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**Andaman Communal Development
and the Tsunami:
Changing Coastal Ways of Life**

By Somyot Tolang

In cooperation with Save Andaman Network

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Andaman Communal Development and the Tsunami: Changing Coastal
Ways of Life.

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Krabi Declaration on Sustainable Post-Tsunami Rehabilitation

The participants of the forum would like to extend their gratitude and heartfelt thanks to all individuals, communities, national and international groups, parties and organizations for the help and aid they have provided for the individuals and communities affected by the tsunami of December 26th 2004. We hope that they will continue to give us unwavering support during the remaining task of long-term rehabilitation. The tsunami has left Indonesia, Sri Lanka, India, Thailand, the Maldives and other countries with devastated coasts, shattered communities, economies and hundreds of thousands of people in need of support. This destruction was, however, only the initial direct impact of the tsunami disaster. The ensuing aid efforts were part of just the first phase of tsunami rehabilitation.

Nine months have now passed since the tsunami and in most affected areas treatment has been delivered to the wounded and basic shelter is available for the surviving victims; in many cases the boats and fishing gear needed for livelihood restoration of the fisher folk have been provided; the remaining tasks are ready to be overseen by restored community structures and local administrations. The situation can, thus, in most instances be described as approaching stability. However, it is a far cry from being normal.

The tsunami recovery now enters a second phase of transformation that is the recovery from a disaster into a more permanent and functioning economic and social set-up, i.e. the mitigation of the secondary tsunami impact. While the aid to rehabilitate from the initial direct impact of the tsunami was characterized by speed and efficiency, the recovery support effort needed for the indirect impact recovery must strive for long-term effectiveness and sustainability. Taking into account livelihood, economic recovery, disaster management, issues of land and housing for the displaced, the landless, women, children, gender issues as well as migrant labor problems. In order to achieve this, a number of measures are urgently needed. Based on past aid delivery experience we therefore ask the international community and supporting NGO's and GO's to mobilize all available resources to:

- Ensure that the long-term rehabilitation of the tsunami affected area is based on definitions of fairness, justice, sustainability and stability as perceived and defined by the tsunami affected communities and individuals;
- Develop the secondary tsunami recovery support into an opportunity to address and solve pre-tsunami problems that have been worsened and/or exposed by the disaster;
- Deliver assistance and support in an accountable and transparent form that ensures participation of those affected in planning, implementation and execution of long-term rehabilitation programs;
- Establish – a vitally important point - a proper, honest forward-looking information system and data-base on the tsunami disaster for the use and to the benefit of its affected individuals and communities, independent of nationality, race or religion;
- Initiate an aid-tracking system / mechanism to avoid the misuse of aid-resources or its appropriation for something other than aid purposes;
- Ensure that the remaining rehabilitation becomes a stepping stone for further development of the affected areas leading to better conditions than before the tsunami disaster.

If the international community, governments and civil societies help to continue with the tsunami recovery support based on the conditions given above, the tsunami disaster itself can be turned into an opportunity for development that is in line with sustainability needs and economic progress of all mankind. We believe in the strength of cooperation, coordination, openness and solidarity in times of need.

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Acronyms

| Abbreviation | Full name/ Expression |
|---------------------|---|
| NGO | Non-Governmental Organization |
| SAO/ TAO | Sub-district Administrative Organization (Tambon Administrative Organization) |
| SAN | Save Andaman Network |
| SEA-C.R. | Southeast Asia Consult & Resource Company Limited |
| TAW | Tsunami Aid Watch |

Preface I

In the publication at hand, the 2004 Tsunami experiences are set against the backdrop of changing lives in the communities of the Andaman Coast in modern times.

Khun Somyot Tolang communicates in a narrative style some of his own experiences in Thailand's South, gathered during his field work with the fishing folk of the Andaman Sea, and reveals the changes taking place in their daily lives. But his collection of stories illustrates not only the changes wrought by the Tsunami disaster of 2004, but goes beyond. Employing a long term perspective, it highlights the course of development promoted by the government and the private sector, especially government policies that have challenged and caused dramatic transformations in the lives of the fishing communities.

To analyze and bring into the rehabilitation discussion some of the issues that have arisen during the mid-term Tsunami reconstruction process, as well as to link them to the broader development process in the affected areas has been one of the main objectives of the Tsunami Aid Watch program (TAW) of the Heinrich Boell Foundation's Southeast Asia Regional Office. It has been at the heart of the TAW concept to do this by providing a stage for the views to be articulated by the affected local communities.

The Heinrich Boell Foundation wishes to thank the author Khun Somyot Tolang and all the help given by Save Andaman Network (SAN). We hope that this publication provides the reader a clearer understanding of the Andaman coastal communities' culture, ways of life and current challenges, as well as a possible starting point for further investigation.

Chiang Mai, January 2008

Dr. Heike Loeschmann

Director of the Heinrich Boell Foundation's Southeast Asia Regional Office

Preface II

This publication offers you insights into the lives of villagers of the Thai Andaman coast. It is a collection of stories which is the result of several years of the author's field work and data collection in the communities of Koh Lee Pae, Koh Phai, Koh Phi Phi, Koh Tarutao and others.

It opens a window on to their current situation after the 2004 Tsunami by placing it in a wider perspective of several decades of local development, as it evolved vis-à-vis the influences of powerful political, economic and administrative actors.

Some unique stories about these communities are presented. Appearing again and again are the problems around the issue of land conflict. As their habitats have become famous tourist destinations, they have had to fight for their rights in their newly contested home environments.

While the problems are quite clear to local people, future work should concentrate on how the involved parties will cooperate in adequately solving them.

We hope you will find this publication both informative and enjoyable as an introduction to the lives of the people of the Andaman Coast.

Finally, I would like to thank the author, Khun Somyot Tolang, and Save Andaman Network (SAN) for their contributions in producing this publication.

Chiang Mai, January 2008

Karl H. Segschneider

Director of the Tsunami Aid Watch programme

Initial note from the author

My years of personal experience with the fishing folk of the Andaman Sea have given me a collection of fond memories. One thing apparent to me is the injustice metered out to the already difficult lives of these hard working people and how it has contributed to their impoverishment.

All their problems come together around the issue of land conflict. Ownership of land allocated for local people on both the plains and in the valley areas are claimed by the national park or by national park developers from the private sector. Tragically, the private sector often owns a lot of land without using it for producing crops. Local people evicted from their land, form impoverished communities in big cities which develop into large slums.

In the past, coastal people did not consider how important land titles were for them, as most of their daily life was spent commuting between the mainland and the land along the coasts. Within this lifestyle, they never considered the need to legally own the plot of land they occupied. As time passed, the areas where they used to live have become desirable tourism destinations and have fallen under the laws of land use control. Moreover, the current fishery policy of exporting sea products has fueled yet another change to their way of life.

The ill thought out policies set by the government have caused dramatic changes in the lives of people in fishing communities. These changes have pushed them from their land, their homes and from their former way of life, leaving them adrift in today's modernized society. The advent of tourism results in the increase of land prices. Behind the beautiful scenes of tourist activity, is anyone aware that tears never stop rolling down the cheeks of the evicted former owners?

These changes also bring about the destruction of the natural resources they have been using for generations. Forest concessions will lead to the destruction of both inland and coastal (mangrove) forests within a few years. Policies of exportation place disastrous threats on our marine resources. Modernized fishing gear such as push nets, have become weapons of destruction to our valuable natural resources. These ongoing situations force people in coastal communities to give up the freedom of living their lives.

You, the reader, will be exposed to the issues that bring about changes to the lives of these people. While their fight against unfair treatment is admirable, undoubtedly they have to face risks and remain patient while confronting influential people. They have no choice. This is the only way to fight back and protect their resources, traditions and livelihood. Even though some communities have succeeded in fighting, their triumph is often short lived.

Struggling in the currents of change, these people need to gather and to fight in any possible way. Adhering to the old ways of thought will not help these people overcome the obstacles. Change is needed.

One might spend his whole life struggling without feeling any sense of victory. May all groups who have fought courageously against injustice be praised whether they are dead or alive.

This paper is the collected experience of several years of field work and data collection. As the author of this study, I have seen how certain methods and concepts have affected the communities. This study represents an appeal from coastal communities to outside societies, whose people might not understand their problems of status and other uncontrollable factors that bring about changes in their lives.

While the nature of the problems is quite clear to local people, future work should concentrate on how involved parties will cooperate in adequately solving problems.

I hope that sometime in the near future, smiles will be worn on the faces of these marginal people, if even only once.

