

Chapter 7:

Baka Community and Intrepid Travel.

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A note on exchange rates:

The following currencies are referred to in this report. Their approximate exchange rate to the Australian dollar (AUD) as of January, 2002, are shown below:

Malaysian Ringgit (MYR)	AUD\$1 = 1.97
Vietnamese Dong (VND)	AUD\$1 = 8,182.50
Thai Baht (THB)	AUD\$1 = 22.80

7. Baka Community and Intrepid Travel.

7.1 Background to the Research Setting.

7.1.1 The Baka community.

Baka is a very small Akha village that Intrepid visits irregularly as part of the 15 day “Northern Thailand” adventure trip. The trip is run by a local operator based at Mae Ai called Funky Tours. Baka is visited as part of a four day trek and is the village where travellers stay for their second nights accommodation.

Baka is situated on a ridge-top in the mountain ranges that are part of the Huay Mae Sai watershed, approximately two hours drive from the city of Chiang Rai in Northern Thailand. Access to the village is via a rough dirt track which forms part of the trek into the village.

The people of Baka belong to the Akha ethnic group which is officially recognised by the Thai Government as one of the nine ‘hilltribes’ in Thailand. The total number of Akha people in Thailand is estimated by the Tribal Research Institute to be approximately 50, 000 people.

The vast majority of Akha people continue to live in Yunnan, Southern China. Large scale insurrections and armed movements during the 19th century saw, many Akha people migrate south to Vietnam, Laos or Myanmar (Burma). The Akha in Thailand are thought to have crossed the border from Myanmar as early as 1903, although the majority have arrived during the last two generations.

Two of the three different sub groups of Akha people that live in Thailand, are represented in the village. The sub groups are the Ulo, Lomi and Pamee. All households in Baka belong to the Ulo sub group except for the female head of one household that belongs to the Lomi sub group.

Administratively, the community of Baka is part of the Thai government system, and forms part of Chiang Rai province, Muang District and Mae Yeow Tambon. According to those in the village it is classified within this Tambon as “Mooban eleven”. This was disputed by a Thai Forestry official, who maintained that the community had never officially been recognized by the

Thai Government system and could be forcibly removed at any time.

The village itself is a clean well kept collection of houses located on a slight grassy saddle. The lack of forest coverage and existence of Cogon grasslands at the village site is reflected in the name of the village “Baka”, which is the Akha pronunciation of the Thai word for Cogon grass. The village has expansive views, particularly to the west, where it looks across to other mountain ranges of the Huay Mae Sai watershed.

The houses in the village are typical of Akha households and have very large grassed roofs which come down low to the ground. Each household is surrounded by a metre high fence which gives the village an organised structure, and reflects the importance of the individual household within the community.

Baka is home to nine households and has a population of only forty people. Twenty -three are under seventeen years of age. Most of these are under the age of thirteen and attend primary school in a nearby community. All the families in the village came across the border from Myanmar and first moved to the Thai border town of Doi Mae Salong. The founding members of Baka moved there nine years ago.

An indigenous management structure has not evolved in the village during its short history. The traditional village roles of *buseh* (headman), *dzoema* (priest- principal village authority) and *pima* (memorizes the traditional laws and customs that make up the “Akha Way” and the many village genealogies) are not represented in Baka.

Other distinctive material elements of village culture normally associated with Akha communities, such as the village swing used during the Swing Festival, or the ceremonial entrance gates are also absent. Excluding the style of housing, there are no other obvious elements of material culture. Traditional styles of dress and ornamentation still exist, but are only worn during special occasions, particularly by women in the community. The lack of such fundamental elements of Akha village life, reflect the marginalised and perhaps temporary nature of the community of Baka. The marginalisation of the community is compounded by the fact that only two people in the community have official identification cards. This severely limits the

opportunities available to people in the community, as it restricts their ability to travel or work away from the village.

7.1.2 Livelihoods of village households.

The livelihoods of those in the village are totally dependent on labouring work with the Royal Forestry Department of Thailand. This is in sharp contrast to the livelihoods observed in traditional Akha communities which are reliant on hill rice production, using the cyclical swidden form of agriculture.

Due to the geographical position of the village within the Huay Mai Sae watershed the people of Baka have been forbidden by the Royal Forestry Department of Thailand to undertake any farming activities around their community. Men in the community continue to hunt in the surrounding forest, although these activities are limited due to the deforestation that has already occurred in the area. Households in the community do not have any legal right to the land around their village.

Given the ban on rice farming, the community of Baka are reliant on the monthly delivery of rice by officials from the Royal Forestry Department of Thailand. A months' provision of rice for each family costs approximately one weeks' wages.

