



North Andaman Community Tourism Network

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2010 Final Report for LLS

Developing Community Tourism on the North Andaman Coast



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Attachments

<i>Financial Report</i>	Indicators of Sustainable Tourism, 2007-2009
Overview of N-ACT	Business Sustainability Plan
Network Meeting Reports	Community Data Tracking Worksheet
Promotional Materials Folder	Community Self-assessment of Capacity
Media Coverage Folder	Community Tourism Activities Matrix
Assessment - Government Tourism Plan	N-ACT Performance Assessment
Thai-English Phrasebook for Tourism	Survey - Community Tourism Impact



1. Major changes in context

Future support:

Please see "Network and Community Business Sustainability Plans" in section 4 for full details.

- The Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC) has expressed willingness to support ongoing N-ACT activities.
- The Planeterra foundation, in cooperation with GAP Adventures and STA Travel, has committed to provide a grant of \$120,000 for community-based tourism development and youth conservation to N-ACT communities.
- N-ACT communities have been chosen for inclusion in two nationwide community tourism promotion efforts, sponsored by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, and the Community Based Tourism Institute.

New members of network:

- The communities of Tung Dap and Koh Kho Khao are now fully active members of N-ACT, with representatives on the steering committee. Over the last two years, N-ACT's assistance has resulted in these communities moving from "interested" to "active" status in the network



Changes in Work Plan

- The protests that wracked Bangkok in April and May led to the cancellation of the study tour N-ACT had been helping to coordinate with the University of Los Angeles. Unfortunately, a great deal of time had been spent working with community groups in Ban Na, Ban Lions, Kuraburi, and Bang Lampu.
- The regional forum (as reported in the plan, but not funded by LLS) has been postponed until early 2011 due to delayed funding from the Planeterra Foundation.
- The February network meeting did not include an exchange visit, as it took place at Nakha, as all participants had already participated in Nakha rafting, and it was unavailable because of low water levels.
- There was no network meeting in March, as members were unavailable, and it was rescheduled for April. As a result, the May meeting was similarly postponed until June.



Other

- In late 2009 and early 2010, two new small-scale beach bungalow resorts have opened in Ban Talae Nok and Tung Nang Dam. These are the first commercial tourism operations to open in N-ACT communities, and as of yet are not cooperating directly with the community tourism groups.
- The Ban Na tourism and conservation group has seen reduced participation and enthusiasm from community members.



"United like this, I believe we can overcome many of the obstacles in our communities"
Anan, Hat Praphat Village





2. Progress toward Results/Outcomes

2A. Networking of communities working on the North Andaman Coast of Thailand to facilitate discussion on building a sustainability/business plan that ensure continued growth of capacity to implement and benefit from community tourism initiatives

Network Meetings

In February, the network met in Nakha. The meeting of 12 men and 10 women included the tourism clubs of Ban Na, Muang Kluang, Nakha, Ban Talae Nok, Ton Kloy, Hat Praphat, Tung Nang Dam, and Ban Lion.



In April, the network met in Ban Lion. The meeting of 12 men and 15 women included the tourism clubs as mentioned above and members from Mae Nang Khaow.



In June, the network met at Nakha Wildlife Sanctuary. The meeting of 18 men and 15 women included the tourism clubs from the April meeting, in addition to representatives from Koh Kho Khao.



Network meetings served as a forum for exchange of ideas, sharing of experience, planning joint actions, and editing promotional materials.



Southern Tourism Trail

N-ACT communities have been chosen for inclusion in two nationwide community tourism promotion efforts. N-ACT advocated for the involvement of Muang Kluang, Nakha, and Ban Talae Nok in the new "southern trail" tourism program being planned by the Ministry of Sport and Tourism, for which activities and promotion will commence in September 2010. N-ACT also worked closely with Community Based Tourism Institute to make sure that Ban Talae Nok was part of their European Tour Operators Initiative.



Resort/Community group conflict

In late 2009, a resort opened on the island of Tung Nang Dam. N-ACT staff are in ongoing meetings with both the resort and the local tourism group to facilitate cooperation between the two. At this time, the villagers are concerned that the resort will harm nearby sea grass beds, and will also bring intrusive outsiders to the Muslim community. The resort owners show little interest in working with the community tourism group, but hopefully will respond to gentle coaxing.



Koh Surin Study Trip

27 members of the Koh Surin tourism group visited Muang Kluang and Ban Talae Nok along with facilitators from Chulalongkorn University. The visiting Moken learned about and participated in homestays, village tours, guiding techniques, and cultural demonstrations.



Links to Ongoing Support

As detailed in Section 4, N-ACT staff worked closely with several organizations to ensure long-term support, both financial and in terms of capacity development. For example, the Planeterra foundation confirmed plans to provide a grant of \$120,000 (written by N-ACT) to support community-based tourism groups and their efforts in conservation and environmental education. In addition, the Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC) has offered to sponsor marketing training for tourism groups and distribution channels for craft groups.



2A. Networking (continued)

Village Survey

N-ACT sponsored an independent survey of 34 community tourism group members from 6 villages. The survey was intended to get an overall perspective on community tourism, including individual involvement with the tourism group, goals, positive and negative effects on the community, youth involvement, networking, capacity building, and areas for network and community improvement.

Government survey

The attached assessment provides details of the tourism framework under which government officials are operating; including the focus, policies, and actions of tourism development with attention to sustainable tourism and community tourism. 14 officials were interviewed at the subdistrict, district, and provincial levels in Phang Nga and Ranong. Interviews and government plans indicate an awareness of, and support for, sustainable tourism and community tourism in Phang Nga and Ranong. Overall, however, a divide was apparent between ambitious plans for sustainable tourism development and the actual ability to put these plans into action.



Ban Talae Nok Youth Conservation Group

With N-ACT's assistance, the youth group has been selected as one of only fifty villages nationwide to participate in a "youth conservation leaders" project sponsored by CBT-I and the Thai Health Promotion Foundation.

