



Lessons learned - the North Andaman community tourism network

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LESSONS LEARNED - THE NORTH ANDAMAN COMMUNITY TOURISM NETWORK

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Abstract

Over the past four years, sustainable tourism along Thailand's Andaman Coast has been promoted as a development tool by government policy, the private sector, and NGOs. Concurrently, a number of communities have developed tourism activities based on the area's cultural and natural heritage. With the support of IUCN, the North Andaman Community Tourism Network (N-ACT) is increasing the contribution of tourism to sustainable livelihoods and sound ecosystem management by providing communities with access to the best available knowledge and practices.

This paper will summarize N-ACT's accomplishments and identify features that may be useful in developing community tourism programs elsewhere. Through monitoring, networking, promotion, and capacity building, N-ACT generates tangible outcomes that address poverty alleviation, gender equity, and the need for knowledge sharing. Lessons from the first phase of N-ACT relate to four major areas; choosing the right partners, setting up a successful network, linking conservation and tourism, and facilitating partnerships.

Keywords

network, tourism, ecotourism, sustainable tourism, community based tourism, CBT, community based organization, CBO, community development, coastal development, capacity building, stakeholder engagement, private sector cooperation, Thailand, Ranong, Phang Nga, IUCN, MFF, Andaman Discoveries

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Main Text

Introduction

Thailand's North Andaman Coast 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.

Over the past four 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: group management and new leaders; positive guest experience; links to conservation and social welfare; and, most importantly, consistent supplemental income.

While tourism is generally in the private sector, community tourism tends to rely on supporting organizations for development, as initial investment is rarely available elsewhere. These supporting organizations usually focus on environmental and social outcomes, whereas the community focus tends to be on income. Thus, supporting groups often fail to transfer capacity, and business efficiency is often compromised.

In the long run, sustainable community tourism requires revenue generation, which, in turn, requires providing a competitive product. Initial assessments revealed:

- No comprehensive information on sustainable tourism or its stakeholders.
- Lack of communication among community tourism groups.
- Absence of promotional capacity and relationships to the private sector.
- Need for partners capable of providing marketing, booking, and ground services

The North Andaman Community Tourism Network (N-ACT) 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. Recognizing the outstanding natural and cultural resources of the North Andaman area, N-ACT is focused in Kuraburi district of Phang Nga province and the adjacent districts of Kapoe and Suksamran in Ranong Province.

N-ACT's objectives are:

1. Networking: Initial engagement and ongoing communication within stakeholder groups leading to bilateral cooperation
2. Development: Group and individual capacity building in communities with active tourism programs and certain communities interested in tourism development

3. Promotion: Improved production and dissemination of promotional materials for direct marketing of community tourism.
4. Monitoring: Synthesis of information on community tourism stakeholders, and documentation of financial benefits, private sector interest, and links to conservation.

Project activities began in March of 2008, and will continue through June of 2010. Support for N-ACT comes from the International Union for the Conservation of Nature (IUCN), Mangroves for the Future (MFF), and responsible tour operator Andaman Discoveries. The authors also wish to acknowledge the community members whose vision and determination is leading towards sustainable tourism on the Andaman Coast.

Outcomes

Tourism is a cross-cutting sector that when well planned can bring about substantial social, economic, and institutional benefits, including poverty alleviation, gender equity, and sharing of knowledge products. To date, N-ACT has generated direct income and funding resources worth over 2,400,000 baht, as detailed in Table 1. Other stakeholder benefits include:

- Communities engaged or interested in sustainable tourism improved their inter-group relationships and capacity in developing and providing tourism products.
- Practitioners of sustainable tourism development (NGO and other) received tools for community capacity development, sharing of lessons learned, and cross-sectoral cooperation.
- Government agencies involved in tourism development gained access to information about local tourism development, and understanding of market demands and community needs.
- Sustainable tourism businesses (operators and promoters) improved their understanding of, and access to, local community tourism activities and received promotional materials.

Gender

N-ACT has addressed gender issues by providing more benefit to women than men, providing in-village income that is compatible with women's traditional roles, and developing leadership and self-confidence in women.

The nature of community tourism work leads to a division of duties along gender lines, with men occupying roles as guides and boat drivers, while women are responsible for food, homestay, and handicrafts. Data from Ban Talae Nok indicates that the women's

groups in received significantly higher income than the men's groups. From February through August of 2008, for example, women made 178,745 baht while men made only 47,370 baht.