Somyot Tolang

Another tragic story from an inhabitant of Koh Lee Pae¹

“Some of us have been physically injured in a series of confrontations with government officers. The violence first occurred when the national park officers had came onto our land. In the violence which followed, officers attacked our people and two were jailed in Bangkwang prison. It has already now been 20 years, but the two are still detained in custody.”

I was traveling the territories of Urak Lawoi where generations have lived their lives on the islands surrounded by the sea. The island where I have been is called Koh Lee Pae, which is a part of the Tarutao Nai Islands National Park located in the Andaman Sea. Koh Lee Pae consists of a number of small islands such as Koh Ah-dung, Koh Rawee, Koh Yang, Koh Hinngam, Koh Kai, Koh Tong, Koh Hinson and many more.

Every year, thousands of tourists both Thais and those from abroad come here to enjoy themselves in various forms of activity. Koh Lee Pae abounds not only with natural sea products, but also offers tourist sights such as magnificent coral reefs, finely powdered beaches and emerald clear water reflecting the sun's rays. There is scuba diving, fishing, and beaches for relaxing under the sun or enjoyment among the swooping waves. This is a real paradise for all tourists and a pleasure for anyone who loves nature.

Traveling by boat from island to island is a real adventure. Two islands, Koh Lee Pae and Koh Ah-dung, are inhabited by groups of seafarers called the Urak Lawoi or the sea people. The Urak Lawoi people from the two islands make up 520 households. For hundreds of years, over a thousand people have been living here. Their main livelihood is fishing using original traditional equipment.

In the past, many of Urak Lawoi men have been injured. The high pressure from deep diving to catch fish was the crucial factor in these injuries. Even though a school was built in 1958, it offers the Urak Lawoi people only a limited degree of education. There is a low level of education as the island is located far from the mainland. However it allows the locals to preserve their unique traditions, culture and language.

¹ First published in “Kleun Thalay Tai”, November 2006.

When the government issued edicts to promote tourism, it first appeared that the policies would bring economic benefits to our country. However, the consequences were felt by the pioneers who lived their life on the lands during the initial phase of development.

The same old woman continued telling the story of the Urak Lawoi people's burden: "At the time when we were accused of trespassing on public land, we were ordered to stop farming and growing our crops. How could we do this when we relied on these harvests as sources of rice and vegetables? Seafood alone without rice and vegetables was not enough of a diet. In 1974, the government agencies and the national park exiled all Urak Lawoi people from their own land. We will always remember the time of cruelty when we were treated as wildlife invading property annexed by the government."

The Urak Lawoi people have been struggling to live their lives as best they can. While it is true that time can relieve all sorrow, for the Urak Lawoi, the pain still exists and it will never disappear. The two men who were jailed have still not been released.

The next tragic episode happened in 1997 as the Urak Lawoi people felt the pressure of the tourism support policies. From then on, they experienced a new kind of life, surrounded by natural resources which others considered financially valuable. Their traditional coastal way of life began to fade away as its value and usefulness diminished in the eyes of modern society.

Plots of land and beach areas are comparable to gold. More and more people want to build resorts or restaurants on these properties. It appeared that the benefits of a higher standard of living, derived from tourism support policies were substantial. The illnesses caused by deep water diving declined as the Urak Lawoi people had new jobs in tourist resorts. Instead, other sickness appeared. These people became ill from overwork at laboring jobs in resorts. Coughing, from breathing in dust from construction activities, was one such illness and neither doctors nor physicians were on hand to assist."

The main issue is the increase from developers in demand for land. This is the biggest problem troubling the actual owners whose ancestors spent their whole lives living on the lands.

“Illiteracy undermines our ability to fight for our rights over the land issue. Laws are not on our side, as we do not understand the laws at all. The so-called ‘civilized’ people with understanding of the law take advantage of us and label us as “uncivilized.” We have lost our lands to those who do not respect Imam Khiri, our sacred ancestor. More lands will be claimed by others and lost to us. Tourism keeps growing while local people are threatened and sued to leave their lands. Nowadays, courts are filled with cases about land conflicts.”

The Urak Lawoi people are mostly illiterate and do not understand the concepts of land ownership. There is no way they could claim their legal rights to any piece of land, the land of their ancestors, or understand legal conflict resolution without knowledge, awareness and understanding of the legal system. They only know they have to believe in what their ancestor, Imam Khiri, told them: to respect nature and never take advantage of others, even animals. Opposing them stand greedy investors with large resources who always play an unfair game of tug-of-war with these people. For the locals, the situation has become increasingly more stressful while tourism activity and businesses are growing rapidly.

“We hope that our children will receive a higher education in the field of law. This might empower us to fight against any outside investor. Marketing knowledge is perhaps another means for gaining some benefit from the tourism that is mushrooming in our community. So we can improve our quality of life. Even being equipped with this knowledge, the one thing we, the Urak Lawoi people, can definitely say is that we will never use any situation to take advantage of someone unfairly. However, there is a very long way to go. We now can only pray for Imam Khiri, our guardian, who protects us from above from the dirty tricks investors play on us. May Imam Khiri send somebody to help us to regain the lands of our ancestors.”

Stories about the life of squid trappers, the national park and the fishing industry in Koh Phai

On the east coast of Koh Phai, the sun reflects on the calm sea. The east wind blows softly, as the tide is at its lowest. To the south of the island, squid trappers quickly collect their traps before the sun sets.

Numerous sea gulls circle and glide above the squid trapping boats. Others float on surface of the sea, riding the passing waves. It will be hours before the tide comes in again. The sun sets and the sky turns red as the sea reflects the golden and red shades of twilight.

Squid trapping boats return to the harbor of Koh Phai, traveling two at a time. The trappers await the high tide to carry their boats closer to the shore where they could moor them for the evening. The black curtain of night begins to fall and hides the sea's horizon.

A cluster of boats moor together for the night, some trappers wash the squid in sea water on the decks of the boats, while others pack the day's catch in boxes of milled ice. Following a hard day's work, the boats are cleaned. The captain of each boat still has more tasks to complete.

Some trappers go ashore and have dinner with their families. Other trappers work with their wives and children aboard and the evening meal will be prepared and eaten on the boat. The tide rises quickly. When each boat is tied to its mooring pole, it is already night time.

The moon takes over for the sun each night. The east coast of the island appears yellow under the moon's watchful beam. The west wind gradually picks up speed and forms rolling waves, which cascade and crash along the beach. The only sound is the sea's lullaby.

From small cabins on the beach, light glows from battery-operated lamps. These easily constructed cabins serve as temporary shelter with a simple room inside. Kitchens and bedrooms usually share the same main room. A terrace where four or five people can comfortably sit becomes a dining area. Often the terrace also serves as a parlor or bedroom. The scene which takes place each evening involves every family preparing their dinner and then shouting to their neighbor to come and join them. This can make for a quarrel-some sounding din! The usual dinner would consist of squid, small fish or horse crabs. And every family must have a big bowl of chili sauce to accompany the food.

Most squid trappers in Koh Phai have moved there from other coastal villages around Tambon Sriboya, such as Bahn Khlong Toh, Bahn Koh Pu, Bahn Ting Rhai, Bahn Koh Jum, Bahn Pak Rha and Bahn Had Yaow. Other trappers have come from areas such as Tambon Taling. Strengthened by a

sense of community, villagers here help each other as if they were blood relatives. Every Saturday, they come to this island for squid trapping and each Thursday travel to the mainland to prepare themselves for the worship of Allah's kindness on Friday. They will also deliver squid to the buyers each Friday.

These sea folk carry materials and tools with them to make repairs or build entirely new traps to replace damaged or lost squid traps. The damage is usually caused by large fishing boats using otter trawls while they fish. These tools not only destroy the squid traps but also damage coral reefs and animal habitat on the bottom of the sea. Both require a very long time to recover. If the habitat is destroyed, no marine life can lay eggs in the area. The large fishing boats come to the Phang Nga Bay (the area from Koh Yao in Phang Nga to Koh Lanta in Krabi) as it offers an abundance of marine life. It also yields other natural resources, such as mangrove forests and sea grass fields.

Life continued as usual until the arrival of the national park authorities. They demanded to see the spokesman for the squid trappers then began their declarations without waiting for anyone's response. The order from the head office stated they could no longer stay in Koh Phai. All squid trappers must leave the area within seven days, as the land was to be developed as a destination for tourism. If they did not leave, they would be charged with trespassing on government property. The authorities handed out legal papers that served to confuse the villagers even more, as they were full of legal terms they could not understand. The only thing they could agree on was that when they returned from the following Friday's *Salah* (ritual prayer practiced by Muslims) would gather and discuss the matter. After this decision, the men returned to the mainland while the women and children remained on Koh Phai.