In addition to facilitating a study trip to the Tap Lamu sea turtle research project, N-ACT also sourced funding from previous guests for the group to engage in nipa palm conservation, a community garden, and educational puppet shows about global warming



Regional Knowledge Sharing

To address the drastic decline in water lily levels, N-ACT staff engaged in outreach to a number of high-level sources, including business families in Bangkok, NGOs, and civil society in Phuket. The outreach led to media coverage in the Phuket Gazette (see attached article). On the academic side, N-ACT facilitated data collection and hosted researchers from a number of universities, including institutions in Bangkok, Chiang Mai, London, and Leipzig. N-ACT staff also provided knowledge products for use by consultants setting up community-based tourism programs for WWF and ProThailand.



IUCN Business and Biodiversity Training

At the invitation of the IUCN Netherlands Committee, N-ACT attended a training for conservation tourism groups in Cambodia. The program emphasized business skills, market analysis, health and safety, and maximizing benefits to biodiversity conservation. Contacts that resulted for the meeting include Mason Florence of the Mekong Tourism Board, Nick Ray of Lonely Planet, and Trevor Piper of SNV.



Wetlands International Day

For International Wetlands day, N-ACT provided transportation costs for three member communities (Muang Kluang, Ban Na, Ban Talae Nok) and also facilitated sales of soap from Ban Talae Nok. The event focused on climate change adaptation and wetlands, and showcased exhibitions, a play about the wetland environment, and a forum.



Nakha Water Lily Celebration

The Nakha Water Lily Celebration included replanting of water lilies, educational seminars, a group lunch, and a shadow puppet performance. Participants, about 100 men and 120 women, came from the tourism groups from Ban Na and Ban Talae Nok, N-ACT staff, area schools, Bangkok universities, the Tourism Authority of Thailand, local government officials.



2B. Develop promotional materials for the benefit of targeted communities under NACT

Thai Language Website

The bilingual www.andamancoast.org website hosts information on eight communities, logistical details, travel resources, responsible tourism businesses, and activities according to theme and location. The website presents local communities as the gateway to attractions, thereby creating a valuable self-promotion tool. By creating a common marketing identity, the website provides access to a wider array of services than member communities could provide individually. This collective identity contributes both to marketing and member empowerment. For the recently completed Thai version, please see www.andamancommunitytourism.com/thai



Brochures and Visitor Information

Note: Please see the attached "Promotional Materials" folder for copies of all brochures and visitor information.



All brochures, web pages, and visitor information were made at the direction of network members. N-ACT staff informed the network of the total budget available for printing. Each tourism group was then asked to consider what type of promotional and information materials were needed, and what would be useful for network-wide promotion. Nakha, Muang Kluang, and Tung Nang Dam requested 4-color brochures, while Ton Kloy and Ban Na asked for black and white brochures. In Mae Nang Khaow, N-ACT contributed text to a brochure, while IUCN Thailand covered the printing and design costs.



In order to facilitate a collective identity, N-ACT worked with a local graphic designer to produce a cartoon map of the area that highlights the unique features and attractions of each community.



Members decided that the network should produce cross promotional materials. This included designing and printing large (1meter by 2 meter) display posters that introduce the network and its members. However, members also requested a way to share more detailed information about each others' programs. The resulting "Guide to the North Andaman" is a bilingual handbook that details the natural and cultural splendor of the area.



For Koh Surin, where it is very challenging to work with the authorities to encourage community tourism, N-ACT staff designed a handout to be distributed by local tour companies. N-ACT then distributed over 400 copies to companies including Greenview, Barracuda, Alex Travel, Tom and Am Tour, and Sabina Tour. The pamphlet encourages visitors to visit the Moken and includes a self-guided tour, respectful behaviour guidelines, and income opportunities for Moken.



Media Articles

N-ACT facilitated media coverage of the area that reached over 500,000 people and included articles in Travel Trade Weekly and The Phuket Gazette, and Fah Thai Magazine Magazine (please see attached articles).

Community Crafts Store

N-ACT staff successfully facilitated placement of craft products from Pak Triam, Ban Talae Nok, and Kuraburi in the Khao Lak Community Appeal Crafts Store, which opened in June.

Kapoe Photography

N-ACT accompanied a local photographer to document visitor attractions including Phra Narai water fall and a floating conservation center.



2C. Support capacity building opportunities for target coastal communities under NACT

Misc Capacity Building

Scholarships

N-ACT staff gathered and submitted application information for 13 students, and including children from Ban Lion, Ban Talae Nok, and Kuraburi, 8 of whom are girls. These students are now receiving scholarships from Patong Rotary to cover their educational expenses through high school.



Village activities matrix

In order to make better sense of the activities available with each community tourism group, N-ACT collated a master list of all activities, a summary of what is involved, and which villages it is offered in. Please see the attached Community Tourism Activities Matrix for details.



M&E and Self assessment tools

N-ACT is engaging in a “sustainable performance approach” to monitoring, that will examine progress in the context of sustainable community development. To counter the challenges of self-assessment and monitoring N-ACT developed several bilingual tools, as attached, including the Community Data Tracking Worksheet and the Community Self-assessment of Capacity.



Village Specific Capacity Building

Koh Kho Khao

At the request of the Thai Environment Institute (TEI), N-ACT staff met several times with the community tourism group of Bang Niang on Kho Khao Island. N-ACT staff initially met with group leaders to help with pricing and product descriptions, and then joined a seminar with the entire tourism group to set more detailed programs for bicycling, kayaking, homestay, and waterfall hiking. As a result of this outreach, Koh Kho Khao joined the network and attended subsequent meetings.

Ban Lion

As described below, N-ACT sourced a study tour from the Asian Institute of Technology. At the request of partner group Mangrove Action Project, N-ACT staff facilitated a two day retreat for the Ban Lion CBT group. N-ACT helped the staff focus on activity development and financial management.



Ban Talae Nok

N-ACT coordinated with Thaicraft to provide training for the women's soap group, resulting in a new product line and much improved quality. Orders from regional hotels have subsequently increased. N-ACT staff have participated extensively in BTN's monthly tourism group meetings, helping to resolve a number of continuing conflicts within the group. Initially, N-ACT helped create an agreement between the guiding group and the kayaking group (who had their own guides). The main source of ongoing tension in the tourism group, however, seems to be a perception that the rules for the queue are unfair. N-ACT convened a village-wide forum to discuss the issue, and as a result, the tourism group agreed to print out a sheet with all the rules, and ask all members of the community to comment on a feedback form. N-ACT then collated the information and suggested that the group could think about having two levels of membership – a core of people who is willing to take time and energy to manage the group, and then a less-involved level for people who want a simple involvement.