People in the community receive a payment of 80THB for a days labour. Tasks include the planting of trees and the clearing of deforested areas in readiness for re-planting. Both men and women participate in this work, although two women with very young children remain in the village.

My observations of work cards used by men in each household, clearly showed that most normally worked five days. The work cards for women varied, although most worked at least two days per week. Given this, it is not unreasonable to assume that most households generate an income of approximately 500THB per week.

However while all are very happy to be receiving a consistent income they are acutely aware of their tenuous position and of their reliance on the Royal Forestry Department of Thailand.

7.1.3 Changes in the community.

Although Baka is a very young settlement, it has grown from two households in 1992 to the present collection of nine households. This has occurred in several stages and has seen the population develop rapidly.

Excluding the community's involvement with the Royal Forestry Department of Thailand, the only other significant change in the village has been the influence of visits from Intrepid groups.

7.1.4 Intrepid travellers.

Two hundred and seventy-four travellers completed a Northern Thailand adventure trip with Intrepid between 1/1/2001 and 1/7/2001. However, as travellers have the choice of completing one of three treks not all of these travellers would have visited Baka. Unfortunately there are no records kept to identify which trek travellers complete as part of their tour, which makes it impossible to identify exactly how many people visited Baka during the first six months of 2001. Nevertheless the following demographics provide an accurate picture of the type of travellers who would have visited Baka.

The majority of the travellers that completed a Northern Thailand trip in the first half of 2001 were female (62%) while 51% were under the age of thirty. Over 37% were from Australia, with the second largest group coming from Great Britain (25%). Small numbers were from Canada (11%), New Zealand (9%) and the U.S.A (5%). Almost all of the travellers were professionally employed in occupations such as accounting, administration, healthcare, hospitality and tourism, education, sales and marketing and management. Nearly 20% of the travellers were university students.

Travellers' motivations for doing the "Northern Thailand" adventure varied. Sixteen of the travellers who completed questionnaires (N = 37) identified the opportunity to participate in a rural village stay as one their motivations for choosing the tour. Others were attracted by the prospect of doing a trek, while the majority (n = 27) identified Intrepid's style of travel as a key factor in their decision to choose the trip.

7.1.5 The local operator- Funky Tours.

Funky Tours is the local operator responsible for organising the four day trek where travellers stay overnight in Baka. They are responsible for all aspects of the trek including the itinerary and provide a guide and two or three porters to carry the food required for the trek.

The owner and founder of Funky Tours, Khun Joe Ahnuruag, has operated Intrepid's "Northern Thailand" adventure trips since 1999 after the tragic death of Ut Chaimongkol, the original operator of the trip.

Intrepid Travel has been a strong supporter of Funky Tours and assisted the company in developing a homestay at Khun Joe's household in the small Northern Thailand township of Mae Ai. Travellers spend a night at this homestay before starting their four day trek visiting hilltribe communities.

7.2 Tourism in Baka.

7.2.1 History of tourism in Baka.

The history of tourism in Baka is essentially the history of Intrepid's visits as it has been the only tour company to have regularly visited the community. Until very recently it had been the only company to stay overnight in the village.

Intrepid first visited the community about eight years ago, not long after the first houses were built. For the majority of this time, Intrepid groups stayed in a nearby village, Ban Klang, and would pass through Baka, occasionally stopping for lunch. Intrepid only began staying in the community during 2000.

However, while Intrepid groups did not stay in the community until recently the company was involved in sponsoring the development of a school within the village. Unfortunately the school closed four years ago due to administrative problems. The school was originally set up in Ban Klang but was also closed due to problems.

The most influential figures in the development of Intrepid's trips to Baka and the development of schools in the hilltribe communities have been Ut Chaimongkol and Khun Joe

Ahnuruag. Ut pioneered the treks and village stays in the area. One of the original members of Baka, Ah U, can remember Ut and the first groups coming to the community. He recalls that everyone was happy to have people pass through the village and were excited by the prospect of having groups stay.

It was Ut's involvement with drugs and his tragic death from a drug overdose that led to the involvement of Khun Joe Ahnuruag and the development of his company Funky Tours. Joe was responsible for organising the first overnight visits to Baka.

The number of Intrepid trips visiting Baka has never been consistent. Intrepid groups visiting the area have a choice of completing one of three trekking trips that Funky Tours have developed. The choice of trek is dependent on the Intrepid leader's assessment of the fitness and ability of the group. The inconsistency of trips means that those in Baka are not aware of an impending visit until the group actually arrives in the community. No records have been kept to monitor how often groups stay in the village.

Several activities have been developed as local people become more accustomed to groups staying in their community, for example singing with the children and the craft market. Accommodation for groups has always been in a separate hut, slightly removed from the other households in the community.

