

Programme Overture



Why we organize Boat Launching II?

Three years after tsunami, many things have occurred – both physical in terms of infrastructure and conceptual in terms of new thinking process. Perhaps this might be just the most important ‘social capital’ of Koh Lanta. What we – the Community Network for Restoration of Lanta Island (CNRLI) would like to relate to you through this important event are:

Koh Lanta is not merely a pretty scenic spot with pristine nature and deep blue sea, it is also a land occupied by living people. They are people with a livelihood, ancient culture and traditional beliefs. This is a part of Koh Lanta’s charm. It should not be neglected. We should never let this livelihood be destroyed, the culture demolished and the beliefs ruined. Neither should the proud local people become labor employees servicing tourist sector, as has happened in other tourist destinations such as Phi Phi, Samui, Phuket.

The emergence of CNRLI represents our struggle to bring forth this mission to the outside world. During the last 3 years, we have worked ceaselessly to restore our livelihood from tsunami,

revive our culture, strengthen our spiritual beliefs and put out measures to protect our natural resources and environment. Our experiences and lessons learnt are all present to you in this event.

We, the people of Koh Lanta, do not oppose tourism. We are not against globalization. We simply see through it that tourism has both positive and negative impacts. We strongly request that all sectors must come together to manage it in such a way that the local people too can survive. To survive, we need to be heard and we need to have a say. In addition, help us learn to adjust with this incredibly rapid change so that we can benefit from it together.

What we hope to gain from this event is that you see in our earnestness and sincerity an invitation for you to join us in working together to achieve this above-mentioned vision. We would like you take part in setting the direction and walking together hands-in-hands in creating a truly participatory “Road Map for Sustainable Development of Koh Lanta”. We could begin by establishing a **Civil Council of Koh Lanta** with representatives from multiple-sectors. We surely can think of ways to make it work. We may be slow compared to you, but we give you our words that we will try our best to keep up with you.



PERSPECTIVES



Koh Lanta in the eyes of visitors, tourists or travelers may not be that different.

Perhaps what you see is heavily-forested hills matching the blue sea expanding as far as your eyes can see. The white beach stretches out in the warm glowing sun in contrast to the cool and clear water, so cool and clear that you feel like drinking it to quench your thirst. You see the colorful corals moving with the current among fishes still unaware of your watchful eyes. This, of course, is the general scenery in the western shore of Koh Lanta.



On the eastern shoreline, a carpet of over ten thousand rais of lush green mangrove complex provides a perfect refuge for the animals to breed, live and grow until they are strong enough to venture into the outside ocean. The serenity of nature, the hospitality of the people and the harmonious relationship between the two touch the hearts of visitors so deeply that quite a few of them decided to settle in this paradise.

From the perspective of business persons, Koh Lanta probably represents a tremendous potential for the return of their investments. However, it will come a day when the business runs its own course and Koh Lanta's attractions are all but exhausted. Then they will certainly move on to a new location and look for new investments. Whatever they leave behind will be the burden of the Koh Lanta people.



The Voices of Koh Lanta Indigenous People

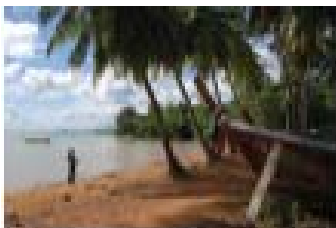
What the local people wish to see is not that far-fetched. It is just that Koh Lanta continue to be their home and that they will not be pushed off to other places. In their vision, they would like to have safe and secure homes for their families – a place for their children to grow up in.

In the darkness before dawn, husband and wife left home to harvest rubber on the land that they inherit from their ancestors. They are relaxed as they do not have to live under constant fear of eviction. Later on, they take their boats out to catch fishes, shrimps and crabs for their own consumption and sell the rest at the market. The meager income covers gasoline cost. If there is leftover, they save it for boat

or fishing gears repair, tuition for their children or in emergency such as sickness. At the end of the year, whatever leftover will be used for making merit according to their traditional belief.



As for the booming tourism, they wonder whether it could be allowed to grow at its own pace so that people like them have time to adjust. What if we do not rush it in the frenzy to get profit? Could we work together so that Koh Lanta can truly be a sustainable tourist attraction? Then everybody can benefit from it by careful planning and management based on fairness and equilibrium land use. We can spare an area for the local community with land provided for agriculture production and for residency. We can save some beach front property for the fisher-folks to moor their boats. Other zone will be maintained for tourists' enjoyment. Together we can issue laws and regulations to be enforced and followed by all. We can design measures for the local people to abide by as well.



We human beings have caused enough damages to nature already. Let today be a day that all of us work to protect the sea, the forest and the environment that give us life, the air to breath and a big home that we call earth.



If we take good care of nature, we as individual will survive and the community will prosper. The way of life, the culture and the traditional practices will be passed on to future generations. Is not this by itself a better way to attract visitors to Koh Lanta? This vision of Koh Lanta is what the local people have in mind. We do not know of any other similar island in the whole kingdom of Thailand that have taken this route.

DECLARATION

People of Koh Lanta

3 year tsunami anniversary

*A crisis that opens up an opportunity
for a better livelihood for the people of
Koh Lanta*



Tsunami of three years ago brought enormous loss to us. We take it as nature's warning to humanity against over exploitation. It carries a message that it is time we take better care of nature. Even now, it still seems nature is angry with us – as witnessed from global warming and the natural calamities happening in every corner of the world.



We, the people of Koh Lanta heed nature's warning with utmost respect.

Throughout the last 3 years, we have worked incessantly to protect our mangrove and coastal forest. We have organized surveillance against illegal logging and supported tree planting. We have issued measures designed to promote wise-use of our natural resources.

We have become the protector of the sea. We plead with you that "Please do not harm the sea, because it is our life source. It gives us foods. Any disturbance may cause enormous changes to the lives of our families that still heavily rely on the sea".

What we have been doing up to now is taking care of nature. Nature too has the rights to be treated fairly. Please do not agitate him too much. We have painstakingly issue our community by-laws to regulate our interaction with nature in accord with the spiritual belief in managing natural resource and environment. This practice has become a part of our culture.

This is our way of showing gratitude to nature. Yes, we need to protect our food source. We must do it now so that our descendants will have



something left for the future. Don't you see that the environment is in the state of needing intensive care and nature equilibrium needs to be urgently restored? We should not push it to total destruction, should we?



Today, the community organizations gather here with a common mission to restore the indigenous livelihood, keep up the traditional culture and the religious beliefs according to each ethnic group. We promise, in full witness of our children, that we will commit our utmost to care for the environment, the forest, the mangrove and the sea of Koh Lanta.

We, the people of Koh Lanta, are united to be the guardian of nature. May the Great Allah help us. May the Sea Spirit be with us. May the Lord Buddha bless us in this endeavor.



If what we intend to do today has any benefit towards our world, our nation, our community and our families, we wish to pass that merit to all the creatures, the sea and the nature so that they will last for generations to come. May our faith in the Way of the Boat, the Sea and the Environment carry our love and respect to you and all sentient beings as well.