Ban Na

N-ACT staff coordinated between the tourism group and tour operator Andaman Discoveries to set prices for transfers from Muang Kluang Homestay and a work plan for volunteer groups to help build check dams. N-ACT staff also attempted to help resolve disputes between group members that have led to reduced participation and enthusiasm from community members.



Village Specific Capacity Building (continued)

Tung Dap

N-ACT staff worked with community members to finalize the pricing for tourism activities, and also provided marketing materials for use by a motivated young community member who plans to market directly to tour operators in Phuket. N-ACT also hosted a pilot tour for staff from the Asian Center for Tourism and Poverty Reduction and the Asian Institute of Technology



Ton Kloy

In Ton Kloy, N-ACT staff helped the tourism group develop a hiking route on Ton Kloy Hill, which will be added to the website. N-ACT also facilitated extensive progress in planning and communications.



Mae Nang Khaو

Product Development – N-ACT staff visited the hamlet of Nai Tui to advise on developing a nature hike for tourists. Attractions include a hike where visitors can see endemic freshwater crabs and shrimp, a water hole where wildlife can frequently be seen. The conservation group hopes to coordinate overnight backpacking trips, and also wants a group visiting volunteers to help build a restroom at the trailhead and rest area.



Koh Surin

Indigenous Education – The Moken rely on selling handicrafts as an important source of income, but often have trouble communicating with visitors who wish to buy their woven baskets and hand-carved model boats. To help with this, N-ACT facilitated funding for a local health worker to provide English lessons to the children of Koh Surin including books, pencils, lesson plans, and a whiteboard. Funds were also sourced for a “clean household” competition to encourage Moken to address the litter generated by good from the mainland.



Capacity Building - Commercial Partners, Income Generation

Financial Leverage to Partner Communities and Organizations

N-ACT was able to generate direct income of 60,000 baht income for network communities through study trips, exchanges, network meetings, and pilot and promotional tours. Similarly, N-ACT generated 35,000 baht for partner organizations.

20,000	Ban Lion	Income from AIT study tour
12,000	Nakha	Income from network meeting
20,000	Ban Lion	Income from network meeting
8,000	Tung Dap	Income from pilot tour
14,000	Ban Talae Nok	Income from AIT study tour
17,000	Koh Ra Ecolodge	Income from ISB study tour
18,000	Mangrove Action Project	Training services
3,840,000	N-ACT, Mangrove Action Project, Andaman Discoveries	Grant for sustainable tourism development and youth conservation



AIT Study Tours

N-ACT staff were directly responsible for recruiting two study tour groups from the Asian Institute of Technology. The first group, 14 exchange students from Michigan, spent two nights at Ban Lions in homestays, participated in a wide variety of activities, and provided valuable experience to the tourism group, along with 20,000 baht in income. The second study tour was from the Geoinformatics Center, and visited Ban Talae Nok to learn about disaster preparedness and warning systems, and included participants from Bhutan and Banda Aceh, Indonesia.



Capacity Building - Commercial Partners, Income Generation (continued)

UCLA Study Tour

N-ACT staff worked closely with a professor from the University of California at Los Angeles' Institute for the Environment. N-ACT helped to prepare activities with community groups in Ban Lion, Kuraburi, and Bang Lampoo, for the 5 week study tour that had 23 students confirmed to participate. Unfortunately, the protests that wracked Bangkok in April and May led to the cancellation of the study tour, due specifically to a travel warning issued by the US State Department.



International School of Bangkok

In February, the International School of Bangkok (ISB) became the first high school community service group to visit the N-ACT area. The pack of 21 students hailed from around the world, and visited Ban Talae Nok for traditional Thai cooking, joining the local youth group in a Nipa palm conservation project, making traditional roofing materials, and working with the Ladies' Soap Cooperative. The students also visited Koh Ra Ecolodge and nearby Ban Koh Ra to learn about local wildlife, conservation efforts, and the Reef Check Project.



Andaman Discoveries

Through N-ACT's exposure over the last two years, local responsible tour operator Andaman Discoveries continues to send clients to N-ACT communities from partners including Khao Lak Land Discovery, Buffalo Tours, and Exotissimo.



3. Communication Activities

See section 2 for full details on communication activities related to networking, promotion, and capacity building.

Google Map

N-ACT staff created a Google map with accurate GIS coordinates for all participating communities and a number of attractions that surround each community – it can be found at www.andamancommunitytourism.com or <http://maps.google.com/maps/ms?ie=UTF8&hl=en&t=h&msa=0&msid=109607337803987032669.00047ff22059b62357663&ll=9.40571,98.530884&spn=1.151581,0.821228&z=9&output=embed>

Communications Summary Table

Sector	Meetings	Participants	Examples
Non-profit	20	20-25 per meeting	Organizations working in development, tourism, & conservation, including Mekong Tourism Coordination Association, Tourism Authority of Thailand, Community-based Tourism Institute, IUCN, Thai Environment Institute, Mangrove Action Project, Raks Thai Foundation, Wetlands International, Mangroves for the Future, Asian Institute of Technology, and a number of Cambodian NGOs
Business	18	60	Local, regional, and national tourism businesses including Buffalo Tours, Exotissimo Travel, Our Jungle House, Sea Canoe, Koh Ra Ecolodge, Golden Buddha Beach Resort, Barracuda Tour, Tom&Am Tour, Diamond Coral Tour, Kuraburi Greenview Travel, Alex Guest House, Andaman Discoveries
Community	30	320	Six active and five interested communities in four districts of Phang Nga and Ranong Provinces
Government	14	45	District and Provincial Officials in Phang Nga and Ranong provinces, Bank of Agriculture and Agriculture Cooperatives (BAAC)



4. Network and Community Business Sustainability Plans

Community Group Sustainability

The network's overall success relies on a member-drive agenda; and, as critical analysis is not inherently compatible with group dynamics of southern Thai culture, network members were neither accustomed to nor comfortable with the "monitoring" process. While expressing willingness to participate, only one community group actively filled out the Community Info Sheet

As it became apparent that network members were not tracking data on their own, N-ACT staff assisted by gathering information through interviews, and helping individuals to track and analyze useful details. By evolving methods for data collection and analysis that are appropriate for network members, N-ACT's M&E process is increasing local management capacity while still keeping track of project inputs, outcomes, and the overall contribution of tourism to sustainable livelihoods in the area.