7.2.2 A description of an Intrepid trip to Baka.

On the second day of their four day trek, travellers have lunch at the elephant camp of Mae Fow before walking up a steep track to reach the village of Baka. Some travellers decide to ride elephants to the village instead of completing the afternoon walk.

Groups normally arrive in the village at 4pm and are enthusiastically greeted by the village's children. Travellers make their way to the top of the village where a house has been built to accommodate them. Next to the accommodation is another small hut that the local guides and porters use to cook all meals.

Travellers then head down to a washing area just below the community. Many of the

children from the village follow along and watch the travellers having a wash. Female travellers wash in a sarong, just as the local ladies do.

After bathing, the group wanders back up to the village. Some head inside the accommodation while others enjoy some games with the local children. Young men in the group are normally invited by local men to join them in a game of Takraw- a form of volleyball played only with the feet.

Dinner is served at about 6.30pm near the accommodation used by Intrepid groups. Most of the local people return to their own homes to have a meal.

The evening activities are dominated by singing with the children in the village and a massage session. Most children participate in the singing activities and delight all with their renditions of Akha and Thai songs. Miti a teenage girl from the community is responsible for organising the children for the singing activities. Once the children have finished travellers get their chance to sing some songs, which are usually nursery rhymes.

After the singing finishes, travellers normally head back to their accommodation where they have the option of obtaining a leg and shoulder massage from women in the village, which costs them 50THB per half hour.

After breakfast the next morning several ladies from the village organise a market of traditional Akha handicrafts including intricately woven shoulder bags, hats or belts covered in silver studs and small shells. Most travellers buy one or two items.

By 10am the group heads out of the village towards another Akha community where they will stay for the third night of their trek. Many of the children follow the group out of Baka for a short distance before losing interest and returning to their village

7.3 Economic Outcomes for Baka.

The economic outcomes for the village community were determined by identifying:

- Services provided by individual households and the community.
- Total economic benefits to the community.
- Distribution of economic outcomes within the community.

- Intrepid trips and household incomes.
- Effects on households of income obtained from Intrepid trips.

7.3.1 Services provided by individual households and the community.

The economic outcomes that accrue to the village only benefit individual households. The lack of village wide institutions or management bodies ensures that the broader village community do not benefit from Intrepid trips. Households in the community receive economic benefits for providing the following services:

- Accommodation,
- Massages,
- Craft market,
- Selling of soft drinks,
- Selling of water.

7.3.2 Total economic benefits to the community.

Table 7.3.2 highlights the total economic benefit to Baka households of four Intrepid trips. The table also includes the direct costs incurred by individual households in the provision of particular services as estimated by members of the village. The calculation of intangible costs was not attempted, as such a microanalysis is beyond the scope of this study.

Table 7.3.2 Economic benefits and costs to the households of Baka.

Services provided	Trip 1 (n=12)		Trip 2 (n=9)		Trip 3 (n=7)		Trip 4 (n=6)	
	Direct costs	Payment	Direct costs	Payment	Direct costs	Payment	Direct costs	Payment
Accom @ 30THB/ pax.		360		270		210		180
Massages @ 100THB/ hour.		800		50		400		
Soft drinks @ 20THB/ bottle.	60	120	20	40	60	120	60	120

Water @ 15THB/ bottle.	75	225	63	315	21	105	36	180
Market.	775	870	100	200	540	850	300	510
Food bought by Funky Tours.		100		100		100		100
Total payment (less costs).		1895 THB		792 THB		1164 THB		694 THB

The table emphasises the importance of organised activities such as massages and the craft market in providing economic outcomes to local people. It also highlights the importance of the Intrepid leader who is responsible for the organisation of these activities, particularly given that accompanying leaders from Funky Tours I observed were not involved.

Both trip one and three had leaders who explained thoroughly the availability of massages and the craft market and were instrumental in organising them. In trip four, several travellers were sick so massages could not take place. In contrast, trip two had an Intrepid leader who was doing the trip for the first time and was not aware of the activities or forgot to organise them.

7.3.3 Distribution of economic outcomes within the community.

The distribution of economic outcomes between households caused a high level of conflict while I was in the community. This was due to the fact that several households in the community believed that they were not receiving their share of the total received from providing accommodation to Intrepid groups.

The economic outcomes from accommodation are split equally amongst the nine households in the community. The economic benefits for the services such as the craft market, selling of drinks and food, however, are controlled by Ah U's household (one of the original founders of the community). Monetary outcomes for massages are entirely dependent on who provides the massage and can flow to any household. Although all households receive some benefit from Intrepid's trips, the major benefits appear to flow to just one household in the community.

