

# Chapter 8:

## *Khun Puai Community and Intrepid Travel.*

### Contents.

8.1	<i>Background to the Research Setting.</i>	3
8.1.1	<i>Khun Puai community .</i>	3
8.1.2	<i>Livelihoods of village households.</i>	4
8.1.3	<i>Changes in the community.</i>	6
8.1.4	<i>Intrepid Travellers.</i>	7
8.1.5	<i>The Local Operator- Siam Adventures.</i>	8
8.2	<i>Tourism in Khun Puai</i>	8
8.2.1	<i>History of tourism in Khun Puai .</i>	8
8.2.2	<i>A description of an Intrepid trip to Khun Puai.</i>	9
8.3	<i>Economic Outcomes for Khun Puai.</i>	10
8.3.1	<i>Services provided by individual households and the community.</i>	11
8.3.2	<i>Total economic benefits to the community.</i>	11
8.3.3	<i>Distribution of economic outcomes within the community.</i>	12
8.3.4	<i>Intrepid trips and household incomes.</i>	13
8.3.5	<i>Effect on families of income obtained from Intrepid trips.</i>	14
8.4	<i>Socio-Cultural Outcomes for Khun Puai.</i>	15
8.4.1	<i>Household perception of Intrepid trips.</i>	15
8.4.2	<i>Arts and crafts practiced within the community.</i>	16
8.4.3	<i>Role of youth in Intrepid trips.</i>	17
8.4.4	<i>Effect of Intrepid trips on daily lifestyles of people within the community.</i>	18
8.4.5	<i>Role of women in Intrepid trips.</i>	18
8.4.6	<i>Effect of Intrepid trips on village political or management structures.</i>	18
8.4.7	<i>Intra-village relationships.</i>	19
8.5	<i>Physical Outcomes for Khun Puai.</i>	19
8.6	<i>Outcomes for Travellers.</i>	20
8.6.1	<i>Travellers expectations.</i>	20
8.6.2	<i>Factors that determined travellers village experience.</i>	21
8.7	<i>Causal factors that determined the outcomes obtained by Khun Puai.</i>	22
8.7.1	<i>Factors determined by Intrepid Travel and Siam Adventures.</i>	22
8.7.2	<i>Factors determined by Khun Puai.</i>	24
8.8	<i>Recommendations.</i>	25

**Note on Exchange rates:**

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

AUD\$1 = Thai Baht (THB) 22.80

# ***8. Khun Puai Community and Intrepid Travel.***

## **8.1 Background to the Research Setting.**

### **8.1.1 Khun Puai community.**

Khun Puai is a large Karen village that Intrepid visits weekly as part of the trip- ‘A taste of Adventure’ in Northern Thailand.” The trip is run by a local operator, Siam Adventures, who are based in Chiang Mai. Travellers stay in Khun Puai on the second night of a three day trek they complete as part of their eight day trip.

Khun Puai is a large Karen hilltribe village, situated in the foothills of the mountain ranges that form the backbone of Doi Inthanon National Park in Northern Thailand. Although not technically part of the National Park the village is very close to its borders and according to the chief will probably be included in the near future if plans to expand the park proceed. The village is home to 62 households and is estimated by locals to be about 80-100 years old. About 400 people live in the community.

Khun Puai is nestled into the side of broad spur, with houses arranged according to family groupings. Below the village in a wide plain area are extensive terraced rice fields that produce one rice harvest every year. Bisecting these terraced rice fields is the small river Mae Puai, from which the village gets its name.

The people of Khun Puai belong to the Karen ethnic group which is officially recognised by the Thai Government as one of the nine ‘Hill Tribes’ living in Thailand. The total number of Karen people in Thailand is estimated by the Tribal Research Institute to be approximately 322,000 people, which accounts for nearly half of the number of hilltribe people in Thailand. The total number of hilltribe people in Thailand account for little more than 1% of the total population of Thailand.

The Karen people in Thailand belong to one of four different sub groupings. Those who live in Khun Puai belong to the largest of these sub groupings, the Sgaw Karen. The original

descendents of Karen people in Thailand migrated from Burma as early as the eighteenth and nineteenth century and have continued to move across the border – particularly in recent times due to the political instability in Burma.