Despite challenges in 2008 and 2009, N-ACT has helped each member group develop a "Business Sustainability Plan" (attached) that will ensure capacity to implement and benefit from community tourism, including how each group will:

- identify current threats and opportunities, while maintaining focus on long-term goals
- plan and prioritize actions for the coming year
- identify responsibilities and means of support for each project
- specify indicators to measure success of actions



N-ACT staff dedicated a significant amount of project time to data gathering, analysis, and participatory M&E in 2010. As a result, N-ACT members have experienced marked growth in community-level capacity for data tracking and analysis. In both group and individual settings, N-ACT staff worked closely to help community members understand the benefits of participatory monitoring and evaluation. N-ACT staff explained that good data collection and analysis can allow tourism groups to communicate value to outsiders and to members of their own community, and to reflect on their own strengths and weaknesses. Examples of recent progress include:



- All community tourism groups are now filling out monthly "Community Data Tracking" worksheets, as attached.
- All community tourism groups have agreed to engage in a semi-annual "Community Self-assessment of Capacity," as attached.
- Muang Kluang and Tung Nang Dam have shared income details that they previously were unwilling to disclose.
- The treasurer of the Ban Talae Nok tourism group has held an open review of the accounts with entire group.

Network Sustainability

Network Goals

The steering committee has identified the following goals for 2010/2011:

1. meetings – continue to meet as a network at least four times a year, maintain strong friendships
2. capacity - use network resources to increase local awareness/pride/skill in tourism, conservation, and community development
3. collective identity – set similar standards, distribute network promotional materials, attend travel exhibitions as a network, share guests, sell joint packages, negotiate jointly with business partners
4. financial – set up network fund, share information about funding resources, sell t-shirts to raise funds for network meetings



4. Network and Community Business Sustainability Plans (continued)

Ongoing Meetings

The network steering committee agreed to meet 4 times year, regardless of external support, starting with an August 7 meeting in Tung Dap that will include an overnight exchange visit to pilot Tung Dap's new tourism programs.

Network Structure

The group discussed future management of the network extensively during network meeting throughout the year, and decided that the network, instead of continuing with the "working group" structure of 2009, the network should form a steering committee. The committee would include a chairman and rules for cooperation that would hold the group together, guide its direction, and make sure that potential benefits do not cause problems. After much discussion, the meeting participants agreed on the following steering committee members, who are responsible for attending meetings or sending an alternative:

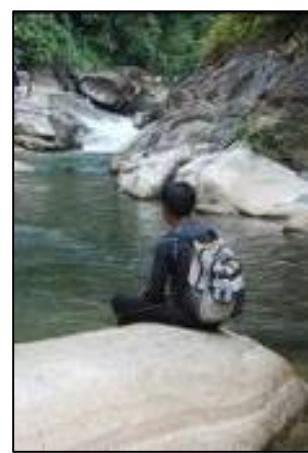
Chairman:	Chamni Aunkhaw (Nakha)
Deputy Chairman (Ranong):	Somkiat Sebsabuy (Muang Kluang)
Deputy Chairman (Phang Nga):	Likhit Yodying (Mae Nang Khaow)
Secretary:	Ladda Ahan/Ekarat Chunyang (Ban Talae Nok)
Treasurer:	Orawan Tiensai (Ban Lion)
Committee:	Pachensak Jiekkhajon (Ban Na) Abdulmunit Malek (Ton Kloy) Somjit Pongprasert (Hat Praphat) Peeraya Suksa-ard (Tung Nang Dam) Jariya Petsai (Tung Dap) Mongkol Lunsopa (Koh Kho Khao) Thammanoon Kedjaroen (Ban Lion)

Future Support

N-ACT staff have been working with the leader of the Ban Talae Nok community youth group to develop a working plan for 2010-2011. With N-ACT's assistance, the youth group has been selected as one of only fifty villages nationwide to participate in a "youth conservation leaders" project sponsored by CBT-I and the Thai Health Promotion Foundation. N-ACT also sourced funding from previous guests for the group to engage in nipa palm conservation, a community garden, and educational puppet shows about global warming

The Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC) has expressed an ongoing interest in supporting N-ACT activities. In addition to two bilateral meetings with N-ACT staff, the BAAC team has visited Muang Kluang, Nakha, and Ban Talae Nok, and also attended the network meeting in June. Discussions are continuing, and BAAC has offered to sponsor marketing training for tourism groups and distribution channels for craft groups.

The Planeterra foundation, in cooperation with GAP Adventures and STA Travel, has committed to provide a grant of \$120,000 for community-based tourism development and youth conservation. The grant will support trainings, network meetings and exchange visits, and a regional forum. For conservation, the grant will support youth guide trainings, a regional youth network meeting, and a community resource center at Ban Lions. Beyond direct funding, GAP Adventures and STA have committed to sending guests to N-ACT communities. Ban Lion and Ban Talae Nok are featured in the 2010-2011 catalogues of both companies.





5. N-ACT Performance Assessment

Sustainability

The crucial element of N-ACT's approach is that the communities themselves are the driving force behind the initiatives. Each community makes its own decisions about how they 'do' tourism. This village-led approach is crucial to the success of community-based tourism; as it allows the community to assimilate tourism on their own terms. The role of N-ACT is a link between communities and tourism stakeholders on the regional, national, and global levels. Unlike a traditional network that emphasizes collective action, N-ACT also creates individual linkages under a set of guiding principles. The lessons learned and best practices generated from these linkages are shared with the network, allowing for collective capacity building based on direct relationships that will last well beyond external funding.

Income generated to Community Groups

N-ACT was able to generate direct income of over 60,000 baht income for network communities through study trips, exchanges, network meetings, and pilot and promotional tours. Additionally, N-ACT secured an annual salary for the coordinator of the Ban Talae Nok Youth Conservation Group, who is also an active member of the village tourism group.