While this distribution appears inequitable, the one household who benefits most is directly involved in each trip and has taken the initiative to organise the sale of food and drinks, and the

small market of goods. All of which have to be purchased in towns that are at quite a distance from the village. Given the short history of the community and the lack of defining ties between households it is perhaps not surprising that such an arrangement has developed.

Ah U's household also organises the cooking equipment needed to prepare meals for Intrepid groups. The cooking of meals is done by porters from Funky Tours. Someone from Ah U's household or from his son-in-law's household (Ah Dor) also ensures that the separate pit toilets provided for Intrepid groups are supplied with large tubs of water for flushing. This job is very tiring as it requires ferrying large tubs of water from one end of the village to the other.

7.3.4 Intrepid trips and household incomes.

The level of income obtained from Intrepid visits does vary within the community. As mentioned one household within the community obtains a higher level of economic benefit through the organisation of some services.

All households found it difficult to determine how much money their household received from Intrepid visits. This was compounded by the fact that there are no records kept by Intrepid or Funky Tours as to which trek each Intrepid group completed (this determines which villages the groups visit).

However, while there are no official records kept, Khun Joe Ahnuruag from Funky Tours estimates that groups visit Baka approximately twice per month. Given that the average number of travellers per Northern Thailand trip between 1/1/2001 and 1/7/2001 was ten it would be reasonable to assume that the total benefit to the community from accommodation would be approximately 300THB per trip. Each household would therefore receive about 35THB per trip from accommodation payments made by Funky Tours.

The benefits to households from massages was also very difficult to determine. Women in the households interviewed stated that the number of massages they gave during each trip varied. Several mentioned that in some trips they gave two massages, while sometimes they did not give any. The number of people obtaining massages in the groups I observed reflect this inconsistency. Nevertheless, even if women from each of the households provided one half hour massage per trip

this would only amount to 50THB per trip. Added to the money made from accommodation payments, the total payments received by households per trip (excluding the household which provides the other services) would be approximately 85THB.

This is insignificant in comparison to the wages households received from the Royal Forestry Department of Thailand. My observation of the work cards for all households revealed that they earned at least 700THB per week. Households where both household heads work could earn twice this amount. Consequently, the income made from Intrepid trips merely supplements the income obtained from the Royal Forestry Department of Thailand.

The one household that provides the extra services, such as the drinks and the craft market, can earn a great deal more from visiting Intrepid groups. Results from table 7.3.2 highlight that the average benefit per trip to Ah U's household of money spent on drinks, food and the market was 797THB. If payments for accommodation and massages are added to this, then the economic benefit to Ah U's household is 557THB per trip.

7.3.5 Effects on households of income obtained from Intrepid trips.

The effect of income gained from Intrepid trips for the majority of households is minor, particularly in comparison to the effect of income obtained from working with the Royal Forestry Department of Thailand. Most households spent the small amount of income obtained from Intrepid trips on clothes or basic foodstuffs.

The effect on the household that provides extra services to Intrepid groups is more pronounced however. The monetary gain from Intrepid's trips is used to replenish the goods sold to Intrepid travellers and to help a younger member of the family, who has moved to Chaing Rai to purchase a motorcycle. Rice is the staple diet of all in the community and is delivered to households in the village by Forestry officials. Payment for this is automatically deducted from the monthly wages of those in the community. Table 7.3.5 gives an overview of household spending of income obtained from Intrepid trips.

Table 7.3.5 Household spending of money obtained from Intrepid trips (n = 9)

Items purchased.	Households who only receive an income from accommodation and massages. (n=8)	Households who receive an income from accommodation, massages and extra services. (n=1)
Food	8	1
Clothing	8	1
Medicines	3	
Motorcycles		1
Assisting young adults who live away from the village community		1
Batteries	2	1
Cotton for needlework	3	1

7.4 Socio-cultural outcomes for Baka.

The socio-cultural outcomes for the village were assessed according to:

- Household perceptions of Intrepid trips.
- Intra -village relationships.
- The role of youth in Intrepid trips.
- Effect of Intrepid trips on daily lifestyles of people within the community.

Intrepid trips have no impact on the political or management structures within Baka or on the arts and crafts practiced, as these do not exist. Similarly the impact of Intrepid s trips on women is negligible, (excluding Miti), as few women are involved.

7.4.1 Household perceptions of Intrepid trips.

Households in Baka were very happy to have Intrepid groups visiting the community. They identified the opportunity to make a small amount of money from Intrepid trips as the major benefit to their household. Six identified the singing activities between children in the community and Intrepid travellers as a positive outcome for young people in the village, while all expressed an

interest in learning more about people who come to their community. Two people from the community mentioned seeing photos that some travellers had bought with them, which they liked very much.

