



Strengthening Local Practice and Sharing Lessons Learned:

Developing Community Tourism on the North Andaman Coast



A report on Phase I of the N-ACT Community Tourism Network

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Developing Community Tourism on the North Andaman Coast

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Executive Summary

As part of the LLS Strategy's Thailand Component, the North Andaman Community Tourism Network (N-ACT) has increased the contribution of tourism to sustainable livelihoods and sound ecosystem management by providing communities with access to the best available knowledge and practices. Recognizing the outstanding natural and cultural resources of the North Andaman area, N-ACT focused its community-level efforts in Kuraburi district of Phang Nga province and the adjacent districts of Kapoe and Suksamran in Ranong Province.

In its first phase, N-ACT generated tangible benefit through cooperative engagement with stakeholders including community members, tour operators, media, and government officers. From April to December of 2008, the network provided:

- Initial engagement with community tourism stakeholders and synthesis of baseline information
- Relationship-building between stakeholders leading to mutual benefit, and ongoing cooperation
- Increased promotion capacity for community tourism groups and local businesses

This paper summarizes the first phase of N-ACT's work and identifies features that may be useful in setting up community tourism networks elsewhere. Through careful selection of core partners and a network structure that built capacity while being locally appropriate, N-ACT generated tangible benefits for stakeholders, policy influence, and support for conservation.

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Acknowledgements

The North Andaman Community Tourism Network is made possible by the support of the Livelihoods and Landscapes Strategy (LLS), Thailand Component of the International Union for the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN). IUCN is the world's oldest and largest global environmental network. N-ACT has further benefited from the kind assistance and hard work of Janaka de Silva and the community members whose vision and determination have led towards sustainable tourism on the Andaman Coast

Project Duration and Implementation Arrangements

Project activities took place from March to December of 2008. Implementation and management of the project on a day-to-day basis was performed by consultants Bodhi Garrett and Nattaya Sektheera. An office was set up in Kuraburi (within 100km of all target communities), and ground-level efforts were assisted and advised by field staff from IUCN, Mangrove Action Project, and Andaman Discoveries. At the national level, the project was administered and supervised by the IUCN Thailand Programme Manager.



Background

The North Andaman is an ecologically and culturally unique area. It remains 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 and tropical rainforests are just minutes away from each other.

As an active participant in conservation and natural resource management along the North Andaman Coast, IUCN recognizes tourism's potential as an ecologically sustainable livelihood. Thus, the Landscapes and Livelihoods Strategy (LLS) aims to "support collaboration among community-based organizations to increase the effectiveness of nature based tourism for poverty reduction and conservation."

Over the past three years, sustainable tourism has been targeted for development in the North Andaman Coast of Thailand by the private sector, NGOs, and through government policy. Concurrently, a number of communities have developed activities for tourists based on the area's cultural and natural heritage. Set against the challenges of the tsunami, and responsible tourism in general, many elements of community tourism are developing successfully including group management and new leaders; positive guest experience; links to conservation and social welfare; and, most importantly, consistent supplemental income.

In the long run, sustainable community tourism requires revenue generation, which, in turn, requires providing a competitive product. Currently, community tourism groups in the area require partners capable of providing marketing, booking, and ground services such as on-site translation for guests. One such organization, a grassroots sustainable tour operator known as Andaman Discoveries, has identified key facets of local community tourism that need to be developed by supporting organizations:

- Community-wide understanding and benefit to ensure that tourism contributes to the village as a whole.
- Ongoing product development to help individuals within a community build skill and confidence over time
- Investment in marketing and promotion by supporting organizations

The North Andaman Community Tourism Network was formed to serve as an evolving platform for ongoing support to local communities engaged in sustainable tourism.



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Objectives and Key Results



Objective 1: Initial engagement with community tourism stakeholders and synthesis of baseline information.

Baseline: No comprehensive information on sustainable tourism or its stakeholders. Available data was widely scattered on internet and with some NGOs.