The lack of village-based income opportunities in Southern Thailand is well documented. Often, women seeking employment are forced to take work in nearby towns such as Ranong and Phuket, disrupting the traditional patterns of village life. Handicraft production, homestay hosting, and food preparation, however, do not conflict with cultural or family obligations such as taking care of children or the elderly. As women are typically the primary household caregivers, income from tourism can directly affect household income and quality of life.

Recognizing that not all traditional patterns of village life are positive, N-ACT also builds women's leadership capacity. The role of "tourism coordinator" is filled by women in all six "active" communities. Women also occupy most of the leadership positions in the Laem Naew, Ban Talae Nok, and Tung Nang Dam. Study tours and discussion forums are more commonly attended by women. For example, women constituted well over 50% of participants on the "Intro to Community Tourism" and "Community Group Exchange" study tours.

Poverty

Tourism is currently a supplementary livelihood in target villages, and as such is only pursued by individuals in need of additional income. In this context, N-ACT is focusing on reducing relative poverty with respect to basic needs and access to benefits.

As mentioned in the previous section on gender, community tourism activities take place *in situ* leaving time for traditional income streams such as small-scale agriculture, animal husbandry, and fishing. Community tourism does not require significant re-investment of time or resources, as families have most of the equipment and knowledge they need to participate. A fisherman's boat and sense of the sea, for instance, prepare him for work as a guide.

Tourism-related conservation projects also contribute to poverty alleviation through preservation of basic environmental services. Mangrove reforestation, as practiced in Muang Kluang and Ban Talae Nok, is critical in restoring mud crab habitat. Mud crabs, in turn, are a key source of sustenance for villagers that cannot afford a long-tail boat or fishing equipment.

Examples of tourism-related poverty alleviation in Ban Talae Nok:

- In 2007, community-based tourism generated 198,755 baht in direct income to members of the Ecotourism Club, and another 39,800 baht for the community fund. The Ecotourism Club consists of 42 members from 32 households, representing 48% of homes in the village.

- In early 2008, a number of villagers wanted to join the Ecotourism Group, but did not have the necessary household standards to provide homestay services. In response, the Ecotourism group provided loans to three families for beds, mosquito nets, and bathroom improvement. These families now have an income generating mechanism, and have already paid back the loans.
- Waste management in Ban Talae Nok began as a tourist activity supported by the local youth group. The initial success of the waste management program, and the financial returns of recycling, motivated all households in the village to participate. This led to Ecotourism Group leaders successfully lobbying the local government to resume garbage collection.

Knowledge sharing

Through knowledge sharing and policy influence N-ACT is making outputs and lessons learned accessible to all levels of decision makers. Locally, N-ACT sponsored a study tour for government officers, as many of them had not yet visited the community tourism programs – resulting in increased government understanding and commitments to ongoing support.

In Kuraburi, government officers asked N-ACT staff to join the Kuraburi Information Centre advisory committee, and N-ACT provided extensive informational materials on local responsible tourism activities. N-ACT also lobbied 23 government officials individually, including the assistant governor of Phang Nga, the tourism council of Thailand, district chiefs and council members, protected area managers, and three provincial departments.

N-ACT engaged with the next generation of doers and thinkers by cooperating with a number of academic institutions including the University of California at Los Angeles, the University of Birmingham, the University of Hawaii School of Tourism Industry Management, and Haboromo University, Japan.

N-ACT was also able to share lessons learned and influence policy at the national and international levels. A history of post-tsunami CBT development in the N-ACT target area was featured in Development Asia magazine, an official publication of the Asian Development Bank (ADB). N-ACT also supplied case study information to the Secretariat of the Convention on Biodiversity for the Global Biodiversity Outlook-3 that will be published in 2010. In addition to publications, N-ACT presented at a number of meetings, the highlight of which was a conversation with the Honorable Hilary Ben, Secretary of State for the UK Department of Environment, Food, and Rural Affairs (Defra). Presentations were also made to the 2008 Responsible Tourism Conference, Mekong Tourism Coordination Office, and the Community Based Tourism Institute of Thailand

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, methods and challenges of designing a network, linking conservation and tourism, and facilitating partnerships.

Lessons from N-ACT's work relate to four major areas:

1. choosing the right partners
2. setting up a successful network
3. linking conservation and tourism
4. facilitating partnerships

In relation to choosing the right partners, engaging will all possible stakeholders, developing and using ground assessments tools, careful selections of target communities and working towards setting standards are key factors that need to be considered during the preparatory stages.