Efficient Methodology

N-ACT has selected partners with demonstrated effectiveness and dedication. Criteria for participation include an active tourism group, leaders of vision and integrity, community support, and presence of appealing tourism products. N-ACT also utilizes locally appropriate methodology. Knowledge products such as training manuals and self-assessments were tailored for use by a local audience – rural adults with a low level of formal education. Initial meetings were informal, and without the presence of Western field staff, in order to avoid expectations of financial benefit. Communities were introduced to each other bilaterally, then visited each other as a group, and finally came together as a network. The informal atmosphere led to learning based on meaningful interaction instead of academic pursuit.



Cost Effectiveness

One way to consider the worthiness of the investment is compare our budget for 2009/2010 (1,260,000 baht) to the funds we leveraged for sustainable tourism and conservation (916,000 for 2009, and over 2 million baht for 2010 and 2011, as detailed in the "ongoing support" section). Overall, N-ACT benefitted from dedicated staff willing to work for very low cost. For example, the website www.andamancoast.org took over 400 hours of labor to create for a cost of only below 30,000 baht – a cost of USD \$5 per hour, and vastly cheaper than the USD \$15-30 per hour charged by skilled web developers in Thailand.



Instead of relying on high paid outside trainers, who often lack local perspective, N-ACT leveraged successful local examples of CBT to build capacity in neighboring communities. Participants from communities just beginning tourism development joined their more experienced counterparts for mangrove and forest tours, homestay, volunteer activities, and lively discussions with their hosts.



Benefits of N-ACT, as identified by members in meetings & surveys

- Improvement of tourism conservation activities and new attractions
- Increased standard and number of homes in homestay programs
- Better management of group, meetings, and financial resources
- Promotion material
- Exchange visits within network
- Importance of sub-district networks like Mae Nang Khaow and Nakha
- Database of tourism activities and resources



5. N-ACT Performance Assessment (continued)

N-ACT Evaluation Survey

27 community members from 8 village tourism groups, were asked to evaluate N-ACT based on answering the following seven questions. Participants chose "yes," "somewhat," or "no" and then had an option of commenting further.

Question 1. Did N-ACT gather and help evaluate useful information?

91% of respondents said "yes," the remaining respondent answered "somewhat"

Question 2. Did N-ACT plan as a group?

75% gave highest rating, 20% responded "somewhat" and 5% responded "no"

Question 3. Did N-ACT implement the plans that were made?

50% responded yes, while only 1 person responded "no"

Question 4. Did N-ACT build further skill in network members?

81% responded "yes," and the remaining 19% responded "somewhat"

Question 5. Did N-ACT access guests and potential customers?

60% responded "yes," and the remaining 40% responded "somewhat"

Question 6. Did N-ACT communicate with local organizations and government?

71% responded "somewhat," while only 14% responded "yes"

Question 7. Did N-ACT manage financial resources well?

50% responded "yes," while the rest responded "somewhat"



Community Self-assessment of Capacity Change During N-ACT

Separately, from the N-ACT evaluation, N-ACT worked with 22 tourism group leaders from 8 villages, and asked them to self-evaluate the capacity of their tourism group at two times - before N-ACT started, and currently. Based on the 9 "factors of success" identified in Phase I, and listed above, community members were asked to rate their group as one of the following:

1. Little or no capacity, activities not happening.
2. Some capacity, activities led by outsiders.
3. Activities led by group with some assistance.
4. All activities managed by community groups.



The areas in which members felt N-ACT significantly increased local capacity (meaning an increase of one full step or more) were:

- gathering and evaluating information
- planning as a group (meetings, an official plan, etc.)
- accessing guests and potential customers
- building further skill in group members and youth

Areas in which members felt the network had moderately improved capacity included:

- implementing the plans made by each tourism group
- communicate with local organizations and government



And, finally, areas in which members assigned a limited impact to N-ACT's work were:

- managing financial resources
- communicating and cooperating with the whole community

Considering the average degree of change reported within each community, Ban Na and Ton Kloy showed the most progress, moving from "little or no capacity" to "led by group with some assistance" in most categories.

Muang Kluang and Ban Lion improved by an average of one step, while Ban Talae Nok, Nakha, and Tung Nang Dam reported moderate progress.



6. Interesting stories

Stories:

- Tourism and Poverty Reduction – Andaman Discoveries' Impact
- Adventures in N-ACT – Meeting at Ban Lions
- Nai Tui Hike - Community Project Development
- International School of Bangkok Visits N-ACT Communities

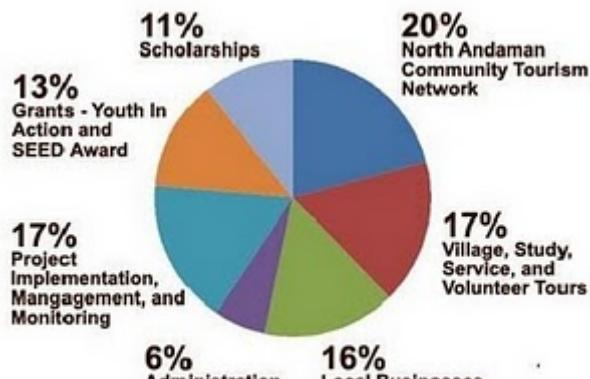


Tourism and Poverty Reduction – Andaman Discoveries' Impact

Tourism is one of the world's largest and fastest growing industries. Tourist spending in developing countries is almost three times greater than the amount of international development assistance. According to research by Jonathon Mitchell and Caroline Ashley of the Overseas Development Institute in London, between 5–25% of tourist spending makes its way to poor people, so the potential for tourism to make a positive impact on the lives of poor people is huge.

Unfortunately, where tourism it is poorly regulated, the results can be disastrous. Insensitive tourism development can have negative impacts on local environment and wildlife. It can contribute to the loss of cultural heritage and traditional livelihoods, and result in the displacement and exploitation of local people. More needs to be done, particularly in the mainstream tourism sector, to reduce these negative impacts and ensure that tourism really does bring positive benefits for poor people.

To examine the local breakdown of tourism spending, N-ACT staff conducted an analysis of 2009 spending by Andaman Discoveries, a responsible tourism operator based in Kuraburi. The analysis found that 17% of Andaman Discoveries' tourism spending went directly to communities and local partners for the provision of tourism services volunteer placements. An additional 16% went to locally owned businesses for provision of services such as transportation and accommodation. In addition, a further 44% went towards community projects that provide benefit to local communities, such as scholarships, conservation, tree planting, and vocational training.