Outputs and Means of Verification:

Synthesized information on 12 communities through 52 meetings with 85 tourism group members	<i>Report - Community Profiles; Phase 1 Summary for Communities (Thai)</i>
Assessment and data gathering meetings with 41 NGOs and 23 government officers .	<i>Report - Initial Situation Analysis</i>
Outreach to 31 tourism businesses and formal surveys of 21 businesses to assess interest in sustainable tourism.	<i>Table - Local Tourism Business Assessment</i>
Presentations to 2 international tourism seminars , and hosting of Bangkok roundtable with 24 national-level stakeholders .	<i>Reports - Bangkok Roundtable, MTCO Meeting</i>

Objective 2: Relationship-building between stakeholders leading to mutual benefit, and ongoing cooperation

Baseline: Lack of communication among community tourism groups, and an absence of established relationships to the private sector.

Outputs and Means of Verification:

Study tour for 39 villagers from 4 communities interested in sustainable tourism development.	<i>Report - "Intro to Community Tourism" Study Tour</i>
Village-to-village exchange between 27 tourism group members from 6 communities.	<i>Report - Community Group Exchange Tour</i>
96,000 baht to community members generated through direct income from handicraft sales and study tours	<i>Appendix 2 - Community Income</i>
2 network meetings leading to the creation of village-specific tourism development plans for 4 communities.	<i>Report - Network Meeting; Table - Community Tourism Development Plan</i>
30,000 baht leveraged from 6 local NGOs and businesses and successful application for over 1.4 million baht funding to partner NGOs	<i>Appendix 2 - Leveraged Funds</i>

Objective 3: Increased promotion capacity for community tourism groups and local businesses

Baseline: Low levels of independent marketing, often dependent on outside assistance, and lack of promotional materials (except for a brochure in Ban Talae Nok).

Outputs and Means of Verification:

Production of marketing/communication materials including a 32-page full color booklet in Thai and English	<i>Photos for Promotion; Introduction to N-ACT Video; and North Andaman Adventure Handbook</i>
Promotional trip leading to direct cooperation between 5 communities and 9 tour operators	<i>Report - Business & Government Inspection Tour</i>
Increased exposure to promoting organizations , including 22 media outlets , 6 universities, and 2 tourism associations	<i>Media Coverage - TV Shows; Article</i>
Coordination of a successful \$25,000 SEED Award application for community tourism development through Andaman Discoveries	<i>Media Coverage - Press release</i>

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Project Activities

Monitoring

Initial engagement took place through informal meetings with communities, NGOs, businesses and local government. This generated summary reports of stakeholders and issues in the form of Community Profiles, Business Assessment, and an Initial Situation Analysis.

Staff considered over 25 sites for inclusion in the project. An extensive "community assessment checklist" for was compiled from national sources and tailored to local needs. In April, six communities were chosen to participate as "active" communities for Phase I: Muang Kluang in Kapoe district; Laem Naew, Nakha, Ban Talae Nok in Suksamran district; Pak Triam and Tung Nang Dam in Kuraburi district. In addition, N-ACT profiled 12 "interested" villages with groups interested, but not yet active, in community tourism (two in Kapoe District, two in Suksamran, five in Kuraburi, and two on Koh Kor Khao).

Networking

Relationship-building between stakeholders was seen as a necessary prerequisite to cooperation. In May, N-ACT facilitated a series of introductory meetings between "active" communities and one-on-one consultations with local members of government. Network meetings took place in July and August with all six "active" community tourism groups to discuss ongoing cooperation and development needs.

Outreach to "interested" communities was ongoing, in order to determine if community tourism development was appropriate and/or likely to succeed. Simultaneously, N-ACT hosted a national-level forum on sustainable tourism development, and presented at two others (see table for details).

Development

After bilateral links were created in May, "active" communities took part in a "Community Group Exchange Tour" to each others' villages in June (see table for details). In August, "active" communities hosted "interested" villages for a study tour that included mangrove exploration, homestay inspections, and volunteer activities. Both tours allowed communities to identify specific areas for capacity development, and learn from neighboring examples.