After the *Salah* the following Friday, the men repaired their equipment on the shores of the mainland. Someone came from the nearby fish market and said there was a phone call. The woman on the line was crying and speaking at once. She said all their shelters on Koh Phai had been destroyed and burned to the ground. "A sheriff and some police officers came and did this," she exclaimed.

Upon hearing the terrible news, all the men rushed to their boats. They worried about their wives and children as well as their tools and equipment

on the island. Approximately thirty boats headed towards Koh Phai, leaving a huge trail of white smoke in their wake. When the men arrived, they could see they were too late. All their shelters had been destroyed. The women and children sat crying under trees. Everyone was heartbroken. "How cruel they are," someone cried out, "We have never hurt the land or anyone ever before."

What could they do about the situation? The answer was not to simply move away and stop earning their livelihood trapping squid in Koh Phai. This was their home. Everyone was filled with resentment towards the authorities. Everyone knew that one day they would return and rebuild their homes. But for now, all they could do was to go to their other homes on the mainland. But they were not prepared to give up their second homes. Everyone agreed they would find their way back to Koh Phai.

Bahn Pak Bara deep sea port project: a promising future or certain doom for the local fishing communities?

For years, three local fishing villages from the community of Satun have been living a serene life around the Pak Bara estuary. These villages are located near an old deep sea fishing port as well as being a tourist destination. The villages are located near the deepest point in the Andaman Sea. On the nearby land, mountain ranges and mangrove forests abound. The population of the three villages is comprised mainly of Muslim fishermen. They fish with small boats that range between 7 and 12 meters in length or 15 to 24 frames. The tools used by the fishermen consist of crab nets, squid traps, bamboo fish traps, stake traps, spring-traps, casting fishnets and fishhooks. The fish they catch is offered for sale as well as being consumed for their own nourishment. The profits are reinvested into repairing or replacing fishing equipment and purchasing necessities for their families.

In addition to wind currents and tidal flows, which are important factors, the fishermen must also consider how to catch each type of fish during its plentiful season. The proper tool must be matched with the appropriate fish at a specific time of year. For example, to catch shrimp, he would use a shrimp net during the season from May to October just as he would use a bamboo shrimp trap from November to December.

The fishermen can conveniently take a long tail boat to purchase additional supplies from the mainland community. The villagers have found ways to adjust to the many changes occurring around them. However for the people of the Bahn Pak Bara fishing communities, the sea has been for generations and remains to be today the main source of their livelihood.

But at this time, various developmental policies are causing rapid change to our natural resources. The policy to become a world leader in the seafood exportation market without appropriate controls is an example of the imbalance that is destroying our marine life. The sea is unable to keep pace with the global demand for its products and the result is a rapid decrease in the amount of sea life. The harvesting of mangrove forests for charcoal production or the invasive techniques of shrimp farming are two more examples of the destruction that will have catastrophic effects.

Tools of mass destruction including push nets, trawl nets, and the electric power generators used by anchovy fishing boats (which are called 'sea tractors' by the locals) have all sprung from the current exportation policies. The newborn and the very small aquatic life cannot survive in a climate of such high technology destructive fishing. In little more than a decade, our natural resources have been compromised by our exportation policies. Some species have become virtually devastated. The fears of all parties involved in natural resource conservation suggest the future of the coastal areas of Bahn Pak Bara are facing extreme crisis. For the consumer, he will recognize the crisis when he can no longer purchase all the products he desires at his local supermarket.

This vast exploitation of our natural marine resources is visible along our coastlines. This devastation has given rise to protests over the use of the above mentioned fishing tools by several different parties since 1992. Unless changes are implemented, the situation in Bahn Pak Bara is likely to have yet another unhappy ending.

New Dimensions in Industry Promotion of Thailand

At present, Pak Bara Port and other public canals are used by both large scale fishing boats and by boats used for transporting tourists to several destinations, including Koh Tarutao, Koh Adung, Koh Rawee, Koh Lee Pae, Koh Buluan Don and Koh Buluan Lae.

New industry promotion policies have been launched again and again by many different governments. However it appears that each time they develop a new concept, it fails. The growth of industrial estates has been prevalent throughout the country and future plans include more expansion. One such industrial estate is in the *halal*² food market. There are plans to erect twelve *halal* food factories in Satun province. Other plans include the construction of rubber, seafood, production of furniture and processed fruit industrial estates.

As the policies in other arenas have failed, so have the policies concerning our coastal communities. Under a master national development plan, one area of expansion concerns transportation of materials between the Andaman Sea and the Thai Bay. At this time a company has been hired to study the possibility of building a Pak Bara deep sea port. The non-fisherman middle class is pleased with the project and awaits its implementation. But this totally contradicts the wishes of the local fishermen. Public hearings are held, but many of the fishermen feel that they are a waste of time, as the outcome is already pre-determined by those in power.

The results of the study conducted by ATT Consultant Co., Ltd. supports the construction of a deep sea port in the waters surrounding the Pak Bara beaches, which fall under the jurisdiction of the Phetra National Park. This area is considered a suitable site for building the deep sea port where 2.4 millions containers of goods can be loaded. The study suggests that the port would help cut costs by reducing both time and logistical expenses. However the study fails to consider the negative effects the construction would have on the surrounding ecosystems or upon the lives of those local residents of the coastal communities.

Plans for the project include:

- Construction of a canal stretching 4 km in length and 15 m in depth to be dredged leading to the sea port from the shore.
- Construction of the harbor section will require the construction of a landfill. The landfill area will recover more than 750 *rais* of the ocean.

² *Halal* means "permissible" in the Arabic language and is most frequently referred to food that is permissible according to Islamic law.

- A four-lane highway totaling 4.5 km in length is to be built to connect the sea port and the shore.
- On the south and southwestern sides of the port, two 1.35 km wave breakers are to be constructed. The north and northeastern side require no such construction as they receive wind and wave protection from Koh Yai and Lin Tae Islands.
- Other plans include the construction of a four-lane highway to connect the Songkhla deep sea port and the Pak Bara deep sea port.
- A railroad from Kwuan Nieng, Songkhla to the Pak Bara deep sea port will also be constructed. (Actually, a railroad should be constructed to serve the local population, whether or not the port is constructed).
- The port will offer many buildings and areas for produce storage and access for loading and unloading.

The approximately 20,000 million Baht budget is for construction of the sea port and the projects listed in the report. It does not include funds needed for possible estate construction in other areas, such as Satun, Songkhla, Trang, Nakorn Sri Thammarat and Krabi.

The site considered for the construction of the deep sea port is part of the Phetra National Park. 1,000 *rais* of ocean will be converted into landfill to facilitate the construction of the port. Many hundred more *rais* of ocean will be dredged to build the foundations necessary for bridge construction. The magnitude of this project will have great destructive impact on the ecosystems of the sea. No study will be implemented to study these negative effects.

If the deep sea port and the projects connected with it as well as the proposed industrial estates are to be constructed, how can the local fishing people adjust their way of life in such an environment of extreme change?

If one of the main duties of the national park system was to protect our natural resources, then many of the major conflicts between the local villagers and the authorities could be easily resolved. Local villagers do not want to see the natural resources they rely upon be destroyed. The national park authorities must work with the local communities in protecting the country's national resources. In addition, local administrators, the military, as well as the Port Authority of Thailand all need to consider the consequences the deep sea port project will have upon local communities

and the ecology of the regions involved. While the people of the Bahn Pak Bara community are a minority, their voices must be heard and their opinions considered.

Implementation of the Pak Bara deep sea port project means certain doom for the current and future generations of the fishing community and the extinction of many forms of marine life.

For the local fishermen, dreams are all they have

After a restful sleep in a small square house, I woke up in the morning and listened to the sounds of the sea. It was dark when I arrived last night but in daylight I could see that sea level was half the way up the poles on which this home rests. I watched the small boats moored to wooden stakes bobbing up and down with the movement of the sea.

This is a typical scene on an ordinary day, a familiar one for all the people living here. I was staying with a local family, Bang Loh, his wife Jaya and their two sons. The younger son is currently studying in third year of elementary school (*Prathom 3*). The eldest son has just completed the sixth year (*Prathom 6*), which is the last year of before high school and the highest level the family can afford to give their boy. He is assisting his father in the family trade. Soon he will work as a full time fisherman, just like his father.

Understanding that fresh water is a rare and necessary commodity on this island, I used it sparingly as I brushed my teeth. Jaya prepared a meal of local dishes for our morning meal. After breakfast, I followed Bang Loh and his eldest son to collect fish from the traps they set last night. Bang Loh brought a can of petrol with him, petrol he recently borrowed from the owners of the fish market.

