



Andaman Discoveries
Become a part of the story...

120/2 Sukapiban 3 Road
Moo 1, Kura
Kuraburi District
Phang Nga Province, Thailand 82150

PRESS RELEASE

4 September, 2008

**Community Tourism Efforts Win SEED Award
Kuraburi, Thailand**

Making sustainable development happen at community level.

In the last two years, community tourism has generated over USD 20,000 income for villagers, while also generating funds to a children’s center, orchid conservation, and other community development projects.

“Community tourism goes beyond enjoying a new culture while supporting sustainable development -- it’s also a great way to make life-long friends,” said **Thamrong Chompusri**, director of Andaman Discoveries.



Darunee Pakdee, or Cha as her friends call her, smiles as she welcomes the group of tour operators to her village on the Andaman Coast. Unlike the majority of visitors over the past few years, this group of visitors is not here to see the destruction wrought by the tsunami of 2004. Instead, they are here as tourists to enjoy the cultural and natural splendor of Ban Talae Nok, a village of 67 homes situated in between the coral reefs and dense rainforests of Southern Thailand.

Life has not always been so easy for Cha – the majority of her village was destroyed in the tsunami, and, due to declining fish stocks and mangrove destruction, she was unable to return to her traditional fishing lifestyle. With the development of community tourism, however, her luck is turning around.

“We are beginning to understand how to connect tourism with our way of life, and share with people the natural environment that we depend on for our culture and livelihood,” Cha explains.

Since rebuilding their lives after the tsunami, some villagers in rural Thailand are using tourism as a tool for sustainable development. Community members such as Cha now offer homestays, eco-tours, and other activities – allowing visitors to participate in the traditional way of life that so often eludes the casual tourist. Their work has been assisted by Andaman Discoveries, a social enterprise founded in 2006 that works as part of the North Andaman Community Tourism Network. Under the sponsorship of IUCN, these two groups are serving as a bridge between local villages and the private sector.



In recognition of their unique approach, Andaman Discoveries recently received a 2008 SEED Award for Entrepreneurship in Sustainable Development. Chosen from close to 400 applications from over 100 countries worldwide, Andaman Discoveries will use the Award to expand its partnerships with the local Community Tourism Network.

"I applaud the success of Andaman Discoveries and the North Andaman Community Tourism Network," said Dr. Janaka de Silva, IUCN Thailand's Program Coordinator, adding that "these IUCN-supported efforts can serve as a model for tourism throughout the region."

Quotes

"Community tourism goes beyond enjoying a new culture while supporting sustainable development - it's also a great way to make life-long friends."

Thamrong Chompusri, Director, Andaman Discoveries

"The SEED Awards are playing an important role in helping to bring about positive change. The winners identified show all of us how, working together, we can make real progress towards meeting our development goals."

Kemal Dervis, UNDP Administrator

"By creating genuine cultural exchange between guests and villagers, community tourism creates an opportunity for communities to preserve their traditional ways of life and natural environment."

Bodhi Garrett, North Andaman Community Tourism Network

"We are beginning to understand how to connect tourism with our way of life, and share with people the natural environment that we depend on for our culture and livelihood."

Darunee (Cha) Pakdee, Community Tourism Coordinator, Ban Talae Nok

"Until I visited, I was not aware the North Andaman had so much to offer. I hope to send groups for cycling, homestay, and volunteer activities."

Ittipol Puttasiri, Product Manager, North by Northeast Tours

"I applaud the success of Andaman Discoveries and the North Andaman Community Tourism Network. These IUCN-supported efforts can serve as a model for tourism throughout the region."

Janaka de Silva, Programme Director, IUCN Thailand

"Events like this give me the motivation to develop tourism to benefit my community, despite the challenges. I hope to develop a strong tourism group with the help of young leaders in the village and the new generation."

Gasom Vejasart, Laem Naew Community Tourism Group

Notes to editors

For more information or to set up interviews, please contact:

Thamrong Chompusri, Director, Andaman Discoveries

Tel: +66 86 907 1559, info@andamandiscoveries.com; Web: <http://www.andamandiscoveries.com>

Bodhi Garrett, Lead Consultant, North Andaman Community Tourism Network

Tel: +66 81 787 7344, bodhi@iucnt.org

Minna Epps, Communications Officer, IUCN Asia Regional Office

Tel: +66 2 662 4029 ext. 108, minna@iucnt.org; Web: <http://www.iucn.org/asia>

About Andaman Discoveries

Andaman Discoveries evolves from North Andaman Tsunami Relief (NATR) - a non-profit organization that has implemented over 120 projects in 12 tsunami-affected communities since the 2005. Andaman Discoveries' objective is to achieve sustainable development in these villages along the Andaman coast of Thailand through community tourism development. AD offers responsible tours and volunteer placements in these communities, which have created numerous employment opportunities and provided financial supports to various locally led social and environmental projects through the mandatory contribution to the community fund from guests.

More information can be founded at <http://www.andamandiscoveries.com>

About IUCN, International Union for Conservation of Nature

Created in 1948, IUCN brings together 83 States, 110 government agencies, 800 plus NGOs, and some 11,000 scientists and experts from 181 countries in a unique worldwide partnership. The Union's mission is to influence, encourage and assist societies throughout the world to conserve the integrity and diversity of nature and to ensure that any use of natural resources is equitable and ecologically sustainable.

The Union is the world's largest environmental knowledge network and has helped over 75 countries to prepare and implement national conservation and biodiversity strategies. The Union is a multicultural, multilingual organization with 1,000 staff located in 62 countries. Its headquarters are in Gland, Switzerland.

More information can be found at www.iucn.org

###