Throughout August and September, N-ACT assisted "active" communities in preparing tourism development plans that also served as a foundation for Phase II planning. N-ACT staff also wrote a number of successful funding applications for partner NGOs, resulting in over 1.4 million baht of funding to support community tourism and conservation.

Promotion

As participation from "active" communities grew in August, N-ACT hosted an Inspection Tour for businesses, members of the press, and district officers, most of whom had never experienced community tourism before (see table for details).

In September, N-ACT worked with community leaders to create a user-friendly, bilingual handbook of local tourism attractions, that was sent to responsible tourism guides and select members of the media. A photographer provided much needed promotional imagery. Unexpectedly, N-ACT was invited to assist Kuraburi municipality in setting up a tourism information facility, and provided information, maps, and photos that were made into displays.

Timeline

	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep
Monitoring						
Networking						
Development						
Promotion						

Example Activities

Event	Participants	Summary
National Sustainable Tourism Roundtable	24 groups	Bangkok-based discussion of cooperation among national groups working in sustainable tourism, including business and NGOs. Outputs contributed to use of best practices for ground level action.
Local Tourism Business Assessment	21 businesses	Survey to determine products offered, current practices, and interest in sustainable tourism. Outputs used to determine partners for Inspection Tour and promotional materials.
Community Group Exchange Tour	27 people	All six N-ACT community tourism groups shared their tour and conservation programs, resulting in cooperative product development, and detailed discussion of prices and marketing.
"Intro to Community Tourism" Study Tour	39 people	Participants from four villages visited N-ACT member communities, along with five field staff from Raks Thai. The trip provided direct experience and discussion of homestays and tourism activities.
Inspection Tour for Business and Government	24 people	Three day tour for government and private sector. Outcomes included direct income, media coverage, and commitments from tour operators.
MTCO Tourism and Biodiversity Forum	52 people	Sharing of lessons learned - presentation to international policymakers and project managers on the importance of capacity building for multi-stakeholder processes.

Summary of Meetings

Sector	Meetings	Participants	Examples
NGOs	18	41	Community development, tourism, & conservation
Government	14	23	Chiefs of district, provincial departments, TAO members
Business	31	49	Local/regional businesses, provincial tourism associatio
Community	52	85	Six active and eight interest communities in five districts
Promotion	8	22	Guidebooks, TV, newspaper magazines, and websites

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Lessons Learned and Constraints

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 – Choosing the Right Partners

An ever-increasing number of community groups on the North Andaman coast are interested or active in tourism development, 25 of which were considered for inclusion in N-ACT. Initial engagement took place through informal meetings with communities, NGOs, businesses and local government. This generated **ground-level assessment tools** and summary reports of stakeholders.

Given the potential for tourism to be co-opted by local elites, and the possible conflicts caused by unsuccessful community tourism development, N-ACT only engaged with communities that could answer yes to the following questions:

Is there tourist access, activities, accommodation, and acceptance from the community?

Is there a potential market?

Is there a community group with interest and motivation?

Is there a leader with understanding, vision, and willingness to forego personal benefit?



“Learn extensively before you act, develop tourism slowly, and always remain open to new ideas.”
Chamni, Nakha Community

A number of checklists for CBT existed at the national and international levels, but were not tailored to local needs. N-ACT staff profiled local CBT groups and businesses to determine which factors for success are most important in the target area. Community profiles described local geography, demographics, livelihoods, history, along with aspects of tourism including current activities, income, and future plans. This data informed the creation of an extensive checklist with **35 factors of success for community tourism** (please see Table 3, Reference Documents). Based on local data and regional observation, the following factors most strongly influence the success of CBT:

- skill of leadership and participation of members in a CBT group
- diversity and appeal of tourism activities offered
- external support for marketing & promotion
- community-wide benefit from tourism
- direct links between tourism and conservation

Careful selection of target communities has been crucial to N-ACT's success. In one instance, N-ACT considered partnering with a well known community development organization to provide in-village CBT trainings. The target villages proposed by the partner organization, however, did not meet the selection criterion described above, and, as such, N-ACT staff declined the offer for cooperation. Wishing to still be of use, N-ACT staff introduced the organization to another NGO capable of providing the necessary trainings. Reports from the third party, however, indicate that the trainings were unsuccessful due to a lack of participation. As such, N-ACT's insistence on selection criteria was reaffirmed.