The village is now administratively part of the Thailand government system. In this respect it is part of Chiang Mai Province, Mae Wang District , Mae Win Tambon. Within this Tambon it is classified as Mooban 3. Accordingly it now has a chief who is the village representative within this administrative system.

Traditional elements of material culture are still major features of life in Khun Puai although this is changing rapidly as the community continues to integrate into the dominant Thai culture. Distinctive elements of material culture still obvious include traditional forms of clothing and ornaments. Only women continue to wear traditional dress although they now also wear tracksuit pants or jumpers either above or below their traditional clothing. Various forms of ornaments such as beads, silver jewellery and bracelets are still worn by women in the community. Men generally only wear traditional clothing during special occasions.

Other distinctive elements of material culture include the architectural styles of houses and the lifestyles of people within the community. These are most obvious at different times of the rice season such as harvesting or planting.

### **8.1.2. Livelihoods of village households.**

All households are still involved in growing rice for subsistence purposes. Some households in the village don't have wet rice fields and have to work dry rice fields which are very steep and not as productive. None of the households sell any of the rice they harvest from their fields. The rice produced from these harvests (wet and dry) lasts on average about six months for most families, although a very small number of households produce enough rice from their fields to last all year.

The size of a household's rice fields is dependent on several factors. According to those in the village the most important is the length of time a household has been in the community. The founding families in the village or those who came not long after were able to cultivate large areas

of wet rice fields. Given the limited area suitable for wet rice fields, any newcomers to the village have been restricted to smaller areas or to developing less productive dry rice fields.

Several other factors appeared to determine a household's wet rice fields. This includes the number of siblings in a family as each sibling receives a percentage of their parent's rice fields when they marry. Inevitably, siblings in large households who receive small allotments cannot sustain all of their new household's subsistence needs and therefore need to earn an income. Another factor highlighted by several people was the debilitating effect of opium which has forced several households to sell their rice fields to pay for their opium addiction.

Households who don't need to buy rice are at a distinct advantage compared to others in the village. This is because any money earned can be channelled into activities or goods that further increase the opportunities available for the household. For example one household which doesn't need to buy rice has been able to invest the income made from growing flowers on a rotary hoe, which it then rents to other households to plough their rice fields.

Given this limited return from farming activities, many families in the village are compelled to become involved in the cash economy to make up the shortfalls in their subsistence needs. Tourism, and in particular Intrepid's visits, is an important avenue for many to earn much needed cash to meet their subsistence needs.

Both men and women in the village are involved in activities that produce monetary outcomes, particularly during the non rice producing season. Semi structured interviews with twenty two households in the village revealed that adult men in thirteen of these households completed work which produced a monetary outcome. Most of these men worked as farm laborers near the lowland town of Ban Kat or the Hmong Village of Khun Wang. Several men in the village also grew flowers that were sold in markets in Ban Kat.

In addition to this are those involved in Intrepid's trips. These include those directly involved, the porters and the accommodation provider, plus those indirectly involved such as the massage providers.

Women in the village are also involved in monetary producing activities although unlike the majority of men their cash producing activities are confined to the village setting and almost exclusively involve tourism related activities. The only exceptions being the three shops which are very poorly stocked and appear to sell very little (the semi structured interviews I conducted revealed that most village people preferred to buy goods from shops in the Thai towns down in the valleys).

### **8.1.3 Changes in the community.**

Khun Puai is a community in transition where many of its old ways are changing rapidly. These agents of economic and social change include the external policies of the Thailand Government, the improved access of the community to Thai towns in the lowlands, the role of the church, and tourism through visits from several companies including Intrepid.

The building of a 10 km dirt road that gives people from the village access to the Thai provincial towns of Ban Kat and San Patong has become a major agent of social change for the community. This change has effected all people in Khun Puai including children who attend Thai schools down in the valleys, women who go down to buy clothes and other goods, and men who go down to trade or work.