To set up a successful network, it is important to ensure local ownership and locally appropriate methods are used, that knowledge products cater to the need and use by a local audience and work to leverage successful local examples so as to build capacity in neighboring communities.

Linking conservation to sustainable tourism can be achieved using a mixture of three approaches. A passive approach, where income from non-extractive utilization of natural resources where as a active approach would be where conservation activities such as a tourism product with saleable value are promoted and a direct approach would be where tourism is used as a strategic tool to support existing conservation efforts.

Facilitating partnership is an important element for successful community tourism. The main approaches used have been by generating demand for sustainable tourism products from regional and national tour operators, supporting development of new Community Based Tourism products for local operators and ecotourism resorts and identifying funding resources for conservation and tourism development projects.

1. 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. A great deal of time was spent engaging with all possible stakeholders. This sorting process generated a repository of local CBT

knowledge, and, more importantly, allowed for identification of potential allies from a large group of actors. Institutional and community functions (including those in CBT development) are not always filled by individuals who are genuinely committed to doing a good job. In order to affect real change, N-ACT has carefully selected partners that have demonstrated effectiveness and dedication.

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?

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** (Table 2). 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.

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 website and Adventure Handbook. The core elements of the business survey are:

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

2A. Setting Up a Successful Network – Necessary Conditions

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 as 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.

2B. Setting Up a Successful Network – Challenges

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.

3. Linking Conservation and Tourism

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 Table 1, 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. 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.

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 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**. During an August study tour, the residents of Ton Kloy came to understand Ban Talae Nok's waste management system, and are now implementing their own waste program. Working with Mangrove Action project, N-ACT secured a 620,000 baht grant for the Ban Talae Nok youth group that will allow the existing mangrove restoration efforts to adopt a multi-species approach.

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, community members from Tung Nang Dam, which is home to a number of uncommon plant species, were greatly inspired by the success of Nakha's conservation efforts. 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.

4. Facilitating Partnerships

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. The structure of the network is accordingly flexible, and able to evolve as needed by its beneficiaries. In the long-run, N-ACT is creating cooperation mechanisms based on local interest and ability which are thereby independent of external support.

Case Study of Ban Talae Nok Ecotourism Club

With assistance from N-ACT, the Ecotourism Club has successfully partnered with government, businesses, and NGOs. The highlight of this cooperation was successful application for the Tourism Authority of Thailand's Best Ecotourism Destination Award

for 2008, accompanied by a year of free marketing and promotion. N-ACT encouragement led to the group's membership in the provincial Tourism Association, resulting in sponsorship for a booth at the Thailand Travel Mart, the nation's biggest tourism industry event. Other partnerships made possible by N-ACT include:

- a study trip for guides and homestay hosts to Koh Yao Noi
- an inspection tour resulting in sales agreements with four tour operators
- editing of a successful funding proposal for the Department of Sport and Tourism
- membership in the Ranong Tourism Business Development Network

Networks can serve as a valuable tool for group action and coordination. In the N-ACT target area, however, stakeholders have mostly engaged in direct cooperation, as facilitated by N-ACT staff. This has generated direct benefit and a platform for ongoing cooperation. As a result of the "CBT Group Exchange Tour" in August of 2008, 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 requested that the group at Nakha recommend them as the closest accommodation.

N-ACT is **generating demand for sustainable tourism products** offered by local communities from regional and national tour operators. Contract rates and product details were exchanged between five communities and nine tour operators including Exotissimo, ETC, Greenview, Jansom Resort, Tinidee Resort, North by North East Tours, and Khao Lak Land Discovery. Andaman Discoveries, for example, is now actively marketing rafting at Nakha. Koh Ra Ecolodge has agreed to offer hiking and orchid restoration tours to Tung Nang Dam and kayak trips that will stop at Baan Krachang. N-ACT also promoted local handicrafts, and secured an order for the Moken boat collective worth 25,000 baht from Mangroves for the Future.

Example Activity - Inspection Tour August 22-24, 2008

Select members of government and the private sector visited six villages with tourism programs. Participants took part in homestays, handicraft workshops, and village-led projects to conserve mangrove forests and an endemic water lily. The inspection tour was only a three day event, yet produced a number of positive results beyond sustainable income for community members. The extensive consultation process beforehand ensured that participants were informed and ready to engage. Members of the private sector were chosen through Bangkok meetings and an in-depth survey of businesses in the Kuraburi area. In village, the tour was hosted by chiefs, district council, and the village tourism groups.