“N-ACT has done a very good job in exposing us to community tourism.”
Chadathip, Educational Travel Center

Similarly, it is important to set **standards for private sector involvement** to ensure community benefit and to maintain the “added value” that genuine CBT has over mass tourism. Tourism is essentially a private sector industry, and local communities require business partners to succeed. Yet, there is a danger that the label of “community-based” tourism could be adopted by the private sector without attention to the needs of communities (much like “eco” tourism has been adopted without regard to conservation). N-ACT has initiated an ongoing survey of local and regional tourism businesses to determine products, involvement/interest in eco and community tourism, and commitment to principles of sustainable tourism. Businesses with a favorable score are included in N-ACT inspection tours and promotional materials such as the Adventure Handbook. The core elements of the business survey were:

- Natural component of products offered
- Awareness of sustainable tourism
- Active involvement in sustainable tourism
- Customer demand for eco/nature tourism
- Contribution to local community
- Awareness of local community tourism
- Customer demand for community tourism
- Annual volume of tourists



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Lessons Learned – Setting Up a Successful Network

N-ACT was formed with the recognition that CBT is the right form of tourism for both for the current tourism market and for field conditions in the target area. The network setup incorporated local ownership and locally appropriate methodology.

Sustainable tourism has the potential to grow to 25% of the world's travel market within six years, taking the value of the sector to £250 billion (US\$473.6 billion) a year (Travel Weekly, 14-07-2006). Even with an economic downturn, sales at ResponsibleTourism.com increased by 37% in 2007. Despite the growing popularity of sustainable tourism, evidence from numerous failed interventions across Asia suggests that **CBT is not always a successful tool** for livelihoods development.

On the North Andaman coast, however, an **analysis of prevailing socio-economic factors** reveals an opportunity for CBT to succeed. The main incomes in the area are small-scale fishing and farming, but coastal fisheries are in decline, and large-scale plantations are replacing mixed-agriculture orchards. As a supplementary livelihood, CBT is a potentially sustainable source of income that is compatible with the local lifestyle, and depends on the same natural resources that keep communities healthy. Local evidence indicates that income from CBT is more consistent and resilient than mass tourism, as it is less seasonal and tends to experience fewer cancellations in times of uncertainty.

Professor N. Shimizu, an expert in rural tourism development at Haboromo University in Japan, interviewed villagers, CBT group members, and government officials in September, 2008 and identified **favorable local conditions for CBT development**. Shimizu found that elsewhere in Asia, income is typically the primary driver of local interest in tourism, leading to contacts with mass tour operators. In Suksamran and Kuraburi districts, however, locals are less motivated by income, and interested in smaller scale tourism development. All sources said they expect incremental development of tourism, and clearly see Phuket and Khao Lak and negative examples. Of Ban Talae Nok, Professor Shimizu observed "the coordination balance – tourism management, community participation, and the contribution to the whole society – is excellent."

Given the local interest in CBT, N-ACT ensured its successful adoption by utilizing **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. Next, communities were introduced to each other bilaterally, then visited each other as a group, and finally came together as a network. The informal atmosphere generated a learning environment based on meaningful interaction instead of academic pursuit. External facilitation of group meetings was kept to a minimum, and community members managed 95% of the discussion. N-ACT staff skillfully guided the group through quiet and/or confusing moments with clarifying questions. This style of group learning also contributed greatly to local ownership of the network – participants recognized from the onset that their level of learning and benefit depended on their input.

No two communities are the same, and this maxim is especially true when considering the complex factors of community development. N-ACT provided **targeted forms of support** to communities at different stages in development. For example, in Laem Naew, N-ACT focused heavily on lobbying village leadership in order to build support for the CBT group. In Muang Kluang, on the other hand, most activities were aimed at increasing the participation of group members.