Community based tourism (CBT) in the North Andaman region has been particularly successful as a socio-economic strategy to help communities recover from the impact of the Asian tsunami in 2004. It provides people with a sustainable form of income within their own village, after their homes, fishing boats and farms were destroyed. The emphasis on homestays and handicraft projects is particularly helpful for women, as it gives them a viable way to support their family and increases their standing within the community. People have less need to relocate to major cities and tourist destinations to make a living, which helps to keep the village and its cultural traditions alive.

The positive benefits of CBT can reach far beyond financial impacts. When managed effectively, CBT puts the villagers in control of their own destination; the villagers make the decisions about how tourism in their village will be managed and so can work together to ensure their lands, their cultural heritage and natural environment are protected. The very fact that tourists come to visit their village instills them with a deep sense of pride and a determination to preserve their culture and environment for future generations.

Income generated by Andaman Discoveries' tours support a number of conservation projects in the area. Funds from tourism help to finance environmental projects such as recycling and solid waste management, whilst the tourists and volunteers are able to directly support projects such as mangrove rehabilitation and conservation of rare species of water lilies and orchids. The children in the villages, schools and orphanages we work with benefit enormously from the time and attention which our guests and volunteers so generously give; it helps to improve their English skills, gives them exposure to different nationalities, cultures and values, and above all brings them lots of fun and laughter.



6. Interesting stories (continued)

Adventures in N-ACT – Meeting at Ban Lions

I did my first homestay in Ban Lion on Koh Phratong. The entire village was built after the tsunami in 2004, funded by the Lion Club. It was really a great way to experience the island. The little boy at my host family's house was so adorable I wanted to take him home with me! And the food was outstanding. I thought I was going to explode after eating my farewell lunch!

We went for a "hay ride," Thai-style the afternoon we arrived. We all piled into a flatbed truck and went across Koh Phratong into the savanna. It looked like I could be in the middle of Africa, quite beautiful. We found a land tortoise tucked inside his shell and visited the remains of an old tin mine that had been abandoned. On our way back we saw a bird dive and pick up a live snake for dinner. Then we headed back to the homestay for a fantastic dinner.

In the morning I was lucky enough to watch the bimonthly N-ACT Network (North Andaman Community Tourism) meeting. It was really exciting to see Nat, the N-ACT Project Manager, in action. We started the meeting and I realized: the people here *are* N-ACT. 8 villages gathered to discuss the future of the organization that will cease to exist, at least in terms of funding, in the middle of July 2010. We sat under the community school, about 20 feet from a miniature swing set and climbing dome for the kids. Dogs sauntered past, waiting to see if any of the meeting attendees accidentally dropped food. Homestay divas slowly bring a variety of tea, coffee, and snacks to keep us going. The setting is perfectly symbolic of community action.

Then Nat snapped into her element. She introduced the meeting. The issues: the N-ACT Thai website, marketing materials, the network committee, data collection for reporting purposes, and last but not least, the future of N-ACT and ongoing support for all the projects.

Everyone introduced themselves. I awkwardly said my name. I mostly listened to the intonation because I cannot understand Thai very well. It was so different from the stuffy community meetings I ran in the U.S. People spoke when they thought of something, made jokes that sent the whole meeting into uproarious laughter.

Kids yelled and played close by and nobody stopped them or hushed their screams of excitement. It was informal, but direct. There was no lack of business decisions made, but the informality lends itself to intense concentration when a serious subject arose. I never looked around a community meeting in the U.S. and saw every single person making eye contact with whoever was speaking.

I saw how this network actually makes an impact on the individuals at the meeting and in the villages. They are not appointed employees looking out for folks in the village. They are the villages. The decisions made in the meeting are reached with consensus because they directly affect everyone. The network has raised capacity in each person, who has then shared their knowledge with their home town, so that their traditional way of life can be maintained while they earn additional income in various sustainable ways.

Handicrafts, homestays, weaving nipa palm fronds for roofing material , and graciously showing curious foreigners how they live. Just demonstrating the process of making fish paste, constructing a squid trap, or dressing a guest up in a traditional Muslim outfit can earn a family extra money. These are activities they do every day regardless of tourism. But with the professional training nurtured by N-ACT, villages have started investing in the future by pooling their income and supporting each other to attend marketing and business development trainings. It seems that a few embers of education can spread wisdom like wildfire.





6. Interesting stories (continued)

Nai Tui Hike - Community Project Development

N-ACT staff visited the hamlet of Nai Tui to help with developing a nature hike for tourists. The local community conservation group works to preserve the watershed and encourage protection and appreciation of the area.

They took us on a hike up the streambed, where we saw freshwater crabs and shrimp. It was beautiful and cool in the shade of the trees. They told us that there is a natural water hole at the source of the spring water for the river, which is used by wildlife in the surrounding area.



Our guides showed us the freshwater shrimp and crabs, which the locals catch as a source of food and saleable goods. Searching through fallen leaves and under the edge of rocks, they could find a surprising number of these little guys.

The conservation group hopes to coordinate overnight backpacking trips with this community group. In the next few weeks me and a couple of other interns will go on a pilot trip with the guides, staying overnight in the jungle near an ancient Buddhist temple on a nearby mountain.

There is also an improvement project that we hope to lend funding and volunteers to help complete. They have already built benches at the waterfall near the trail head, but now they want to complete a restroom and functional day trip area.

One of the great things about working with community-based tourism is helping to support the locals in encouraging appreciation for these unknown nooks of ecological goodness.



International School of Bangkok Visits N-ACT Communities



The International School of Bangkok (ISB) became the first high school community service group to visit the N-ACT area in February! The group of 21 students hailed from around the world, forming a truly diverse mixture of guests. With assistance from N-ACT staff, the students experienced a variety of activities that the Northern Andaman Coast has to offer.

The trip started in Ban Talae Nok where the students got a taste of traditional Thai cooking. The local youth group lead ISB through the nearby Nipa palm conservation project, explaining their efforts to preserve the environment by working with natural tidal processes to sustainably harvest crops. The ISB students then had an afternoon of weaving nipa palm

leaves to make traditional roofing materials, and working with the Ladies' Soap Cooperative to mix up a batch of fresh soap!



The students spent the next day at Koh Ra Ecolodge. They learned about local wildlife, conservation efforts at the lodge, and the nearby Reef Check Project.