In brief, the tour produced the following outcomes:

- Commitment from tour operators to sell community tourism products including day tours, cultural tours, homestay, and conservation activities.
- Government recognition from Department of Sport and Tourism in Ranong that a host village has now been included in provincial development plans.
- Promotion through regional television and newspaper coverage and future support from provincial Tourism Associations

- Material contributions from local tourism businesses for 20% of inspection tour costs.

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 and accompanying information materials in English and German. The tour is designed to provide an improved customer experience for Greenview while increasing income opportunities for Moken through handicraft sales. N-ACT is also cooperating with the Koh Ra Ecolodge to design a guided community tour that will provide income to a village guide and contributions to a community fund. On nearby Koh Phratong, N-ACT is facilitating the design of a village tour in Tung Dap that will highlight the island's traditional fishing lifestyle. Golden Buddha Beach resort has agreed to supply customers.

N-ACT has also been directly responsible for **generating funding resources of 1,475,000 baht**. This money will support conservation and CBT development projects that will be implemented by partner organizations in N-ACT communities. N-ACT helped link Mangrove Action Project to a number of local projects, including a series of CBT trainings funded by Raks Thai and the Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism. These trainings focused on CBT as a tool for natural resource management and included a number of communities in the N-ACT target area. N-ACT was also responsible for a procuring year-long, EU-funded grant for environmental education awarded to Mangrove Action Project and Andaman Discoveries. Working with Andaman Discoveries, N-ACT co-authored the funding application and implementation plan for the 2009 SEED Awards for Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Development. SEED will provide \$25,000USD to Andaman Discoveries to "expand employment opportunities, strengthen local economic and cultural activity and promote sustainable resource management through community based tourism." Some of this money will be used to co-fund N-ACT's Phase II activities, including a website for community promotion and development of study tours.

Beyond providing benefit to local communities, private sectors interventions are creating **business-to-business cooperation** in responsible tourism. As a result of the SEED Award, N-ACT staff accompanied Andaman Discoveries to the World Travel Mart in London in November 2008. While in London, N-ACT staff engaged in extensive outreach to responsible tour operators, and secured commitments to send guests to N-ACT communities from Grace Travel, Billetkontoret Tour, GAP Adventures, and Meet the People Tours. In Thailand, the N-ACT inspection tour led to cooperation between Exotissimo (a major national tour operator) and three local businesses (Koh Ra Ecolodge, Greenview Travel, and Andaman Discoveries).

Tables

Table 1 - Income Generated by N-ACT (for partner communities and NGOs)

<u>Partner</u>	<u>Contribution</u>	<u>Area of Cooperation</u>
Muang Kluang Tourism Group	50,500	direct income from study tours
Ban Talae Nok Tourism Group	52,200	direct income from study tours
Nakha Tourism Group	12,800	direct income from study tours
Laem Naew Tourism Group	4,300	direct income from study tours
Tung Nang Dam Tourism Group	4,900	direct income from study tours
Ban Krachang Tourism Group	7,200	direct income from study tours
Youth Clubs	4,100	contribution for help with study tours
Moken Boat Handicraft Group	31,000	order for MFF Symposium
Ban Talae Nok Handicraft Groups	2,000	MFF Symposium study tour
Community-based project staff	735,000	direct income from project work
Mangrove Action Project	620,000	EU Grant for Env. Education
Mangrove Action Project	105,000	Raks Thai funding for CBT Training
Andaman Discoveries	750,000	SEED Award for CBT Development
Andaman Discoveries	54,000	Business from Tour Operators

Table 2 - Factors of Success for Community Tourism

Capacity

- tourism leaders' understanding of sustainable tourism
- tourism group understanding of sustainable tourism
- community understanding of sustainable tourism
- support for leadership within tourism group
- inclusiveness of group
- relative poverty of members
- existing network with other community tourism
- existing relationships with N-ACT members
- existing conflicts in the village(s)

Marketing

- existing promotional materials
- current promotional efforts
- existing promotion network
- understanding of target market
- understanding of Thai tourism market
- independent market capacity

Tourism Activities

- number of products/activities offered
- safety of products offered
- content of products offered
- service of products offered
- food and accommodation prices
- activity prices
- seasonality of activities
- English-language ability
- nearby attractions
- potential activities
- links to local conservation or cultural activities
- percentage of overall income

External Support

- assistance in capacity building
- vocational trainings for villagers
- product development assistance
- external marketing and promotion assistance
- existing network of supporters
- government cooperation
- assistance in conservation activities