It is interesting to note that the trip down to the lowland areas that once took village people several days to walk now takes several hours in a small pickup truck. Not surprisingly the Honda Dream motorcycle is now a common sight in the village and is especially popular amongst young males who take every opportunity to head down to the Thai towns such as Ban Kat.

The village primary school built twenty years ago has also had a tremendous influence on many young people in the village. The school operates like any other Thai primary school. Unfortunately for many of the young people in the village the Thai teacher attends infrequently.

Those families who have the financial resources send their teenage children to school in Huai Pong, a rural Thai school in the lowlands. Siam Adventures have been involved in a project that provides uniforms and books for the children who attend this school.

The inclusion of Khun Puai in the Thai Government administrative system, which means the village has an elected chief who attends monthly meetings with Thai Government officials, has now also drawn the village into mainstream Thai society. Many in the community voted in the last nationwide election.

Unlike other hilltribe communities, the government ban on the clearing of forests at higher elevations has only had a minor effect on households within Khun Puai. The positioning of the village on the flanks of a broad valley has ensured that most households in the village have been able to develop wet rice fields.

The other major agent of social change besides tourism is Christianity. Fifty one of the households now consider themselves Christians, forty eight of which are Baptists and three are Catholic. The remaining families still follow their original animist beliefs. Three services are held every Sunday and are very well attended-especially by the women in the village. A Sunday school run by teenagers is also popular.

#### **8.1.4 Intrepid travellers.**

Two hundred and eighty eight travellers visited Khun Puai on Intrepid trips between 1/1/2001 and 1/7/2001. The majority of these travellers were female (64%) while most were under the age of forty (84%).

Nearly 43% of the travellers who visited Khun Puai in the first half of 2001 were from Australia with the second largest grouping of travellers coming from the U.S.A. (22%). Small numbers of travellers came from New Zealand, Great Britain, Japan and Canada.

Almost all of the travellers were professionally employed in occupations such as healthcare/ medical, hospitality and tourism, accounting, administration and management. Nearly 24% of travellers who attended Intrepid trips to Khun Puai were university students.

Passenger's motivations for doing the 'Taste of Adventure' trip were varied. Thirteen travellers in the three groups surveyed (n=26) 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 identified Intrepid's style of travel as a key factor in their decision

to choose the trip.

### **8.1.5 The local operator - Siam Adventures.**

Siam Adventures are the local operator responsible for organising the three day trek where travellers stay overnight in Khun Puai. They are responsible for all aspects of the trek including the itinerary, the provision of a guide and the recruitment of two porters from Khun Puai.

The owner and founder of Siam Adventures is Charin Silphisuth. According to Charin, Siam Adventures began operating as a travel agency and trekking business in 1995. However they did not begin running sections of Intrepid's trips until late 1997 when they began the homestay and trekking section of Intrepid's very popular 'A taste of Adventure' trip. Siam Adventures now operate several trips for Intrepid including: 'A taste of Adventure', 'Treasures of the North' and the 'Northern Explorer'. Several of these trips involve trekking activities and village visits.

Like Intrepid, Siam Adventures have a responsible travel philosophy and have been involved in running programmes which assist the community of Khun Puai. These include organising excursions for hilltribe children, providing young people with school books and uniforms, building a small community centre, assisting men from the village complete a drug rehabilitation programme for their opium addiction and helping local people remove rubbish from their community.

## **8.2 Tourism in Khun Puai.**

### **8.2.1 History of tourism in Khun Puai.**

According to those in Khun Puai, travellers first started coming to their village about twenty years ago, as part of hikes that aimed to climb Doi Inthanon, Thailand's highest mountain. Tourism appeared to operate inconsistently in the village until about five years ago when a local operator from Chiang Mai called Banana Tours began more regular visits.

Banana Tour groups now stay in the village almost every night. During these occasions, up to twenty people stay in Khun Puai, although a review of Banana Tour records back in Chiang Mai highlight that the average number of people staying in the community every night is about ten.



Accommodation for Banana Tour groups is at the top of the village and is provided by relatives of one of the guides who work for Banana Tours. Another of their guides also comes from the village.