On his long tail boat, 19 frames in length, Bang Loh thought he will get more fish today than yesterday. "In a little more than thirty minutes, we will reach the place where I set the traps," Bang Loh shouted as we headed for our destination. I said nothing, realizing my voice could not be heard over the engine's roar.

"My family has borrowed five liters of petrol from the owners of the fish market, enough for one trip to sea like this," he yelled. "Besides petrol, some

families borrow everything, including fishing tools and even boats. Every family borrowing fishing materials must deliver fish, crabs or shellfish to the owners of the fish market as payment after each fishing trip," added Bang Loh as we reached our destination.

This is how all the fishermen earn their meager income. They have only their labor and the fish they catch to offer in exchange. "We never know exactly how much we will catch in a fishing trip. Some days we catch many fish and some days we do not. We are able to survive on a small profit, living our lives day to day. The worse times are during the monsoon season when we can not go out fishing for days because of the storms," Bang Loh explained as he collected fish from the nets.

Understanding his situation, I hoped that he would get a lot of fish today. Would God in heaven be on his side, I prayed. My prayers were all I had to offer in assistance. Perhaps Bang Loh's son offered a similar prayer.

Under the increasing heat of the sun, Bang Loh pulled the fish net in a slow but constant manner as his son collected the fish. As they finished the work, it was close to midday. They discovered many of the fish traps were gone. The first suspected culprit, actually the only possible culprit, was the push net boats.

"I have heard from others that there are boats equipped with push nets around here, but I never thought I would be one of the victims," Bang Loh muttered softly. "Yesterday was a better day; we caught enough fish to cover petrol costs with a bit leftover for our savings."

People here understand quite well that the problem begins with the large boats equipped with push nets, boats with electric power generators (called 'sea tractors') and the use of poisons. Using these methods, even the small fish are killed. The boats damage and destroy the local fishermen's traps, sometimes destroying up to half of the traps.

It was well into the afternoon when we arrived back at the shore. Everyone helped carry the catch and the fishing tools except me, as I carried only my camera bag. On the way back home, Bang Loh stopped by a small grocery store to buy some rice and canned goods. He also bought some snacks for his youngest son. It is a pity knowing this is all he can afford for his family after a hard day's work on the sea. Considering that the fishermen provide

the sea's bounty to the city people they receive very little in return. They give the most and receive the least.

The tide and the weather are uncertain factors for the fisherman. Today might be warm and sunny but no one knows what the weather will bring the next day. Fishermen are subject to other factors beyond their control, such as the rising cost of petrol and the diminishing natural resources, which force them to fish further and further from the shore.

A Thai person's first impressions of Rawai Beach

Having recently received a bachelor's degree, I began a new life in a new field, by joining the large number of volunteers who assisted the victims of the 2004 Tsunami, which struck the communities of the Andaman Coast.

I began my journey on Thailand's biggest island. This work was like a dream. As I breathed in the scent of the sea and I took in the beauty of the natural sights, I could scarcely believe it. This island is simply paradise and I understand why every tourist would like to visit at least once.

My first assigned task was to accompany six senior workers to act as counselors to the people of Rawai Beach. It was the beginning of my exploration of this new community. As we left downtown Thalang District heading towards Phuket, we were driving along the bypass road leading to Rawai Beach. The trip took about one hour.

On the beachfront, I saw a long row of floating boats. The tide had fallen and revealed a scattered pattern of coral reefs. Our destination was a community located along the road that runs parallel to the sea. We made our way by walking along a small street that cuts through the community. The numerous houses are the traditional raised wooden houses on stilts of the coastal communities. I also noticed a couple of grocery stores.

We came to a house, in which many people live. Some of us went inside the house in search of a place to sit. I decided to sit outside. As I watched the children play and giggle among themselves, one by one the villagers arrived. Gradually, a circle of people formed and we all participated in an informal meeting.

The locals explained the history of their community. Rawai Beach began as and remains today a fishing community. It consists of two groups of sea nomads, the Urak Lawoi and the Morgan. They share similar traditions and languages, including a similar boat floating ceremony, a belief in the supernatural and a practice of black magic.

According to the elders, the Urak Lawoi people was the first group to arrive following the 2nd World War. The Morgan people followed soon after. The two groups of sea nomads formed a large community of more than one hundred households. Over time, blood relationships were established through cross-marriage between the Morgan and the Urak Lawoi people. As a result, their traditions also assimilated. They are now known as the *Thai Mai*, meaning “new Thais.” Traditionally, they depended entirely upon fishing for their income. They enjoyed a relatively easy and serene way of life from the sale of fish, crab and shellfish. The surplus income was small; however it was a happy life. Today, the situation has changed as many people choose to work as laborers to earn their money.

Large fish and crab traps are typical tools used by the villagers of Rawai Beach. However, the government currently prohibits fishing activities in many of the areas the villagers have used for decades. They are being accused of trespassing on government property by entering into prohibited zones. To the villagers of Rawai Beach, this is truly unfair.

After the meeting, I needed to use the toilet. I soon discovered there were very few toilets to be found. Despite the size of this large community, it appeared the number of public toilets was too few to serve its people. This became very obvious to all of us workers. When we inquired about this issue, we discovered the answer was involved in issues of land ownership. Many of the public places of the community are claimed to be under the ownership of members of the private sector.

The local villagers fear becoming involved in legal matters, and they believe complaining about the lack of toilets is something that could get them into trouble. Surprisingly, coconut trees are the source of another problem to the villagers. Coconuts fall from the coconut trees and damage the villager’s roofs. But the villagers dare not cut them down as they are unsure if a land developer will claim the land belongs to him and charge them with destruction of property.

That evening villagers organized a local song and dance performance called the *Rong Ning*. This was my first time to witness such an event performed live. The performance draws upon the rich traditions of the past, from a time before the exploitation of the villagers. The audiences gave an enthusiastic round of applause to the performers at the end of the show.

It was very dark outside as a kind Morgan man attempted to guide us through the night to the fish market on the beachfront. We found the market crowded with tourists. I was informed that most of the vendors are not local people, but instead are middlemen who purchase large quantities of fish from the fishermen to sell at the market.

After the Tsunami, an overwhelming amount of aid from many parties was provided to the effected people of this community. Some of the aid came from foreigners who ran Christian organizations. As a result of this outpouring of aid, some of the villagers have converted to Christianity. The organizations have also constructed churches for worship in the community.

In light of these factors, local people feel the land around them is being taken away and believe that many outsiders have trespassed into their lives. The sea, which they regard as their main source of food and life, is being taken away from them for the profit of outsiders. They are branded trespassers on the land that they have inhabited for decades by the government and by developers in the private sector. They feel that if anyone has the right to claim this land, it is their people.

Walking along Rawai Beach, I felt depressed as I pondered the tragic fate of the local people in this community. Tourism projects a large shadow of doom that acts like a dark curtain. As in a theatre production, in front of the backdrop, we see only a promising picture of the future for our nation fuelled by money from the pockets of tourists. But we cannot see behind that same backdrop, where the tragic future of the effected people plays out. Rarely is their plight brought out into the light for others to see.

A day in the lives of the people of Bahn Nahm Rab

At daybreak, a gentle breeze rolled off of the Andaman Sea as a group of villagers from Bahn Nahm Rab began tapping the rubber trees. Others prepared to go fishing in the sea near the Tha Koh Yong canal. For the

people of this community, these tasks are performed daily as a way to earn a living. But this way of life is seen as outdated in a modernized society whose rule is ever expanding.

Along the beach, an old man prepared his *Hua-Thong* boat to go fishing in the Andaman Sea. The engine groaned and turned over, the local-style craft leaving a trail in the mooring slot that was dug crudely into the shoreline.

His eyes were full of hope. The hope rose with him each day just as the warm sun also rose. He hoped that a bounty of fish or crabs would be waiting for him in the sea that day. The fish would serve as food for his family and he hoped there would be enough left over to sell at the market. His family needed the money.

He passed some floating fish farms. The community organized and ran the floating cage farms by itself and he thought this was a better idea than the capital conversion policy that converted properties into capital assets. This policy provided individuals with the right to lease portions of the sea, but a communal organization was better, he felt. On the banks grew thick mangrove forests. These forests have taken years to recover from the aftermath of the earlier forest concessions. These concessions in essence legally granted the right to deforest the land. All the greedy investors left behind were a stripped coastline and abandoned kilns once used for making charcoal out of mangrove wood.