Three households also mentioned the opportunity to obtain first aid items as a positive outcome of having Intrepid groups in the community. These were supplied by visiting Intrepid leaders out of the first aid kits they carry with them. All households expressed an interest in being more involved with Intrepid groups.

7.4.2 Intra village relationships.

Visits by Intrepid groups have caused a serious level of tension and conflict amongst households within the community, over the distribution of payments to the village. This disquiet created a serious level of tension while I was in the community and erupted into a heated argument between the heads of various households.

My observation of this situation and subsequent interviews with the households involved revealed that many did not believe they were receiving their share of the money paid by Funky Tours for accommodation. No records were being kept by those involved- Funky Tours, Intrepid Travel or people within the community, to clarify these concerns. Further interviews revealed that Ah U was in fact withholding some money because he did not believe other households were helping when Intrepid groups were in the village.

Two points are pertinent regarding the development of this situation. Firstly, Funky Tours' payment of accommodation monies to Ah U was misplaced because he is not recognised by other households in the community as the headman of the village. Given the lack of leadership and management within the community, more effort should have gone into developing a system of payment that was satisfactory to all.

Secondly, the disquiet over payments for accommodation, perhaps masked a growing level of disenchantment or resentment by some households to the increasing benefits accruing to one household over payments for soft drinks, water and handicrafts. However, as this disquiet did not

become apparent until very late during my stay in the community, I was not able to verify this through more extensive interviews with households in the community.

A more thorough level of planning involving Funky Tours, Intrepid and the community prior to bringing groups to the village may have alleviated this problem. For example, a more open system of payment should be implemented and local people should be given more opportunities to become involved.

7.4.3 Role of youth in Intrepid trips.

The greatest level of interaction Intrepid travellers have with local people, is with young children, mostly under the age of twelve. From my observations and informal conversations with young people in the community, it did appear that these interactions produced positive outcomes for them. I did not observe any behaviour which suggested a copying of tourist roles and certainly did not observe any young people begging or behaving in an aggressive or anti-social manner.

All the young people I observed in the community were incredibly enthusiastic about having Intrepid visitors come to the village. When asked what they liked about having groups in the village, most referred to the singing which occurs in the evening of the visit.

Miti is the only teenager over the age of fifteen who continues to reside in the village. Two other teenagers have left the village and are currently working in Chiang Rai. Miti is an important factor in the success of Intrepid visits to the community. She is heavily involved in all aspects of Intrepid's trips within the community, including the organising of the singing activities that occur. According to Miti the greatest benefit she gets from Intrepid visits is the opportunity to practice speaking Thai with the Thai guides from Funky Tours.

7.4.4 Effect of Intrepid trips on daily lifestyles of people within the community.

Given the size of the community there is little doubt that Intrepid's trips would have some effect on the daily lifestyles of people within the community. However the limited time Intrepid groups spend in the community, its small group numbers, the arrangement of facilities for Intrepid groups on the periphery of the village and the lack of involvement by households, excluding Ah U's household, ensures this presence is not overwhelming. The use of separate washing and toilet areas

means that local people and Intrepid groups are not using the same facilities. None of the households interviewed could identify issues which suggested a disruption to their lifestyle from visiting Intrepid groups.

Interviews with Ah U's household highlight that his family was more than happy to disrupt their lifestyles for one night given the economic return they obtained.

7.5 Physical Outcomes for Baka.

The physical outcomes for the community were assessed according to:

- Waste and pollution related to visitation from Intrepid groups.
- Local resource use related to visitation from Intrepid groups.

The physical outcomes of Intrepid's trips to Baka are negligible or non-existent. This is because facilities have been developed within the community to cope with any waste generated by Intrepid groups and that activities completed by groups use few resources. Facilities created for Intrepid include the provision of a proper pit toilet system, cooking and sleeping huts and a bush shower.

The provision of these facilities has restricted any possible physical impacts and confined them to specific sites. The limited amount of time travellers spend within the community also lessens the possibility of creating physical outcomes within the village.

A small amount of waste paper is created at the toilet and during cooking. This is collected and burned by the local community. Any other waste created during cooking activities such as tin cans are squashed and removed by Funky Tour porters.

The community of Baka is exceptionally clean- particularly in comparison with other hilltribe communities visited as part of the "Northern Thailand Adventure" trek. People in the community regularly sweep up the paths surrounding their homes and burn any rubbish collected.

Other possible impacts such as those created by soap or shampoos surrounding the wash area have also been minimised. Before beginning the trek travellers are directed to buy biodegradable soap, which reduces the potential impact on the environment surrounding the

washing area.