Travellers on Banana Tours are backpackers who come mainly from Japan, England and Ireland. Almost all of the Banana Tour travellers I observed in the community were Japanese university students.

Banana Tours, through their charismatic owner Sambat, have initiated and financed the building of a kindergarten in the village. The kindergarten is known as the Banana Tour Project. The teacher for the kindergarten is a local village lady. Her wage is now paid for by the Thai education system.

Siam Adventures in association with Intrepid have been running trips to Khun Puai for approximately three years. Unlike those from Banana Tours, Intrepid groups have only visited the community on a weekly basis, although during peak holiday periods such as Christmas and New Year, sometime come twice a week. Intrepid groups stay at the bottom end of the village and use two men from the community as porters.

Like Banana Tours they have been involved in assisting the village through a range of different projects.

### **8.2.2 A description of an Intrepid trip to Khun Puai.**

Typically Intrepid groups enter Khun Puai at about 1.30pm on a Friday afternoon and leave the village at 9.00am the next day. A Thai guide from Siam Adventures leads the group. Two porters from Khun Puai also accompany the group and are responsible for carrying the food consumed on the trek as well as the empty water bottles used by travellers. An Intrepid leader also participates in the trek.

Massages, singing with children, interacting with local people, and purchasing goods from a craft market are the main activities that Intrepid travellers participate in during their village stay.

After a tiring day hiking, most travellers take the opportunity to have a massage provided by a local village man. These normally occur late in the afternoon and cost travellers 50 THB per half hour. Of the groups I observed, only five travellers out of thirty- nine chose not to have massages.

Prior to beginning the night activities, travellers and young people from the community enjoy separate meals prepared by Siam Adventures. Both groups then join together to participate in singing activities. All of the young village children who attend introduce themselves in English and then sing a collection of songs, some of which are Karen songs while others are Thai and even the odd Japanese song. After they have finished, travellers get up and introduce themselves in Karen and then sing a collection of songs. Hits such as the ‘hokey pokey’, ‘heads, shoulders, knees and toes’ and ‘Row Row, Row your boat’ are popular.

On the Saturday morning, travellers are woken early by the sound of village women setting up a makeshift market. Each household hangs up their own crafts, although some ladies prefer to give their goods to another lady in the village to sell for them for a nominal fee if the item is sold. All items are sold at a set price so there is no bargaining involved and the women in the village sit back away from the stalls so there is no pressure upon travellers to buy goods from particular village ladies. Traditional sarongs, bags and shirts are the most popular items made for sale. Necklaces and wristbands made from wild seeds are also popular.

After the craft market is completed, travellers finish off their breakfast and get their packs organised for the final three hour walk of the trek. After some hearty shaking of hands between the travellers and Bati Guler, the accommodation provider, the travellers say their last “Tabluk Pardo”, wave good-bye to the usual group of kids who are milling about and head off for the last section of the trek.

### **8.3 Economic Outcomes for Khun Puai.**

The economic outcomes for the village 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.

### **8.3.1 Services provided by individual households and the community.**

The economic outcomes from Intrepid's trips benefit a broad number of households in the community. At present there is no mechanism within trips to provide a collective benefit to the community although the astonishing success of the craft market ensures that many households in the community benefit from Intrepid visits. Households in Khun Puai provide the following services for Intrepid groups:

- Accommodation
- Craft market
- Portering duties
- Massages

### **8.3.2 Total economic benefits to the community.**

The total economic benefit to Khun Puai households of four trips I observed is highlighted in Table 8.3.2. The table does not include the estimation of direct costs incurred by individual households although given the services provided it is likely that such costs would have been negligible. The calculation of intangible costs was not attempted as such a microanalysis is beyond the scope of this study.

The table highlights the astonishing success of the craft market in providing economic benefits to households within the community. This market provides all households in the community with an opportunity to benefit from Intrepid's trips. It provided over 50% of the total economic benefit in all the four cases observed. In three of the four groups observed, the market provided over 68% of the total economic benefit. The financial benefit to the two porters was also substantial with each receiving between 700 - 1000 Baht per trip.