ISB followed up with two days of fun and games at local schools. First, they visited Kuraburi High School, sharing their English conversational skills with the younger students. The following day they attended a National Children's Day event encouraging Burmese family interaction and integration with the Thai community.

We sent ISB off with a farewell dinner in Khoa Lak, where they shared their favorite learning experiences throughout the trip. As the waves crashed on the beach in front of the restaurant and we enjoyed a delicious Thai dinner and sent the ISB students back to Bangkok in style.



7. Lessons Learned

This section identifies features of N-ACT that may be useful in setting up community tourism networks elsewhere. It provides some insights to the questions of who to work with, how to set up a network, and what can be achieved by a community tourism network. Lessons learned will be presented through analysis of how core partners were selected, key aspects of how the network was set up, and strategic outcomes of network cooperation.

Lessons Learned –Promotion and Knowledge Sharing

In areas with little or no existing tourism development, it is important to focus on **building market awareness**. With advice from CBT-I and Andaman Discoveries, N-ACT has identified the following target markets: tour operators, study and volunteer groups, families, and adventure/eco tourists. Promotional tool and efforts are tailored to reach these targets.

Normally, tourist destinations are presented independently of the communities that surround them, allowing tour operators to bypass local involvement. By creating a **common marketing identity** for the North Andaman coast, N-ACT provides access to a wider array of services than member communities could provide individually. This collective identity contributes both to marketing and member empowerment. The bilingual www.andamancoast.org, for example, details the natural and cultural splendor of the area. The website presents local communities as the gateway to attractions, thereby creating a valuable self-promotion tool.

There are, however, inherent dangers that promotion could attract attention from mass tourism. In order to grow the market in a sustainable direction, N-ACT has engaged in **selective outreach to media** partners capable of reaching the target audiences mentioned above. The network generated media attention in international outlets, including BBC World Challenge, Wild Asia Travel Awards, Responsible Travel Magazine, Travel+Leisure Magazine (New York), and the Sunday Times (London). National coverage included Capitol TV, Channel 5, NBT TV, the TAT website, and regional newspapers. Additionally, N-ACT provided information on community tourism to guidebooks including Lonely Planet, National Geographic, Frommers, the Rough Guide, Natural Guide, Ethical Travel and the Good Tourist.

Lessons Learned – Facilitating Partnerships

Network members are engaged in direct cooperation - community members are now **co-developing CBT products**. Muang Kluang agreed to create a “bay tour and picnic lunch” program that included a visit to Laem Naew. Ban Talae Nok agreed to add rafting at Nakha River to their list of guest activities, and Nakha agreed to refer guests to both Ban Talae Nok and Muang Kluang.

N-ACT is **generating demand for sustainable tourism products** offered by local communities from regional and national tour operators. Nine tour operators now have contracts with N-ACT communities. Study tours arranged by N-ACT created 69,000 baht in income. Andaman Discoveries, for example, is now actively marketing rafting at Nakha. Koh Ra Ecolodge offers hiking tours to Tung Nang Dam. N-ACT also promoted local handicrafts, and secured orders for local collectives worth 32,000 baht over two years.

N-ACT is further facilitating business/community partnerships by **developing new CBT products** for local tour operators and ecotourism resorts. At the request of Greenview Tour, N-ACT has designed a walking tour of the Moken village at Surin Islands National Park to provide an improved customer experience for Greenview while increasing income opportunities for Moken through handicraft sales. N-ACT successfully worked with Koh Ra Ecolodge to design a guided community tour with minimum contributions to a village fund that sponsored a new well and water tank. On nearby Koh Phratong, N-ACT facilitated design of village tours in Tung Dap and Ban Lions that will highlight the island's traditional fishing lifestyle. Golden Buddha Beach resort is already supplying customers for Ban Lions.

N-ACT has also been directly responsible for **generating funding resources of over 2 million baht**. This money is supporting conservation and CBT development projects that will be implemented by partner organizations in N-ACT communities. N-ACT secured a grant of 360,000 from the Planeterra Travel Foundation for study tours, networking meetings, and a youth guide training in 2010-2011.

Beyond providing benefit to local communities, private sectors interventions are creating **business-to-business cooperation** in responsible tourism. The Business Inspection Tour resulted in Buffalo Tours and SpiceRoads developing volunteer and bicycling tours with Andaman Discoveries, and featuring Greenview Resort in their Southern Thailand itineraries. Cooperation initiated in 2008 continues between Exotissimo (a major national tour operator) and three local businesses – Koh Ra Ecolodge, Greenview Travel, and Andaman Discoveries.



Lessons Learned – Constraints to Setting Up a Successful Network

Systemic Challenges

Sustainable tourism policy and ecotourism development are emphasized in the official development plans for both Ranong and Phang Nga provinces. Meeting and feedback from government officials in the N-ACT target area indicate a strong enthusiasm at the TAO level for CBT, but a **poor government-level understanding of sustainable tourism development**. As witnessed in Kuraburi district, local businesses often wait for government support as a pre-condition for success, but the local/regional government usually tends to support those initiatives that are already successful. This also exacerbates the relationship between government and CBT groups, as community members perceive that official assistance is only available once a project is successful, after which government claims all the credit.

It is sometimes **difficult to network within the private sector**, as operators can view each other as competitors, which can make exchange and cooperation challenging. Moreover, the private sector is often not interested by the challenges of long-term value. Many tour companies have operated for years without having to address the consequences of unsustainable practices. This trend may be accelerating due to the number of new companies, and the lack of standards for tour operators in Thailand. Yet, tourism businesses often rely on nature and culture that they have free access to. The risk of tourism overdevelopment is that these assets may be lost.



Community-level Challenges

Overall, there is **insufficient participation in CBT management and product development** from community members. All six active community tourism programs are dependent on a small group of motivated leaders. Most communities receive a high degree of external support, leading to an expectation that solutions will be provided by outside agents (i.e. NGO saturation after the tsunami). Community members are also quite busy with traditional livelihoods and responsibilities. Tourism is, however, a new activity for residents, and locals do not yet understand the tourism industry, which is reasonable for a population that has until recently been exclusively engaged in traditional livelihoods.

