



Strengthening Local Practice and Sharing Lessons Learned: The North Andaman Community Tourism Network

The North Andaman districts of Kuraburi and Kapoe in Thailand are ecologically and culturally unique. They remain relatively undeveloped and many communities still survive by their traditional livelihoods of fishing and farming. Muslim, Buddhist and Moken villages live side by side in harmony. Coral reefs, mangroves, and tropical forests are just minutes away from each other.

In recent years, declining fish catches, degradation of mangrove forests, and expanding commercial plantations have put pressure on the natural resources that local communities depend on for survival.

Recognizing that tourism has potential as sustainable livelihood, and wishing to avoid the negative impacts of mass tourism, a number of villages in the area are in the process of developing community based tourism. They have chosen to focus on activities and products that draw on the North Andaman's natural and cultural heritage, and that are compatible with traditional activities such as craft making, fishing, and small-scale agriculture.

Currently, visitors can take part in homestay, study trips, volunteer activities, and a wide variety of eco, culture, and adventure tours.

From This



To This?



With support from Mangroves for the Future and IUCN's Livelihoods and Landscapes Strategy, ten communities have formed N-ACT - the North Andaman Community Tourism Network. The network serves as an evolving platform to increase the contribution of tourism to sustainable livelihoods and sound ecosystem management by providing communities with access to the best available knowledge and practices.

Currently, N-ACT is facilitating:

- Group and individual capacity building through trainings, study trips, product improvement, and learning tools
- Stakeholder communication resulting in cooperation among communities, businesses, NGOs, and government
- Promotional materials, marketing activities, and private sector outreach resulting in new customers
- Strengthened connections between community tourism, conservation efforts, and poverty alleviation
- Knowledge products to encourage replication of successful community tourism development methods

N-ACT is demonstrating the viability of sustainable tourism as a supplemental livelihood by securing income for local partners. The network's success is based on careful selection of ethical businesses and capable community partners with genuine potential for tourism development. By actively seeking new clients and funding sources, the network has generated significant support for its partners, as shown in the table below.

Beneficiary	Funds to Partner	Area of Cooperation
Community Tourism Groups	240,800 Baht	direct income from new clients and study tours
Handicraft Cooperatives	88,200 Baht	new orders and workshops with tourists
Mangrove Action Project (NGO)	620,000 Baht	EU Grant for Youth and Conservation Tourism training
Andaman Discoveries (tour operator)	167,000 Baht	sales of tourism products developed with N-ACT communities

Supported by:



Conservation and Community Tourism

The interconnections of tourism and conservation in the network have evolved organically. To secure these linkages, N-ACT is using a mixture of three approaches:

- A passive approach where tourism provides income from non-destructive use of natural resources, such as hiking
- An active approach where conservation activities are sold as a tourism product, such as helping with an orchid restoration project or planting mangroves with a youth group.
- A direct approach where conservation groups use tourism as a strategic tool to support existing efforts and raise awareness, as with the efforts of Klong Nakha Community Tourism Group



Case Study – Conservation in Klong Nakha

The Klong Nakha Community Tourism Group was formed to conserve the critically 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 club 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. N-ACT is helping to produce bilingual interpretive and promotional materials. To date, N-ACT has facilitated TV coverage of water lily conservation, and an interactive study tour from the University of California at Los Angeles.



Moving Forward, Meeting Challenges

In early 2010, the network is launching a bilingual website, www.andamancoast.org, that allows communities to market themselves directly. With strong bonds now formed between network members, N-ACT communities remain strongly committed to continuing their cooperation and sharing lessons learned.



Case Study - Poverty Alleviation in Ban Talae Nok Village

In 2008, tourism generated 39,800 baht for the community fund and 300,000 baht in direct income to members, representing 48% of the village. This is equivalent to two months' salary per home. N-ACT's goal is not to encourage tourism as a full-time job, but as a supplementary income compatible with traditional livelihoods.

At the request of poor families, the Ecotourism group provided loans for bedroom and bathroom improvements – six new families are now hosting guests, and have already paid back the loans.

Recycling began as a tourist activity with the local youth group. Since then, the waste management program has generated over 16,000 baht income for the youth group, and its success led to adoption of village-wide collection and recycling system.

Profile: Darunee "Cha" Pakdee

Income in 2007: 48,000 baht
Income in 2008: 125,000 baht
Income in 2009: 136,000 baht

Duties:

Homestay Host
Ecotourism Group Coordinator
Community Center Manager

Recent Highlights:

Winner of TAT's Annual Tourism Awards
Marketing booth at Thai Travel Mart in Bangkok
Study Tours to Satun, Phuket, and Chiang Mai Provinces
Hosting familiarization trips with private tour operators