**Table 8.3.2** Economic benefits and costs to the households of Khun Puai.

<b>Services provided</b>	<b>Trip 1</b>	<b>Trip 2</b>	<b>Trip 3</b>	<b>Trip 4</b>
	<b>(n=10)</b>	<b>(n=7)</b>	<b>(n=9)</b>	<b>(n=10)</b>
	<b>Total benefit</b>	<b>Total benefit</b>	<b>Total benefit</b>	<b>Total benefit</b>
Accom @ 20THB/ pax	200	140	180	200
Massages @ 50THB/ Half hour	550	350	450	450
Market	5130	3750	6770	3000
Two Porters @500 TH/ Trip	1000	1000	1000	1000
Porters Tips	650	500	650	1000
<b>Total payment to the village.</b>	<b>7530</b> <b>THB</b>	<b>5740</b> <b>THB</b>	<b>9050</b> <b>THB</b>	<b>5650</b> <b>THB</b>

### 8.3.3 Distribution of economic outcomes within the community.

The distribution of economic outcomes within the community is dependent on a households' level of involvement with Intrepid groups. Three groups were identified. One of these groups were households directly involved every week. People in this group receive a weekly payment from Siam Adventures for their services. This group includes the two porters who assist on the treks plus another man who provides the accommodation where Intrepid groups stay .

The second group were those households indirectly involved with Intrepid groups. Almost all of households in the community (80%) are indirectly involved with Intrepid groups through their involvement in the craft market. People in this group include the many women who make weavings to sell at the local market held for Intrepid travellers, plus the eight to ten men who provide

massages to travellers. Economic benefits to this group are variable and obtained directly from travellers purchasing goods at the craft market or having massages.

Astonishingly only a very small percentage of village households, ten in total (16%), have no involvement with Intrepid groups. These households were occupied by either the very elderly, those with very young children or those that were sick or incapacitated and therefore could not participate in the craft market or provide massages.

#### **8.3.4 Intrepid trips and household incomes.**

Households who are directly involved in every Intrepid trip to the community receive a wage from Siam Adventures. The income obtained from these activities is particularly important as none of these households obtain a monetary outcome from any other source. If not for their employment with Siam Adventures both of the men working as porters would be forced to seek paid work outside of the community. The male head of the household that provides accommodation is now too old to work outside of the community.

In comparison, the economic benefit to the households indirectly involved varies and is determined by the amount of crafts sold or the number of massages provided. Interviews conducted with those indirectly involved (n=19) highlight that specific factors determined a households' level of involvement. These interviews revealed the following:

- The total income of five households came from the craft market. In all of these cases the male household head was no longer present or was unable to work outside of the community.
- Five households (26%) estimated that very little of their income (less than 20%) came from their involvement with Intrepid groups either through the craft market or the provision of massages.
- One household estimated that they obtain almost no economic benefit from Intrepid visits. This household earns a substantial income from growing flowers and has enough wet rice fields to ensure that it doesn't have to buy rice. Not surprisingly there is little motivation for this household to be involved.

- The remaining eight households (42%) estimated that some of their income (anywhere between 25-75%) came from work associated with Intrepid groups.

These figures, while drawn from a small sample (39% of households indirectly involved), show that the income obtained from Intrepid’s trips is an important part of many households’ livelihood strategies. Furthermore its level of importance increased substantially if the male head of the household was not present or continued to reside in the village and was not employed in a cash earning capacity.

### **8.3.5 Effects on families of income obtained from Intrepid trips.**

Money earned from Intrepid s trips is spent on a range of different items. The most important is rice which was identified by a majority of houses. Intrepid trips therefore are helping many households meet their basic subsistence needs. Table 8.3.5 gives an overview of what households in the village spend their income on.

