that the life of the ocean comes from the mangrove. After one year, we can see the difference, life in the mangrove. The crabs, shellfish and fish are returning. Sadly some people do not believe us, and put traps and nets in our conservation area. When we find the nets we give them to the local government officer but the bad people who ignore the conservation area aren't brave enough to return and collect their equipment. The money we get from the confiscated equipment is put into our community fund so that we

have some money for gas and the boat. Nature gives me the spirit to do this project, because without her, we are nothing." Duan Phetsai, 18 years old.

## Tung Dap Waste Management – Trash That!

The garbage collection has turned into a weekly treat for all those involved, never before has litter picking been so much fun! This month the children were rewarded with a trip into the mangroves with the village elders to learn about the forest. "A dirty village is caused by dirty people," said Somrak Parnsuwan. "There's no need for it if we work together and don't throw litter away carelessly." The village has become a lot tidier and children are now educating parents about rubbish and using too many plastic bags.



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## Scholarship Update – Opportunities For All



Twenty-one year-old Eakachai Vijit is one of our 134 scholarships students interviewed this month, receiving financial support to assist with their studies. A staggering 55 per cent of students want to become teachers in their villages. Eakachai, wants to be a village guide and share his knowledge with visitors to his village. “I’m a member of the Youth Conservation Group and that make me proud,” he explained. “I want to help my friends and family welcome guests and not be shy. We can’t rely on the sea to feed us forever so need to think about different jobs, like guiding and tourism.”

## Ban Talae Nok Community Centre – Healthy Minds, Healthy Bodies

The informal adult education classes are going strong with 22 people registered and regularly attending. The teacher noticed a considerable improvement with the students. “Half my life I’ve had problems because of my lack of education,” admitted Rohkeenah Harnjit. “I hope that the next half won’t be as bad because now I can read and write.” After Ramadan the girls are back in action with their daily aerobics. Attendance by older members is declining, but community centre manager, Cha, hopes that some new moves and music will bring them dancing back in.



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## Ban Talae Nok Youth Activities – Saving for the future



Pink, the assistant manager at the centre, wanted an activity to educate the children about saving, so created the “Bamboo Saving Project.” All the village children have made a bamboo moneybox and have to put all their leftover school money in each day. After three months, each child will open a bank account and put in all their savings. “It’s better to save than waste money on sweets,” said 11-year-old Alongkorn Punchung, who plans to buy his mom a gift with his money. The children’s’ library and information centre opened this month with an educational puppet show by the youth group about the dangers of drugs.

## Ban Talae Nok Waste Management – The Three R’s

After months of campaigning, the villagers now have regular garbage collection, which is having a positive impact on the community. Response to the garbage bins has been positive and they are being put to good use by all villagers, both young and old. Frequent workshops are held to promote waste management awareness, with more people Reusing, Recycling, and Reducing as a result. “Garbage is valuable, it allows us to make some extra income,” explained Eakachai Vijit. “If we all make an effort to follow the three R’s, then we can reduce the effects of global warming.”



A waste management slogan competition is currently taking place for younger villagers to encourage their involvement and understanding. “I used to eat snacks and then throw the litter on the floor,” admitted seven-year-old Vassana Saksun. “Kelly used to tell me to pick it up and I didn’t understand why, but now I know I have a duty to take care of my village and the environment.”

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### Putting Tsunami Donations To Good Use



Many items were donated after the tsunami: money, clothing, blankets, schools, and even entire villages. Ban Talae Nok school received an entire room full of musical instruments including traditional classical Thai instruments. However, this room had been locked and instruments left unused because no funding was available to employ a qualified teacher. With the support of Andaman Discoveries, a teacher is now teaching the 34 children how to play classical Thai music, the highlight of which will be a live performance for Princess Sirintorn when she comes to officially open the school. "Thai music is beautiful and I will study hard to play well for the Princess," said 12-year old Vassana Vijit.

### Surin Moken Emergency Food Delivery

Andaman Discoveries doesn't usually support the donation of food or clothing, as we would rather address the socio-economic circumstances that create that need. However, after an urgent request for assistance by Narimon Arunonpai, a respected social researcher from Chulalongkorn University, meant we had to take action. The Moken community on Surin was in need of rice and basic cooking necessities as bad weather had prevented them from fishing. Many of the villagers were growing weak and becoming ill. The community had come to the mainland for their Tenth Month Ancestor celebrations and each family received a 10 kilogram bag of rice, fish sauce, dried chilies, and other ingredients to keep them going until next month when they would be able to commence fishing again.



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### MAP (Mangrove Action Project and Sewalanka Foundation



The essence of Andaman Discoveries is about exchange and discovery, so when the Mangrove Action Project (MAP) brought a group of eight Sri Lakans to Ban Talae Nok village on a study tour, the villagers were delighted to share their experience of tsunami recovery and community-based tourism with them. Their stay was part of a part of a week long field study tour on mangrove restoration in southern Thailand. "MAP has a keen interest in community-based tourism (CBT) as a means to increase the awareness of the conservation of coastal resources and has followed the development of Andaman Discovery since its formation," explained Jim Enright, MAP's Asia Coordinator.

Many of the group said the homestay (and food!) was the favorite part of their weeklong trip. The evening was concluded by the exchange of Thai and Sri Lankan songs and much laughter.

### Tsunami Housing in Need of Repair – Helping Hands

Many people ask why villages require volunteers. The needs of the villages change over the year but people can always make a contribution in many ways. This month's two volunteers, Adele (UK) and Robin (US) spent five days working on a construction project. In Ban Talae Nok, over the half the village was destroyed by the tsunami and rebuilt by an aid organization. The houses are of low quality and are in desperate need of repair. The villagers campaigned for building materials, which were donated by another agency, and are now in the process of rebuilding and repairing the tsunami houses. No budget was provided for labor costs so village volunteers are working on the project and always appreciate an extra pair of hands.



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### Research Guests - Valuable Lessons

Andaman Discoveries evolved from the North Andaman Tsunami Relief's commitment to sustainable community-initiated projects, incorporating community-based tourism into its framework. We're working hard to create a type of tourism experience that can assist with development and environmental conservation. Our community-approach is gaining interest from researchers and development agencies – Caitrin (from the U.S.) joined us from the Population Development Agency (PDA) as part of her four-month research project into micro management techniques and the environment. She noted several synergies between the organizations in regards to strategies for sustainability of community-based tourism and hopes to create a dialogue between the two organizations.



Other researchers included Milena and Flavio (from Switzerland) investigating different approaches to natural disaster management. They were most impressed by the reliance of the communities to recover from the tsunami to create new opportunities.

For more information about our nomination for the Virgin Holidays Responsible Tourism Award and Wild Asia Responsible Tourism Award, please contact us for a news release. We would love to share this good news with newspapers, magazines, and development agencies doing similar work.

If you would like to visit us or fund a project, please contact us at [info@andamandiscoveries.com](mailto:info@andamandiscoveries.com). Everything we and the villagers do is made possible by volunteers and donations. It doesn't cost a lot to make a lot of difference!



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