The forests had been re-planted by various groups of villagers and the youth of Bahn Nahm Rab. Additional support and labor came from government agencies and NGOs. The forest was divided into parts according to a community agreement that reserved areas for marine animals and foliage habitat and for the growth of mangrove forests.

After the Tsunami on December 26, 2004, villagers realized that mangrove forests worked as a simple yet effective natural protection against the sea. The forest helped spare many lives and property from damage in Bahn Nahm Rab, especially when compared to other communities without such natural protection. When the decision to allow villagers to cut wood from the forest to rebuild their homes was made, the community set up guidelines for how much wood was to be gathered and from what areas it could be collected.

Depending on the management style implemented, the community could opt to reduce the rate of deforestation. An organization called The Special Unit to Protect the Sea was formed in 1999. This collective of fishermen are fighting against communal resource devastation caused by land developers and investors. The group warns against the dangers of using explosives, poisons, push nets or other illegal tools of the trade. Their actions have contributed to a great reduction in number of these activities.

There were a number of plywood plete boats floating along the canals, each with fishermen collecting the fishing nets they placed last evening. Hundreds of different small boats were floating in the sea at that moment. There were fish, crab, shellfish and squid waiting in the sea; these were the hopes that each fisherman clung to.

From his boat, the old man slowly drew his first small crab trap, called a *Sai Yong*, from the water. A big blue swimming crab was trapped inside. He put the trap inside the boat. After more than two hours, all the traps were collected. He then made his return, heading along the Tha Koh Yong Port canal. He greeted the other fishermen he passed and inquired about the day's catch.

As he reached the port, an old woman and a small boy awaited his return on the shore. They had been collecting rubber latex from one of their neighbor's orchards. It was a job that paid very little money.

Under the glaring sun, the old man worked up a sweat as he pulled crabs from the traps. Some of the crabs would become their midday meal while some would be sold at the market. He took the leftover crab lures from the traps and put them in the fish cage where a substantial number of groupers still remained.

The old man needed a short nap before his next trip that evening when he would return to his boat and head offshore once again. This was his routine each and every day.

In the nighttime, he would hunt for shrimp. His simple tools consisted of a dip-net and a butane lighter. When the lighter's flame struck the eyes of a shrimp, they reflected red under the water. He then used the dip-net to scoop them from the sea. Although this sounds quite easy, it requires a great

deal of skill. This task generally took him all night. When the morning came, he would sleep for a while before beginning the routine all over again.

This simple way of life has survived the current shift of globalization. For most of the sea people, this routine allows them an acceptable way to earn a living and an opportunity to live their lives. The sea has provided them with so many things and for this the sea people are grateful.

Life after the mining era: the beginning of the end³

Long after the funeral ceremony of his wife and his daughter was over, the man who lost everything that he loved sat staring at the remnants of the devastation left by the Tsunami. His only companion was a bottle of 45% proof whiskey. The memories of his former life as a miner remained clear in his mind. Like pages in a book, he flipped between the pictures of his past when he and his family lived there together happily.

It had been nearly twenty years since he and his wife settled down there. It was a time of hope with the promise of a successful future achieved by working as a laborer in the mining business. At that time, their eyes filled with hope and their hearts with the anticipation of a wonderful life.

But time and other things have changed. Life revolves around an ever-changing social and political landscape, not around the hopes of a laborer. He followed the concessions provided by investors like all laborers did in this business. Hard work never let him down before. Instead, it instilled a sense of hope in his life.

But the hardest work he had ever done in his life was the task he performed that afternoon. Whiskey could be used to celebrate or to deaden pain and today it served both purposes. Today was the day he buried the bodies of his wife and daughter.

³ First published in "Kleun Thalay Tai", July 2006.

The tragedy after the end of concessions

As it did most days, the glaring sun shed light on the lives of the struggling people. And like most days, the head of the family that lived in the house with the blue painted roof instructed his sons to hurry with the preparations for a day of fishing in the sea.

While his sons gathered the items necessary items for the trip, such as the fishing net and adequate petrol, he bid goodbye to his wife and daughter. They waved and smiled back as they continued to dry fish in the baking sun. He had a foreboding sense that this would be the last time he would hear them say goodbye.

As they approached the islands near the waters of Burma, the three fishing folk busied themselves with various tasks. Nothing out of the ordinary occurred until later in the day when they saw the tide go out quite quickly. This could happen for a number of reasons, the man thought, nothing to be concerned about. He had more important things on his mind, namely how much fish would he catch that day and how much money could he collect at the market. If he had a good catch, he would buy his daughter a new school uniform. And with a little money left over, his wife could purchase some necessary odds and ends to help manage the household.

It was not too late in the day as they prepared to drop the first purse seine. Suddenly they were interrupted by a blare from the PB (People's Band) radio on their boat. Something had happened on the shore. What exactly had happened, no one was sure, but the tone was quite ominous. They turned the boat around and headed back immediately.

As they approached the shore, a ruined world like a scene from a nightmare burned their eyes. What happened, what caused the devastation in front of them? He could not believe what he saw as this scene was beyond his imagination. He rubbed his eyes again and again, hoping to wake up from this evil dream but he came to understand this was real. The island was in ruins, debris scattered everywhere. People ran about searching for their lost loved ones. Some prayed to *Hin Lan*, the sacred deity most of the local people believed in, to aid in the search for their family members. Rushing to his house, the man searched everywhere for his wife and daughter. No one heeded the warnings of the possibility of more killing waves. All they were concerned with was the search for their missing loved ones and the hope that they survived the wave.

Frantically, the man searched and searched when all his fears came true and hit him with the force of a truck. He had found the body of his little girl. From how she lay on the ground, she must have been running away when the wave took her life. The wristwatch given to her by a kind tourist the night before still clung to her tiny wrist. He cried out in despair; his world had collapsed.

He had to find his wife before he could attend to his daughter. But he feared the arrival of “corpse finders,” men who would take the body and refuse to let him claim her corpse, believing that it could be anyone’s relative. He must find a place to bury her and do it quickly. It had to be a suitable place he could remember and find easily when he returned. He found a place under the shade of the pine trees, and decided it was as good a place as any. As he had few tools, the digging was difficult but soon he had completed the temporary grave. The hole was the correct size for her little body.

Before he lowered her into the ground, he gave her one final tight embrace and made a solemn vow. “I will protect you forever, my little princess. Wait until I reunite you with your mother. We shall take you to a better place than where you lie today. It won’t be long, my dear,” he lamented softly. His tears moistened the sand as he filled her grave.

He kept this promise to himself. He had to be careful, his daughter’s body could be found and someone else could claim the body as their relative. There were numerous cases of misidentified remains. The more cases he heard of the stronger his resolve was to keep his secret. If someone took his daughter’s body he would never be able to keep the promise he made to her. But months had gone by since the Tsunami and still he had no clues to his wife’s whereabouts. His hope grew dimmer and dimmer like a firefly as the dawn approached.

The man and his two sons lived in the temporary shelter provided by the government. His boys tried to sob quietly but all the nearby neighbors could hear. Their problems were never-ending. A major problem was over the issue of land ownership with the land developers. He and his neighbors were on the front line of the battle attempting to keep their rights to the land they lived on. They had been threatened verbally many times.

During the height of this crisis the next tragedy occurred. One of his sons was found hanged from a tree. Regardless of how it happened, whether suicide to end his sorrow or murder at the hands of the land developers, the man had to stand tall and remain strong. Firm in his personal resolve, there was no time to grieve.

On the day of his son's funeral, the man felt numb. The world around him grew still and silent. As he had done so many times before he turned to his daughter's resting place and asked himself how could he fulfill his promise to her.

Over a year had passed since the Tsunami and he had been waiting for a phone call from a relief organization that assisted in finding human remains. He spent less and less time searching for his wife's body as he became increasingly busy working with the other community members. They built homes or worked on the community infrastructure and fought side by side against the land developers. They had to fight together or they would all lose the land that belonged to them.

Unexpectedly, one day the phone rang and a worker told him his wife's body had been found. He was so happy to receive the call! He looked over at the spot where his daughter lay. Tears welled up in his eyes and a newfound hope leapt in his sorrowful heart. He had so many conflicting feelings on this day he had dreamt about often.

Once he claimed his wife's remains from the information center for missing Tsunami victims, he unburdened his heart and told a trusted friend his secret. He returned to the fateful spot where his daughter was buried by the pine trees carrying a hoe that some kind foreigners had given to him. The hoe reminded him of happier times when he worked in the mining trade. When he reached the spot he put the hoe down and knelt beside her grave. He used his hands to remove the sand and called tenderly to his daughter, assuring her of his return and letting her know she would no longer be alone.