**Table 8.3.5 Household spending of money obtained from Intrepid trips.**

<b>Household spending of money obtained from Intrepid trips.</b>	<b>Number of households. (n=26)</b>
Schooling, including fees and accommodation.	2
Clothing.	1
Rice.	14
Chillies.	7
Sweets at local store.	4
Cotton for making traditional crafts and clothes.	5
Vegetables.	4
Fish.	2
Medical Appointment.	1
Soap.	4
Motorbike	1

These figures show that while Intrepid's trips are an important source of income for many households, it is not substantial enough to spend on major items. The exception to this is the household which spends a proportion of the income gained from Intrepid trips on motorbike repayments. This household is directly employed by Siam Adventures and thus receives a wage every trip.

## **8.4 Socio-Cultural Outcomes for Khun Puai.**

The Socio-Cultural outcomes for households were assessed according to:

- Household perceptions of Intrepid trips.
- Arts and crafts practiced within the community.
- Role of youth in Intrepid trips.
- Effect of Intrepid trips on daily lifestyles of people within the community.
- Role of women in Intrepid trips.
- Role of women in Intrepid trips.
- Effect of Intrepid trips on village political or management structures.
- Intra-village relationships.

### **8.4.1 Household perceptions of Intrepid trips.**

All of the households interviewed were ambivalent about tour groups who visited the community. In fact most had few opinions about travellers, except for the fact that they provided an opportunity to make some extra money. Such a response suggests that most households don't think much about tourists who visit the community. Several households mentioned that some of the local guides who used to come to the village smoked and drank too much and didn't respect the local people, although this appeared to be directed to guides who came many years ago when tourists first started coming to Khun Puai.

The three households directly involved in Intrepid trips identified the opportunity to make some money as the major benefit their household received from Intrepid trips. They believe that

visits to the village have been very good for them as it has allowed them to stay in the village, and that tourism work is much easier than working as labourers in farms in Ban Kat or Mae Wang.

Each of these households also believe that the village has also benefited from Intrepid visits through the donations made by Siam Adventures for school clothes and books, cleaning up rubbish in the village and the opportunity for people in the village to sell clothes at the market.

For households indirectly involved, the greatest benefit has been the opportunity to sell crafts and traditional clothes at the market or give massages to Intrepid groups. All thought that tourist visits were good for the village although many said they could not talk to tourists because they could not speak their language and were too shy.

Other benefits mentioned by ten households was the opportunity for 'village children to sing with tourists who come to the village and to get some food'. Twelve households mentioned the donations made by Siam Adventures for school clothes and books as a good thing for their village. Excursions organised by Siam Adventures for young people in the village were also considered as a positive benefit for Khun Puai, as were the donations of vegetable seeds that Intrepid travellers give to households within the community.

The three households who have no involvement with Intrepid groups were still positive about having Intrepid groups in the community even though their household did not receive any benefit from these groups. Households in this group had purposely chosen not to be involved because of specific household factors.

#### **8.4.2 Arts and crafts practiced within the community.**

The arts and craft market held for Intrepid groups is a significant part of the programme completed by travellers. The extraordinary level of involvement of households reflects the markets importance to those in the community.

Interviews with women from households indirectly (n=19) involved demonstrate that tourism visits have commercialised the making of arts and crafts in the community. However this does not appear to have lessened the value of these arts and crafts, as all women interviewed stated



that even if Intrepid groups no longer came to the village, they would still make many of the goods sold such as clothing and bags. The majority said they simply wouldn't make as many.

Most (n=15) stated that they make many of the garments and goods sold at the market during the dry season when they have time, as during the wet season they are required to work long hours in the rice fields.

While Siam Adventures was involved in developing a craft market for Intrepid groups, it wasn't the first craft market to operate in the village. Ti, a guide for Banana Tours, who comes from Khun Puai, was the first to suggest that women display their crafts and clothing in a market. Banana Tours also have a craft market, but not many women in the village exhibit their goods there because travellers from these tours do not buy many items. In comparison, women in the village were very enthusiastic about the market held for Intrepid groups, because Intrepid travellers bought many items. Most estimated they sold between one to three items per month.

### **8.4.3 Role of youth in Intrepid trips.**

The direct effect of Intrepid's trips on young people in the village appeared limited. This is because there is very little interaction between travellers and teenagers. Even those teenagers whose parents have a direct involvement in Intrepid's tours, have little involvement.