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. For example, in August of 2008, participants from the four interested communities took part in mangrove and forest tours, homestay, volunteer activities and lively discussions with their hosts. A total of 39 community members participated, including 17 from communities interested in developing tourism, and 22 residents from the hosting villages of Muang Kluang, Nakha, and Ban Talae Nok. These villages represented the full spectrum of traditional livelihoods, from upland farmers to coastal fisherman. Each host community was asked to present an overview of tourism in their village, including history, activities, management, strengths, and weaknesses. The study tour generated increased understanding of the process by which CBT develops, and stimulated discussion of its positive and negative impacts. Raks Thai field staff from 5 nearby communities also took part, and expressed motivation to apply what they had learned in their own work.

"There are too many examples throughout the developing world where tourism development has lead to an intensive exploitation of land and resources, leaving landscapes degraded and communities unhinged after just several years of unmanaged tourism and whereby the local tourism market is often monopolized by the outside private sector".

Dirk Steebergen , Natural Resource & Environmental Management Centre



"Realistically, if you want the local operators and the communities to be involved, the network needs to be organized on a local level."

William Tuffin, Laos Ecotourism Operators Forum



"United like this, I believe we can overcome many obstacles in our communities"

Anan, Hat Praphat Community



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Lessons Learned – Constraints to Setting Up a Successful Network



Systemic Challenges

Whereas most forms of tourism are based in the private sector, community tourism receives significant support from NGOs, academia, and government. Generally, the stated goal of these supporting organizations is to create ongoing, independently-run operations. This requires a transfer of capacity from organization to community that rarely occurs. Communities are often economically motivated, but supporting organizations tend to place more importance on social and environmental outcomes. This **fundamental difference in priorities** is particularly relevant in poor communities.

While dialogue is occurring among the stakeholders, it is mainly between business and government, and communities typically face **barriers to meaningful participation in tourism planning**. Assessments carried out by Thai Research Fund, Thai Environment Institute, and the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism, found high community-level interest and numerous possible activities in communities, but also identified the following challenges:

- Widely scattered information on sustainable tourism and its stakeholders, and a lack of promotional materials
- Low levels of independent marketing, often dependent on outside assistance
- Lack of communication among community tourism groups, and an absence of established relationships to the private sector

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 very 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 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. Operating costs are also quite high, as electricity is supplied by diesel generator, and roughly 1,000 baht of water is required per every four guests. Furthermore, the absence of capacity building has led to deep divisions in the village, and income accruing to only a few families.

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.

An **inter-provincial network** is unlikely to function in the N-ACT target area. The distance between communities is too far, requiring untenable time and transportation costs; supporting agencies such as TAT, Dept. of Sport and Tourism and Tourism Associations are all provincial; and the main source of guests is for CBT operations is different, depending on their proximity to Ranong or Khao Lak.

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Lessons Learned – Making a Difference

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.

The **interconnections of tourism and conservation** in the N-ACT project area have evolved organically. By recognizing and supporting these linkages, N-ACT has been able to leverage significant conservation benefits. Community-based tourism can be used to support conservation on three levels:

- Income from non-extractive utilization of natural resources (passive)
- Using conservation activities as a tourism product with saleable value (active)
- Using tourism as strategic tool to support existing conservation efforts (direct)

As detailed in Appendix 2, the direct income and increased marketing capacity generated by N-ACT **provide tangible benefits from sustainable resource use**. The six “active” 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, homestays and cultural activities 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, in July of 2008, a 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 the N-ACT Adventure Handbook, 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 Klóng Nakha Ecotourism Club was formed to conserve the endangered Nakha water lily, which is found only in Klóng 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 Klóng 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.



Success Stories

In Ban Talae Nok, tourists can join with the youth group to plant mangroves or gather litter. The waste management program has generated over 16,000 baht income for the youth group in 2008, and its success led to adoption of village-wide collection and recycling system.

The Tourism and Conservation group of Tung Nang Dam protects fragile local habitat including sea grass beds and swampland. Working at a village nursery, tourists can help local guides protect and replant threatened native orchids.