"It's time for you to awake, my little princess, and see the beautiful new school uniform I have brought for you to wear. Now I will take you to your mother. She will take care of you after the long wait. And your brother will look after you as well when you all meet in heaven. Please rest in peace and may you all be happy in heaven."

And with this act of love the promise of a father to his daughter was fulfilled.

With respect to the family who stayed in the house with the blue roof, who once lived their warm lives in Bahn Nahm Khem. They are the family of my own best friend.

The lives of the villagers on Phi Phi Island

Once I packed my bag for a three-day and two-night trip to the Phi Phi Islands, I was ready to begin my journey. This was my first trip to the islands. I had a packet of tourist brochures that included a lot of information about the small surrounding islands. I found a great deal of information about the various tourist attractions but very little about the local people. My plan was to visit a friend on Koh Phi Phi but also to collect data about the lives of the coastal people.

I knew that the Phi Phi Islands consisted of several smaller islands. The most well-known are Phi Phi Don (located at Moo 7) and Phi Phi Lae (located at Moo 8). Both are in Tambon Aow Nang, Muang District, Krabi Province.

There were many routes leading to the Phi Phi Islands. From the mainland, it took approximately two hours by boat for the 42 km trip.

My friend had booked me a room and I quickly unpacked. I then treated myself to a stroll along the beach and began to orient myself to the island. I found the island offered everything the mainland also offered. There were several restaurants for tourists, convenience stores, grocery stores, banks, numerous ATMs, internet cafés, VCD rental shops and shops selling clothing, imported goods or souvenirs. I also found several tourism information booths.

The price for the room was between 800 and 2,500 Baht, depending on whether it was the high or the low season. If a bridge connected the Phi Phi Islands to the mainland, it would be as crowded as Phuket, which is Thailand's largest island.

The original name for the Phi Phi Islands was *Puley Pee A Bee*. (*Puley* is the word for island in the local dialect and *Pee A Bee* means mangroves). The local people call a certain plant *Pi Pi*, which later developed into the spelling

Phi Phi. Phi Phi Island consists of six smaller islands: Phi Phi Don, Phi Phi Lae, Pi Da Nok, Pi Da Nai, Yoong and Phai (Bamboo) Islands. The well-known bays are Maya Bay, Lo Lana Bay, Lo Da Lum Bay, Yong Ka Sem Bay, Loh Bah Kao Bay, Ton Sai Bay, Phuk Namm Bay, Run Tee Bay and Pee Leh Bay.

After speaking with the local people, I began to understand more about the history of the island. The Phi Phi Islands used to be covered in forests. There was a great deal of wild life, especially wild boar. At that time, land purchase and land deeds were unnecessary. Virtually all activity could be done without money. Rice farming and fishing were the two main means of support. In 1973, the government declared the Phi Phi Islands as part of the Noppharat Thara National Park and this declaration brought about many changes to the lives of the local people.

There were twelve villagers with land title deeds at that time. These villagers occupied the land themselves or rented the land out to others for a profit. The Phi Phi Islands had served in the past as a refuge for fishermen, including the Urak Lawoi people, from the storms during the monsoon season. They planted cashew trees and coconut trees during their stay. Later the Chinese moved in and settled down on the islands and started businesses purchasing and selling sea products and other items. Both Phi Phi Don and Phi Phi Lae Islands have mosques indicating a long and deep root in the Muslim faith in these communities.

There were thousands of people living on the islands. But only one hundred households or so containing approximately eight hundred villagers were true natives of the islands. The rest of the population emigrated from other regions.

The population can be broken into three categories:

1. Landowners. This group consists of both local people and people originally from outside of the island. Some landowners built hotels, resorts or guesthouses on their land and thus increased the value of their property. But for many local people, this was not an option as they were unable to finance construction. Their only choice to turn a substantial profit from the land is to give up the property and sell to developers.

2. Local non-landowners. This group consists of local villagers and other residents who do not own property. These people mainly work as laborers and often live on the land of friends, acquaintances or employers.

3. Migrant laborers or businessmen. These non-native people work as laborers or found opportunities in trade or tourism.

The first group of tourists to come to Phi Phi Island did so by fishing boats. The accommodations were very simple and consisted of fishing houses. But today many things have changed as the tourism industry has grown bigger and bigger on the islands. In the past, villagers made their living fishing and had a connection with the sea. Today most residents are involved in the tourism industry in some manner or another. Land prices have sky rocketed. And all of these changes are a direct result of the government's tourism support policies.

Night Life on the Phi Phi Islands

Walking along the crowded areas of the Phi Phi Islands at night was similar to walking along the Silom or Khao San Road areas in Bangkok. Each was filled with stalls selling various goods and a great number of tourists, both from Thailand and from abroad, were browsing through the merchandise, hunting for bargains. Koh Phi Phi boasts at least four large pubs for eating, relaxing and drinking. The beaches along Ton Sai Bay where the island port was located were lined with food stalls offering various types of seafood

It was nearly 8 pm when I recognized a group of foreigners who were on the same boat as me going from the mainland to the island. They were pacing back and forth and looked very unhappy. I asked one of them if I could be of assistance. He said his group was very troubled as they were having a difficult time finding a cheap place to stay on the island.

These kind of back-packing tourists are a problem in Thailand. They wish to spend a small amount of money and then make large demands for service. They insist on cramming many people into one small room. Often they are very rude and refuse to pay the hotel when checking out if every detail was not to their satisfaction. We see many of this kind of tourist during the low season when prices are cheaper. Knowing the sort of travelers they were, I decided not to get involved.

Life after the Tsunami for the people of the Phi Phi Islands

After the Tsunami, the people on the Phi Phi Islands experienced many problems. Bahn Nahm Khem appeared to be the classic example of an effected area that also felt the consequences of tourism policies. These policies tend to support the land developers rather than the local citizens. But the problems of the people on the Phi Phi Islands were more dramatic. The government agencies claimed rights to the land the locals formerly inhabited and prohibited them from returning to the land. Shortly after the Tsunami, over 6,000 people were left without jobs, homes or hope. The Thaksin administration declared parts of the Phi Phi Islands were reserved for special tourism development. This was called “rehabilitation” of the island. These policies resulted in an escalation of prices for accommodations, with prices for lodging ranging from ten to hundreds of thousand Baht per night. This caused even more displaced residents to be forced from their land. They had to move to the highlands of the islands, where they had no interest in living.

Nearly two years after the Tsunami, no clear plan existed for the rehabilitation of the Phi Phi Islands. Without such a guideline in place, the local people did not know how to proceed. How could the effected businesses recover?

“We do not need special aid for each and every effected area but we do need a blue print or a guideline from the government that we can follow. Two years have passed since the Tsunami, and every family has children to feed and every family needs to know what to do,” commented one local entrepreneur.

During the second Thaksin administration, from 2004 to 2006, the number of restricted areas increased in accordance with government policies. Under the banner of rehabilitation, the administration was able to sidestep local laws and regulations. This resulted in allocation of formerly private land. Suvarnabhumi International Airport was a good example of similar tactics. It was proclaimed to be a better solution for the Thai people but the only thing it was for certain was an exercise in capitalism.

The long-tail boats of the Phi Phi islands

In some of the Tsunami damaged areas, fishing boats were provided to effected residents. But on the Phi Phi Islands boats were mainly used for transporting tourists.

Called taxi boats by the local people, these were used to take tourists out diving, exploring coral reefs or for sight seeing. This was an important occupation for local people and for other entrepreneurs who relocated to the Phi Phi Islands. Along the island's ports one could see numerous boat drivers enticing tourists to choose their taxi boat.

Most of the long-tail taxi boat drivers were former fishermen. They turned to transporting tourists when the number of fish they caught no longer allowed them to provide for their families. The main cause of the reduction in number of fish was destructive methods employed by the larger companies, namely the use of push nets and boats with electric power generators. Instead of fishing, they went to the ports and began new careers as taxi touts. By shouting and other methods, the ex-fishermen attempted to convince tourists to let them act as guides to this beautiful island. They offered trips to see the ancient murals of Viking Cape. Although this was a good career choice, the cost of living on the island was very high and few locals earned an adequate salary.

The life of the Urak Lawoi fishermen on the Phi Phi Islands

Land ownership was not an important issue to the Urak Lawoi people. Land provided them temporary refuge during the monsoon season. Koh Phi Phi and Koh Phai were two of the places used by the Urak Lawoi as a protective base during the monsoon season.