Informal interviews with teenagers whose parents are directly involved (n=3) revealed that young people didn't take much notice of travellers who come to the village. Tourism was not considered exciting or new to teenagers as many had simply accepted that tourists had always come to their village. Only one teenage member of the village was involved regularly with the trips I observed and this was indirectly through the provision of massages.

The interactions that young people do have with trip travellers comes during the singing that occurs at night. However these are very young children between the ages of 3 - 12. Those who attend, not only get to mix with travellers, but also receive a reasonable meal and drink while Intrepid travellers are having a meal.

During my time in the village I didn't witness any begging or any sort of anti-social behaviour from young children towards Intrepid trip travellers.

However, while there appeared to be little direct effect of Intrepid trips there has been a positive impact through non - tour activities such as the organising of excursions and the supply of funding for school uniforms and books. These have been organised by Siam Adventures.

#### **8.4.4 Effect of Intrepid trips on daily lifestyles of people within the community.**

The general confinement of Intrepid travellers to an area near their accommodation, has limited the effect of Intrepid's trips on the community. Intrepid groups stay at the very bottom of the villlage well away from the majority of households. The very small number of people from the community involved also limits Intrepid's impact in this regard. Excluding Bati Guler, who provides his home for accommodation, and several ladies involved in the market, there is virtually no impact on the daily lifestyles of people in the community.

#### **8.4.5 Role of women in Intrepid trips.**

The indirect role played by women in the village is an essential part of Intrepid's visits. It is through their involvement in the craft market that the benefits of Intrepid's visits are spread amongst the community. Apart from their role in the craft market women are not directly involved in Intrepid trips. Both the porters and the accommodation provider are men.

Given the organisation of the market and the early time it is held, the disruption to the roles played by women in the community is minor. Many of the women who make garments to be sold don't attend the market but prefer to give their goods to other women who accept a small fee if anything is sold.

All women felt very positive about their role in the market as it had allowed them to make a direct contribution to the economic strategies adopted by their households.

#### **8.4.6 Effect of Intrepid trips on village political or management structures.**

Intrepid trips have had no impact on the political or management structures in the village. This is because the development of tourism in the community has been based on relationships with individual households rather than the village as a collective. Nevertheless the chief of the village was consulted before trips could come to the village.

### **8.4.7 Intra-village relationships.**

Intrepid trips have little impact on relationships between people in the community. All people were happy to have groups come and stay in the community. All would be happy to have more groups visit. The opportunity for all households to obtain some benefit from Intrepid's trips has reduced the possibility of disagreements or conflict over the distribution of benefits from Intrepid's trips.

## **8.5 Physical Outcomes for Khun Puai.**

The physical outcomes for Khun Puai were assessed according to:

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

The physical effects of Intrepid's visits to the village are negligible and not readily apparent. The short time Intrepid groups stay in the community and the use of existing facilities by groups has ensured its physical impacts are not obvious. Apart from the small community centre built by Siam Adventures, there has not been any facilities specifically developed to cater for Intrepid groups.

There is little doubt that aspects of Intrepid's programme within Khun Puai, such as bathing in the Mae Puai, could create environmental consequences. However, they would most likely be insignificant and were not directly measured. Intrepid travellers are directed to purchase biodegradable soap by their Intrepid leader to lesson this possible impact.

If anything, visits by Intrepid groups may be having a positive impact on the village environment as it encourages people to keep the village clean. On several occasions Siam Adventures have been involved with local people in a clean up of the community.

From my observations, most of the rubbish in the community came from packaging associated with the three small shops that exist in the village. As all of the shops are in different locations to where Intrepid groups stay, it is unlikely that Intrepid travellers purchase anything from these shops.

The use of plastic waterbottles on the trek has the potential to create environmental consequences, however this has been reduced as used waterbottles are squashed and carried out by the porters. Nevertheless if travellers were able to fill their own water bottles from a large 20 litre drum or other drinking water source each morning, this would reduce the amount of waterbottles consumed by groups.