While the bottles from soft drinks consumed by travellers are recycled, the use of plastic waterbottles creates the largest possible impact of Intrepid trips. At present, travellers can buy 1 litre bottles of water from one household in the community. While this provides a positive economic outcome to the household it does create the potential of waste. Most travellers squashed their used water bottles and took them with them, although a few inevitably remained. The use of a water filter on the trek reduced the number of waterbottles used, although this has the negative consequence of limiting the possible economic outcomes to the household that sells them.

A possible response to this, is to encourage the household selling the bottled water to purchase 20 litre water containers. Travellers would still be charged 15THB for a litre of water. A similar idea works in Vietnam, although the household concerned does not obtain any economic benefit from the system.

7.6 Outcomes for Travellers.

7.6.1 Travellers' expectations.

Questionnaires completed by travellers who visited Baka (n=37) reveal that twenty travellers (59%) believed that their Baka village experience matched their pre trip expectations. Fourteen travellers (71%) said that their time in Baka exceeded their pre trip expectations. The following comments highlight peoples impression of their time in Baka.

“I wasn't sure what to expect- I had been warned that visiting hilltribes was like visiting a zoo i.e. village people on display. Having experienced it myself I think Intrepid handles it with sensitivity i.e. not too many tourists all the time, building own huts for trekkers, not creating dependency on tourists to bring in money”

Catherine.

“ the trek was no that hard, which was okay concerning the heat, due to the short time we didn't have that much time to interact with the people”

Krist.

“People are very friendly , especially the children. Village seems very natural- untouched”

Kaye.

“Baka was incredible. I loved the people there. I was expecting people to shy away from us but they welcomed us with open arms.”

Alison.

“The time in Baka did meet my expectations, although I thought they would be more traditional and less western.”

Namee.

7.6.2 Factors that determined travellers’ village experience.

As part of their questionnaire response, travellers were asked to rank in order of importance the factors that they considered significant in determining their Baka village experience. These factors were developed after discussions with travellers, Intrepid leaders, local operators, local people, and other Intrepid staff during a preliminary research trip. Table 7.6.2 highlights the results.

Table 7.6.2 Factors that travellers considered important in determining their Baka village experience (n = 37).

Factors	Average Ranking	
	Most important 1	Least important 9
Role of local tour guides	5.77	
Role of Intrepid leader	7.56	
Interaction with local people	2.38	
Activities conducted within the village	7.06	
Interaction with other travellers	5.00	
Weather	6.91	
Trip organisation	5.53	
Ability to cope with the physical and mental challenges posed by the trek and village stay	5.77	
Trekking activities	5.53	

The results highlight that travellers consider their interaction with local people and the activities they completed within the village as the most important factors that determined the experience they had during their Baka Village stay.

7.7 Causal factors that determine the outcomes obtained by Baka.

Causal factors that determine the outcomes obtained by the community appeared to be related to the political and socio-cultural structure of the community, external government policies, Funky Tours and Intrepid Travel. However it should be noted (as discussed in chapter 2- Research Design and Methods) that the causal statements and inferences made below are drawn from the researchers intimate knowledge of the data collected. Nevertheless it should be remembered that the statements are data based speculation and conjecture.

7.7.1 Factors determined by Intrepid Travel and Funky Tours.

- Role of Funky Tours.

Funky Tours have a very influential role in determining the impacts of Intrepid trips to Baka as they are responsible for the organisation of trips to the community. This responsibility includes the employment of local guides and the payment of services provided by the village.

- Intrepid leaders.

Table 7.3.2 highlights the pivotal role that Intrepid leaders have in determining the level of outcomes obtained by local people. The leader's role is also important in determining the outcomes obtained by travellers as their presence and relationship with local people determine to a large extent the interaction that travellers can have with people from the community. The important role that leaders played in organising the singing, massages and craft market is also decisive in determining the level of interaction travellers can have with local people.

- Inconsistent visitation levels.

At present Intrepid groups arrive unannounced, which limits the community's ability to obtain a greater benefit from Intrepid groups. The household involved in providing extra

services would be prepared to buy more goods such as crafts and soft drinks, if they were confident that groups would come fortnightly.

- Limited time Intrepid groups spend in the community.

The limited time Intrepid groups spend in the village limits the positive or negative impacts that groups can have on the community.

- Size of groups.

With only forty people living in Baka, it is inevitable that a group of twelve travellers would have a major presence in the community.

- Food arrangements.

Food consumed by travellers while in the village is supplied by Funky Tours. This limits both the economic impact and the socio-cultural impacts that Intrepid visits have on the community. Nevertheless, one household does obtain a small benefit from the sale of some food such as eggs and tinned fish which are used to prepare meals for Intrepid groups.