There were two small groups of sea nomads on the Phi Phi Islands. Each group consisted of twelve to fifteen households and each group maintained approximately ten boats. Households were often grouped together according to which middleman bought their fish.

During the monsoon season, the Urak Lawoi people fished in the sea and moved from island to island. They required a safe place to moor and repair their boats during the bad weather. Toh Dalum Bay and the Tong peninsula were among the places they would frequent during this time of year. After the monsoon season had passed, they would leave the temporary structures they constructed intact. The fishermen had hopes of returning to use them the following year.

The weather was not the only factor that forced them to move from island to island. The current tourism support policies also forced them from their land.

Much of their land had been designated for tourism and the authorities did not want the Urak Lawoi people to inhabit these areas. It is the belief of the authorities that the locals would spoil the tranquility of the island and serve as an irritant to the tourists. This forced the Urak Lawoi to leave the land they felt belonged to them and seek out refuge on other islands. But they have no legal right to stay on the other islands. At the current time, this is not a major problem, but in the near future the land could be sold to developers and they would be forced to leave once again. The situation for the Urak Lawoi people could change from bad to worse in a very short period of time.

Koh Tarutao: the island of prisoners

Koh Tarutao was formerly used as a prison for long-term offenders and for political prisoners. Later, the sea nomads called the island their home. Next, the island was to become the first marine national park of Thailand. At that time, the land was declared restricted. Shortly after the declaration, a number of businesses took root on the island and created a tourist destination on the island's beautiful beaches. All this land development and construction forced the fishermen from the island they formerly called home.

The name *Tarutao* comes from the Malay word *Talotrau*, which means "many islands." The island's numerous bays are among its most important tourist destinations. These include Pantemalaka Bay, Jak Bay, Morlae Bay, Son Bay, Talowaw Bay and Talo Udang Bay. Other significant sites are Loodoo waterfall, Crocodile cave and Pa Boo To, each providing beautiful scenery for the tourists' appreciation. On the south of the island are the offices of The National Park Protection Unit. This area had formerly served as the prison for political prisoners of the Bowondet coup group and for the Petty Officer's coup group.

Tarutao is the largest of the surrounding islands, measuring 152 km². The island has vast evergreen forests that provide a natural habitat for a diverse number of animals and plants. The island also has many mangrove forests and beautiful beaches.

Tarutao and its history as a prison for political prisoners

In 1936, the Department of Corrections needed a new facility to house prisoners. The jail would provide vocational training to its inmates. The new location had to be difficult for inmates to escape from. Koh Tarutao was considered the most suitable location. Additional offices and residences for wardens and officers as well as buildings for vocational training were later constructed along the Talowaw and Talo Udang Bays.

In 1938, the first group of five hundred prisoners was sent to the island. Additional prisoners were sent to the island after the initial prisoners. In 1939, seventy political prisoners, primarily the Bowondet coup group and the Petty Officer's coup group, were jailed on the Talo Udang Bay facility.

In 1941, during the 2nd World War, the island prisoners and staff endured drastic conditions. There was a severe lack of food and medical supplies and many prisoners lost their lives. Other prisoners and staff members who escaped the island plundered passing trade ships on the Malaka strait, where the island is located, for food and supplies. This earned the region a reputation as a danger zone for trade ships. The situation continued in this vein for many years.

In 1946, the United Kingdom seized control of Malaysia. UK authorities asked the Thai government for permission to address the pirate situation surrounding Koh Tarutao. Their forces were able to eradicate the problem. The use of the Koh Tarutao as a vocational training center for prisoners soon ended.

The second phase of the island: the establishment of fishing communities

According to the information provided from the elders of Bahn Hua Hin, Amphoe La Ngu, Satun province, they were among the first group of people to move to Koh Tarutao. This followed the transporting of the political prisoners to Koh Tao, in Surat Thani province and the subsequent closing of the prison. They were a small community and they built simple shelters from the available materials on the island. They planted orchards and began harvesting coffee and coconuts. They fished using bamboo traps and raised cattle. This small community also built and operated a school for the residents.

The third phase of the island: the National Park

Studying American forest conservation management principles, officials of the Thai government believed that the nation must preserve its wildlife and forests for future generations. This was to be achieved by restricting construction and depopulating certain areas. It actually meant that man and nature were to be separated. At the time, these developments were heralded as the proper course for the nation.

On 19 April 1974, the Royal Forest Department had established the Tarutao National Park, the first marine national park of Thailand. For approximately ten years, the local people remained undisturbed. However, in 1984 this changed, when national park officers arrived and began to drive the local residents from Koh Tarutao. The officers threatened the villagers and destroyed their fishing tools and equipment. They were prohibited from living on the island. Following this destruction, the local villagers moved from the island. The new places they inhabited were Bahn Boh Jet Look and the areas along the coastal lines of Koh Boo Lon, Koh Adung, Koh Lee Pae, Koh Li Dee, Koh Raya Yod and Bahn Hua Hin.

The fishermen and their problems with the national park

In 1984, under the authority of Phetra National Park, construction of numerous projects was underway on Noon Bay located at Moo 4, La Ngu district. Originally, the National Park Office purchased land from the villagers on which to construct the buildings. Once construction was completed, no villagers were allowed to stay on the properties. In 1987, villagers who built temporary shelters on Koh Li Dee were also driven away.

In 1995, villagers living near the border zones of Moo 1, 2 and 14 of La Ngu district were asked by Phetra National Park officers to sign documents approving the boundaries of the new national park. The area concerned was quite large and included the areas where they lived and fished. The officers claimed that if the residents approved the boundaries, they would be given land ownership documents at a later time.

But the villagers refused to sign the proposal, fearing they would be prohibited from occupying the land in the future. The villagers understood that by signing the proposal, the areas where they fished would become

restricted. They would no longer be able to provide for themselves. The villagers gathered, organized and refused to approve the proposal as a unified group.

The National Park Office drove villagers from their homes in the name of natural resource protection. But from the villagers' point of view, these areas had already been compromised as a result of earlier policies. They did not feel the solution to the problem was to drive them from their land and stop them from fishing in the seas. The concept of separating man from nature for the protection of nature was ill thought out. All parties involved must protect the national resources. One or two factors cannot be singled out and held accountable for the entire problem. The solution must consider all the factors in the equation. The solution was not to drive villagers from their land and prevent them from fishing in the sea.

When the villagers were forced from the newly restricted areas, they had to leave their cattle behind. These cattle were left to wander aimlessly in the forests. Their former owners felt much the same way, forced from their homes and left to wander from place to place. They were forced from the familiar surroundings of the islands and cast adrift in the strange, dirty, crowded city.

A Muslim donor visits Bahn Pak Klong, Si Kao district, Trang province

After the Tsunami, many effected communities experienced frustration caused by the huge outpouring of aid provision. While some communities were able to manage this aid, many others could not. And instead of relief this aid brought about only conflict.

The long-term problems of many communities concern the degradation of the sea. These problems are the direct result of the continued deforestation of the mangrove forests and the destructive techniques and tools used by large-scale fishing companies.

In the Bahn Pak Klong area, the land cannot be used for agricultural production. The soil is very sandy and not conducive to sustaining crops. Approximately ninety percent of the land is covered with mangrove forests. The land itself has caused many problems for its residents, but the Tsunami

brought an entirely new set of problems. Many organizations offered aid and volunteer support to help address these problems.

A tour of Bahn Pak Klong

The coordinator on the phone informed the chauffeur that he was to pick up a gentleman at the Trang airport and bring him to a Tsunami affected village. The Muslim gentleman donated a great deal of money to help the villagers but he wished to remain anonymous. The young volunteer arrived at the airport early, so the gentleman would not be left to wait. He stood by the arrival gate.

The distinguished and elderly man walked carefully, supported by his son and daughter in-law. After a short introduction, the chauffeur took them to their hotel in the center of Trang. They would check in, have a quick lunch and plan for the trip in the afternoon.

Due to his health problems, the gentleman chose to visit the village of Bahn Pak Klong. This village was less severely affected than other villages, but it was an easy destination to reach. It was located in Si Kao district, about 50 km from the center of Trang. This was a very lucky opportunity for the villagers of this community. The volunteer chauffeur explained about the destruction of the village and the efforts taken to correct the problems:

Bahn Pak Klong was a coastal community located in Moo 9, Tambon Bor Hin, Sikao district, Trang province. This area contained many mangrove forests and was connected to the Si Kao Bay. The people of this area worked as fishermen, raised livestock or worked as hired laborers. This community had one of the lowest incomes per capita in Thailand

The small mosque in the center of the village served as a meeting hall for discussion of village matters. It served as a center for community as well as religious activities. The building had meeting rooms as well as study rooms for the children. The community worked with outside agencies to renovate the mosque. For example, the toilets had no doors. This was an ongoing project.