The Pak Triam tourism group, for example, suffers from a **high dependency on external support**. In 2006, villagers were approached by L'oreal Cosmetics, who wanted to sponsor a community-run “floating bungalow” as part of their larger tsunami relief campaign. L'oreal then hired Momentum, a public relations firm, to implement the project. After hurried community consultations, and very little capacity building, Momentum completed the construction process in early 2007. The result, “Ban Krachang,” is a floating fish farm modified into a rustic guesthouse with 10 rooms, yet the actual fish pens are too large for aquaculture – rendering of little value if tourism operations cease. Furthermore, the absence of capacity building has led to deep divisions in the village, and income accruing to only a few families. In 2009, the floating bungalows were moved to the island of Tung Nang Dam, and ceased operation completely in 2010. As a result, the community of Pak Triam is now less involved, and Gee, the project manager from Pak Triam, has entered into a benefit-sharing agreement with the wife on one of Tung Nang Dam’s district council members. Additionally, the Ban Krachang website has shut down, as L'Oreal has been unwilling to provide further support.

Existing politics or conflicts in a village can hinder CBT development. In Ban Talae Nok, the increasing clout of the “village coordinators” has led to tension between the original leaders of the tourism group, and those now putting the work into community tourism. This tension arises from a combination of factors including old family disagreements, personal styles, and the fact that tourism income is elevating the socio-economic position of poorer villagers. In particular, village tourism coordinators point to solid evidence that the chief and his “people” are unwilling to share government resources and expect a disproportional amount of benefit from tourism. Thus, the village tourism coordinators may be subtly withholding some benefits from this group.

CBT development can also engender **conflicts between communities**. For example, Muang Kluang initially agreed to provide referrals through their information center to nearby communities. Due to unrealistic expectations, however, visitor volume has not been high enough to send guests to surrounding communities, which has resulted in disappointment and a lack of interest in future cooperation.



Lessons Learned – Conservation

Altruistic motivation for conservation is high throughout the N-ACT target area, as evidenced by the large number of local community groups and NGOs involved in environmental protection. It is likely that this altruism arises from a relatively sustainable lifestyle in which local culture and the natural world are fundamentally intertwined. The low population density and relatively prosperity allow for a conservation ethic that is often untenable in areas with high levels of poverty or resource degradation.

Linking conservation to community tourism can be achieved using a mixture of three approaches:

- Passive, where income is generated from non-extractive utilization of natural resources
- Active, in which conservation activities become a tourism product with saleable value
- Direct, where tourism is used as a strategic to support ongoing conservation efforts.

By recognizing and supporting these linkages, N-ACT has been able to leverage significant conservation benefits.

The direct income and increased marketing capacity generated by N-ACT **provide tangible benefits from sustainable resource use**. All network communities depend on the natural environment for tourism. All villages offer jungle hikes and island/snorkel tours, except for Nakha where the sole tourism activity is river rafting. Guiding, handicrafts, and homestays provide income for villagers who otherwise rely on fishing and forest resource extraction including logging, NTFP collection, and hunting.

In Ban Talae Nok, the Ecotourism Club has adopted an environmental code that includes restrictions on cutting trees and trapping wildlife. Considering that 48% of homes in the village are members of Ecotourism Club, this code has influenced behavioral norms and **created a locally-enforced conservation standard**. This code is also discouraging unsustainable activity by villagers outside of the Ecotourism Club. For example, a recent study tour found a number of birds trapped in a mist net, causing distress to the visiting students. The leaders of the Ecotourism Club spoke with the owner of the mist net, and he agreed to discontinue the practice, agreeing that mist netting had the potential to offend and upset visitors. Similar tactics were used earlier in the year to discourage over-harvesting of mangrove saplings.

Discouragingly, recent tourism development in Khao Soke, Phang Nga Bay and Koh Surin indicate that “eco” tourism is leading to accelerated resource degradation. There is common consensus that, despite good policy, this is occurring due to a lack of ground-level protection mechanisms. As such, developing “eco” tourism is not enough – to be truly sustainable, **direct links between tourism and conservation** must be established.

The tourism groups in four of N-ACT’s “active” villages also function as conservation clubs, and support projects including orchid protection, waste management and conservation of an endemic water lily. N-ACT is **increasing demand for local conservation activities** by linking community tourism groups to the private sector and developing promotional materials, such as www.andamancoast.org, that highlight the natural and cultural resources of the area.

For groups already engaged in conservation, N-ACT provides a platform to engage local stakeholders and **educate a wider audience through tourism**. For example, the Klong Nakha Ecotourism Club was formed to conserve the endangered Nakha water lily, which is found only in Klong Nakha and surrounding rivers. This unusual fresh-water plant has long leaves that drift gracefully in the river, and delicate white flowers that bloom from October to December. The Klong Nakha Ecotourism Club is motivated more by a conservation ethic than income, and any profit is used to sponsor rafting trips for local school children. The club also sponsors a nursery for the water lilies that is used by youth groups for restoration activities. Groups of government officials are among the most common visitors, offering ample opportunities for policy influence, but the Ecotourism group lacks printed education materials. N-ACT is helping the group to develop promotional and interpretive materials in Thai and English. To date, N-ACT has facilitated national TV coverage of water lily conservation, and an interactive study tour from the University of California at Los Angeles.

In addition to encouraging conservation within communities, tourism networks such as N-ACT can **provide conservation solutions and resources**. Conflicts between local communities and protected area managers are common in the N-ACT area, but tourism can be an area of cooperation. The community of Laem Naew, for example, has been in conflict with nearby Laem Son National Park for over a decade in regards to illegal land use and fishing practices. Tourism, however, presented a point of common interest. N-ACT sponsored discussions between Laem Naew and the park on tourism development that led to a thawing in relations, and further cooperation on fisheries protection. High potential exists for future cooperation and information sharing in the area of conservation. For example, youth-led conservation in Ban Talae Nok can also serve as a model for Muang Kluang, where a number of conservation programs are active, but are not yet developing youth leadership.



8. Photos of Project Activities

Network Meeting April 2010



Government Survey



Koh Kho Khao capacity development





N-ACT 2010 Final Report for LLS



Mae Nang Khao Product Development



Ban Lion Training



Cambodia training



February Network meeting



Asian Institute of Technology study trip from Bhutan



120/2 Sukapiban 3, Moo 1, Kura, Kuraburi, Phang-Nga, 82150
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