- Consistent visitation from the same leaders.

Having the same set of Intrepid leaders visiting the village on a regular basis, makes a difference to the outcomes obtained by local people and travellers. This is clearly demonstrated in Table 7.3.2

- Opportunities for direct interaction between travellers and local people.

The direct levels of interaction that travellers were able to have with local people- particularly young people was the most important factor in determining their enjoyment of their time in Baka.

- Pre-tour information.

Pre-tour information for travellers on the appropriate behaviour and equipment required whilst in Baka is provided. This limits the possibility of travellers acting or dressing in ways that cause offence to local people.

- Use of water filters.

Use of water filters on the trek reduces the number of water bottles consumed by travellers

whilst they are in the community. While this reduces the possible physical impacts of Intrepid's trips it does reduce the financial benefit to the household that sells waterbottles to travellers.

7.7.2 Factors determined by the community.

- Unstable nature of the community.

The temporary nature of the community has led to a lack of social, cultural and economic bonds between households in the community. The absence of shared histories and family ties plus the dwindling relevance of the Akha way, has reduced the commitment amongst households to each other and to the broader concept of community. This is perhaps not surprising given the disparate background of households and the short history of the community.

- Lack of recognised leadership or management group within the community.

This is an exceptionally important factor and one that contributed to the conflict that I observed.

- Size of the community.

Given the size of the community (only forty people) it is inevitable that groups do have a substantial presence in the community. However, the spatial arrangement of facilities used by Intrepid groups such as accommodation, toilet, and washing areas on the periphery of the community, ensures that the presence of Intrepid groups is rarely overwhelming.

- Motivations of local people to be involved in Intrepid trips.

All of the households would like to be more involved with groups that come to the community.

- Role of a specific member of the village who helps organise activities within the community.

Miti, a bright teenage girl from the community, is particularly important to the success of the program in Baka. Miti is able to act as a link between her own community and Funky Tours, through her ability to speak English. She is responsible for organising activities such as the singing which occurs between travellers and young children from the community.

- Royal Forestry Department of Thailand.

All households in the community are employed by the Royal Forestry Department of Thailand. The income obtained from Intrepid's visits merely supplements the income gained by working for the Forestry Department.

7.8 Impacts matrix.

Table 7.8 highlights the relationship between causal factors, outcomes and impacts identified in sections 7.3- 7.7. The table shows that the outcomes and impacts of Intrepid trips for local people are a result of a combination of factors. Some of these are determined by the community themselves while others are directly related to how Intrepid practically implements its trips.

The table also highlights the relationship between outcomes and impacts. In particular it demonstrates that the impacts of Intrepid trips flow directly from the outcomes obtained by local people.

Table 7.8 Baka village and Intrepid Travel Groups. Causal Factors, Outcomes and Impacts.

Causal Factors that determine Outcomes																Outcomes		Impacts						
Community Factors												Intrepid/ Funky Tour Factors												
Role of a specific member of the community who helps organise activities.	Livelihood strategies of local people are based around employment provided by the Royal Thailand Forestry Department.	Arrangement of facilities for Intrepid groups is on the periphery of the village.	Unstable nature of the community. Temporary nature of the community has led to a lack of local, cultural and economic bonds between households.	Small size of the community. Presence of groups is very noticeable.	Lack of leadership or management group within the community.	Limited opportunities for the majority of local people to be involved in Intrepid trips.	Participation of passengers in a number of activities such as singing, massages etc.	Direct interaction between Intrepid passengers and local people.	Use of local Operator- Funky Tours who are responsible for the design and implementation of Intrepid's trips to the community.	Consistent visitation from the same Intrepid leaders.	Pre visit information is provided to passengers on the appropriate clothing and background to hilltribe communities.	Role of Intrepid leaders in organising activities in the community including craft market, massage and singing.	Limited time Intrepid groups spend in the community.	Food consumed by Intrepid passengers while in the community is supplied by Funky Tours.	Inconsistent visitation levels of Intrepid trips.	The use of water filters on the treks helps reduce waterborne usage.	Motivations of passengers.	Size of groups. Maximum group size is 12.	Facilities such as toilets and designated wash areas are provided for Intrepid groups					
																				→	No collective benefit to the broader village community			
						H	H	P	H	P										→	Economic Benefits to some households within the community from the provision of services such as massages, craft market and selling of soft drinks.		→	Minor contributions to the livelihood strategies adopted by some households. Major contribution to the livelihood strategies adopted by one household.
		H									P		P					H	H	→	Physical Impacts are negligible. Physical impacts from washing and toilets are localised to specific sites.	Very little waste is created by Intrepid groups.		
			H		H	H			H											→	Open conflict between households in the community over the distribution of income from Intrepid trips.		→	Tension between households in the village.
H	P						P	H				P	H							→	Local perceptions of Intrepid trips are positive excluding arrangements made for accommodation payments. Positives include opportunities to make some money, singing activities involving children and giving massages.	Willingness of all households to increase their involvement with Intrepid groups.	→	Enthusiasm to have more groups come to the community- even taking into account problems associated with the distribution of economic outcomes obtained from Intrepid groups.
P							P	H										P	P	→	Positive feedback from passengers.			