A savings account for investment in community development was opened. This was to be used to develop career opportunities in mushroom cultivation, fish cage farming, the raising of livestock and rice production.

The villagers worked with the fishing association in Trang province and with various NGOs to organize and facilitate conservation of the natural resources. Projects included a sea grass conservation plan and the establishment of a sea animal nursery. Subjects addressed included the understanding of regulations for marine life natural resource management.

Efforts were made to strengthen ties within the community and establish a sense of local pride. In addition to their roles as providers and family members, villagers were expected to participate in community projects, each according to his or her skill level. The religious leader of the community, Phu Yai Kaew, worked with the political leaders of the community to instill a sense of pride through participation.

Activities for the youth gained support from different organizations in the private sector. Youth camps were organized to teach about marine ecology and natural resource conservation. Ajarn Suwat Thonghom from the Sapha Rashinee School brought students from the town to participate in an exercise. Together they studied the problems of the environment and how they could solve these and other social problems. This allowed youth from the town and the village to work through problems together in a real-life situation. Hopefully, this would be a skill they could use in the future.

All these activities had been sponsored by an anonymous Muslim donor. The budget was several million Baht. Funds were used to hire teachers and volunteers were provided. The programs were well coordinated and the participants and workers thanked Allah for this precious example of unification and cooperation among the Muslim people.

An anonymous Muslim donor provided spiritual support, occupational recovery funds and organized community activities. Other groups helped in different ways. They followed up on the implemented programs and looked for ways to support the plans of the agencies and volunteers for community recovery. Under the conditions of the village, the workers sometimes took ill, but their strength of character and their sense of goodwill were unshakeable.

One story touched my heart. A volunteer got very sick from the difficult conditions in Bahn Pak Klong and he was hospitalized for several days. He was to return to Bangkok following his hospital release. None of the villagers could afford the bus fare to accompany him to Bangkok, although they all wished they could. So they all wrote messages on pieces of paper

taken from their children's notebooks, sending their regards and prayers to Allah for his recovery.

The life of villagers in Nah Nai, Koh Haad Sai Dham, in Ranong province two years after the Tsunami

Mrs. Dwongpen Phakdee, the vice-chairwoman of the Tambon Administrative Organization of Ngao, Ranong province, granted me an interview. She discussed the situation in the village Nah Nai.

“Many of the local people were crab trappers. There used to be many crabs but the numbers have decreased due to the use of push nets and otter trawls. These have destroyed the natural resources the villagers depended on.

“The locals would catch shrimp the old-fashioned way, using a hand bag-net. They also used small boats for catching shrimp, prawns and other small fish. This was not a large-scale enterprise as the local fishermen lacked skills in marketing. Villagers from Moo 3 and 4 and Koh Chang came to the Aaw Na Kao area to fish.

“After the Tsunami, a great deal of aid poured into Koh Sai Dham. Funds were provided for occupational, family and community recovery. But the fishermen still lacked the fishing gear and the boats needed to return to the seas. So the agencies gathered still more aid and the additional funds were used to provide the fishermen with boats and gear. At that time, it seemed as if the conditions of their lives had improved. But fishing was more difficult as the number of fish in the sea declined.”

Mr. Samrit Chanchuklin lived in the village of Bahn Nah Nai, Koh Haad Sai Dham. He told me about what happened to the fishermen of his community:

“The Tsunami did not take as many lives and destroy as much property in our village as it did in other places. For example, Khao Lak and the Phi Phi Islands sustained much more damage. There were funds available for boats and fishing gear. Funds could be used to begin occupations as fishermen once again. The funds were to be repaid in installments to keep the money active in the community. Villagers were able to borrow money to address their needs but this brought about a new problem: debt. Villagers soon found themselves with debts of between 40,000 and 60,000 Baht.

“It was believed that since the fishermen had the tools they needed: boats and fishing gear, they could continue on as they did before. Historically, the villagers used simple local fishing tools. For example, purse seines, shrimp bag-nets and bamboo fish traps. After they deducted the cost of petrol, the fishermen earned between 200 and 300 Baht per day.

“Almost two years after the Tsunami, the fishermen of Haad Sai Dham found they still could not make a living. The amount of fish they caught did not allow them to cover the costs of their petrol. Let alone make enough money to support their families. The number of fish in the sea had diminished. This was not what the fishermen expected.

“About six months after the Tsunami, there were many jellyfish in the sea and the waters became cloudy and muddled and turned the dark color of a dirty cloth. The fishermen’s catch continued to decrease. Some days they caught nothing at all.

But still they continued to try, what other option did they have? There was a plan to release fish from the nurseries into the seas. But this plan did little to alleviate the situation.

“This pattern affected the entire community. With no money, the fishermen could not provide rice for their families. Some fishermen attempted to reconcile their debts in the courts, but to no avail. Their debts continued to multiply. They were unable to cover the 2,000 to 3,000 Baht per month loan repayment charge. They hoped that tomorrow would be better and they would find crabs in the traps they set the night before. But their hopes were running thin.

“So the young men of the village turned to work as laborers in the construction industry or as factory workers. But this did not solve the problem of the fishermen and what has happened to their community and the sea. It seemed as if the issue was to be forgotten as people worked to provide for their families.

“The cycle of life is part of the natural law. Man eats animals, animals eat plants and plants feed from the soil. Man catches the fish from the sea and feeds his family. This is how the world works.

“The plan to provide the fishermen with gear and boats was a sound one. But people did not take into consideration the diminishing natural resources. This is the question that will face many communities. How can we live with these diminished resources and continue the way of life we are accustomed to for generations?”

This author sees this problem as the main factor that families in Koh Haad Sai Dham will have to address in the future.

Publications under Tsunami Aid Watch

Short term research projects

1. Building for the Future II: a case study of boat repair and community shipyards.
2. Ecology and environment of Bahn Nahm Khem three years after the Tsunami.
3. Land problems after the Tsunami.

Long term research projects

1. Data collection regarding land problems and solutions for Tsunami impacted areas.
2. Morgan (Sea-gypsies) ways of life and the history of Morgan land use.
3. Three years of Tsunami rehabilitation in Bahn Nahm Khem: Opportunity in crisis.
4. Bridging the expectation gap: Lessons learnt from three years of Tsunami aid delivery and rehabilitation in Thailand.

Previously published

1. TSUNAMI. A study on disaster response in Sri Lanka, with a contribution on the situation in Thailand by Karl Segschneider, Director of the TAW team, published in cooperation with Heinrich Böll Foundation, Brot für die Welt and medico international, July 2006
2. SCOPE-Chartes. Sustainable Community Owned Professional Eco-Chartes. Edited by TAW, Chiang Mai, December 2006. ISBN 978 974 88189 7 9
3. Renewable Energy Options on Islands in the Andaman Sea. A feasibility study for hybrid renewable energy/diesel systems in two Tsunami impacted communities. Edited by TAW, Chiang Mai 2007. ISBN 978 974 7093 51 3
4. Seal of Fair Recovery (SoFaR). A support tool for post disaster rehabilitation. A concept paper – Siegel „Fairer Wiederaufbau“. Zur Unterstützung des Wiederaufbaus nach Katastrophen. Ein Konzeptpapier. Edited by TAW, Chiang Mai 2007. ISBN 978 974 8266 12 1
5. Tsunami: CROSS-Effects? Christian Religious Organizations' Support and its Socio-cultural Effects on aid recipients in Tsunami

- Rehabilitation. A case study at Thungwa, Thabtawan and Nahm Khem villages of Phang Nga's Takua Pa district. By Pikula 76 Sithiprasertkula, in cooperation with Save Andaman Network, edited by TAW, Chiang Mai 2007. ISBN 978 974 8410 258
6. 78 Weeks later: A descriptive, quantitative and qualitative summary after the Tsunami in Thailand. By Karl Segsneider and Walaitat Worakul, edited by TAW, Chiang Mai 2007. ISBN 978 974 8410 24 1
 7. The Tsunami Early Warning System in Thailand, a resource book, including a synopsis of comments by Tsunami impacted communities, 30 months after the disaster. Edited by TAW, Chiang Mai 2007. ISBN 978 974 8418 26 1
 8. Building for the Future I: A case study in rebuilding houses and rehabilitating Andaman coastal communities after the Tsunami. By Chalinee Sathanboa, in cooperation with Save Andaman Network. Edited by TAW, Chiang Mai 2007. Published on: www.taw-hbf.org

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