Causal Factors H Most Important P Important

7.9 Recommendations.

The following recommendations are aimed at ensuring Intrepid's trips to Baka are run in the most sustainable and responsible method possible. Part of this process involves ensuring that the local operator responsible for the trip to Baka is prepared to adhere to Intrepid's responsible travel practices. Developing a consistent monitoring process and a code of practice (to be given to local operators) are practical steps that can be taken by Intrepid.

Developing a code of practice.

A code of practice or a set of principles for operating overnight trips to ethnic minority communities, needs to be developed. This would ensure that the basic principles of community based tourism would be followed by all local operators who run Intrepid's trips to these communities.

- Notifying the host village.

The present arrangement of arriving at a village unannounced, needs to be changed. Not only is it rude, but it also lessens the opportunities available to local people to obtain economic benefits from Intrepid's visits. Dropping one of the three treks available and having groups alternating between the two remaining treks would ensure this did not occur. The more consistent pattern of visitation would allow people in Baka to prepare more thoroughly for Intrepid visits. According to Khun Joe this would not be difficult as very few groups now complete trek three.

- Inform leaders.

Ensure all Intrepid leaders to the village are aware of their pivotal role in organising the extra activities such as massages and the craft market. Highlight to leaders the positive benefits of these extra activities for local people.

- Community Support Fund.

Developing a 'Community Support Fund' in the village would provide a greater benefit to the majority of households who at present only receive a financial benefit from payments for

accommodation and massages. However, if such a fund were to be developed, some form of management structure would have to be organised to cope with such an initiative. Intrepid would not be involved in initiating proposals but would assess ideas and methods in partnership with the community and Funky Tours. Funding would be dependent on the number of travellers visiting the community. A format for developing such a fund would need to be devised.

- Monitoring of trips.

A method of monitoring the impacts of Intrepid's trips on ethnic minority communities needs to be devised. A standard format could be developed to complete this task, and responsible travel coordinators or experienced leaders to the area would need to be trained in conducting this task. Such a report would be included in a yearly 'Responsible Travel Report' which would outline the company's responsible travel performance. Techniques used in this research such as rapid rural appraisal techniques could be used to assess Intrepid's impact. Secondary research on the number and types of travellers visiting the community could be completed by office staff in Melbourne. Discussions with Funky Tours would be part of this monitoring process.

- Use of bottled water.

Some changes could be made in regards to the supply of bottled water within the communities which would drastically reduce the number being used. Encouraging the household who supplies bottled water to purchase 20 litre containers, would reduce the number of plastic bottles used by travellers as they could simply reuse the same water bottle(s).

- Detailed trip notes on Baka for leaders and Travellers.

These notes could be prepared from information contained in this report and other information currently used by leaders. Such information could be provided for travellers, similar to the trip notes that are provided to travellers before their village visits in Borneo.

- Consistency of leaders.

Maintain the policy of having a consistent group of leaders visiting the community. Such a policy ensures that local people get to know leaders which provides positive outcomes for all, particularly travellers who are able to have greater levels of interaction with local people.

- Organisation of the market.

A consistent pricing level for goods in the craft market should be developed. A sheet with these prices should be laminated and provided to the Intrepid leaders. A consistent time for the market should also be organised, ideally after breakfast.

- Monitor the quality of local guides provided by Funky Tours.

Unfortunately the local guides provided by Funky Tours on the trips I observed, other than Khun Joe, had little knowledge of the community or the surrounding area. They did not consider it to be their role to organise activities whilst in the village. Carl Needham, the Ground Manager in Thailand, has spent a considerable amount of time attempting to rectify this problem.

- Employment of local people as porters.

Employing local people as porters would greatly add to the trip for travellers and would allow local people to explain in their own terms their lifestyles and community. Any of the men in the community could complete this role. Funky Tours would still be required to supply a guide.

- Trip specific feedback forms for travellers.

Trip specific feedback forms would allow for a more sophisticated method of appraising passenger enjoyment of trips. Questions specifically related to travellers time in Bakawould be included in such a form.