## **8.6 Outcomes for Travellers.**

### **8.6.1 Travellers Expectations.**

Questionnaires completed by travellers who visited Khun Puai (n=24), revealed that fourteen travellers (54%) believed that their Khun Puai experience exceeded their pre trip expectations. Eleven travellers (42%) said that their time in Khun Puai matched their pre trip expectations. Only one passenger said that her time in Khun Puai did not match their pre trip expectations. The following comments highlight peoples impression of their time in Khun Puai:

“I really enjoyed the interaction with the villagers and the children that dropped by our hut.”

(Howard)

“The trekking was perfect- nice terrain and length. Village stay was really exciting, but would have liked to have been shown around the actual village more.”

(Amy)

“I really didn’t know what to expect. The warmth of the Karen people certainly exceeded all expectations.”

(Lance)

“I was amazed at the reality of the working village, but I was disappointed (probably quite selfishly) at the teeshirts and the rubbish around the outside rim of the village.”

(Alex)

“Wish there was more time to interact with the villagers. It felt strange just arriving one night and leaving early the next morning.”

(Dan)

“Honestly I had no idea that Intrepid’s definition of basic accommodation was like a medieval village- I seriously thought it meant a shared bathroom or outdoor toilet. I had no idea what to expect and would have appreciated a sense to prepare myself. It wasn’t bad but was really unexpected.”

(Cat)

### 8.6.2 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 Khun Puai village experience. These factors were developed from personal observations and discussions with travellers and Intrepid leaders during a preliminary research trip. Table 8.6.2 highlights the factors that travellers considered important in determining their Khun Puai village experience.

**Table 8.6.2 Factors that travellers considered important in determining their Khun Puai village experience.**

Factors.	Average Ranking	
	Most important 1	Least important 6
Role of Siam Adventure guide.	4.17	
Role of Intrepid leader.	4.52	
The trekking activities.	<b>2.91</b>	
Interaction with local village people.	<b>2.30</b>	
Activities conducted in the village.	3.22	
Interaction with other travellers.	3.69	

These figures highlight the significance of activities such as the singing that occurs between travellers and young children in determining a travellers impression of their time within Khun Puai.

However the narrow variations in rankings also highlight that travellers considered all of the factors to be relatively important in determining their experience within Khun Puai.

## **8.7 Causal factors that determine the outcomes obtained by Khun Puai.**

Causal factors that determine the outcomes obtained by the community appear to be related to the political and socio-cultural structure of the community, the role of Intrepid Travel, and most importantly Siam Adventures.

### **8.7.1 Factors determined by Intrepid Travel and Siam Adventures.**

- Use of Siam Adventures.

Siam Adventures have the greatest influence in determining the outcomes and impacts for all involved in Intrepid trips. They are responsible for all aspects of the village stay including the accommodation used, activities conducted and leadership of the group. The community assistance programmes initiated by Siam Adventures have provided positive outcomes to people within the community.

- Role of Intrepid Leader.

With the presence of the Siam Adventures guide, the Intrepid leader is able to spend a considerable amount of time ensuring passenger needs are met. The Intrepid leaders knowledge and enthusiasm for the craft market was an influencing factor in the amount of goods purchased by travellers. The leaders reinforcement of standards relating to travellers dress and behaviour ensure that travellers behave in an appropriate manner while in the community.

- Community Assistance programmes initiated by Siam Adventures.

These programmes have provided positive outcomes to people in the community, particularly young people who have been provided with educational materials for their schooling.

- Pre visit information for travellers.

All travellers are provided with pre visit information regarding appropriate behaviour and

dress whilst in the community. This information has ensured that travellers behaviour and dress does not cause offence to anyone in the community and has contributed to the positive perception of Intrepid trips by local people.

- The limited time groups are in the community.

The short period of time Intrepid groups actually spend in the community limits the physical or socio-cultural impact of trips.

- Recycling of plastic water bottles.

Plastic water bottles used by travellers is potentially a large litter problem for communities where Intrepid groups stay. The plastic waterbottles used on trips to Khun Puai however are squashed and carried out by porters. These are then recycled by Siam Adventures.

- Frequency of Intrepid trips.

Intrepid trips to Khun Puai occur weekly. This level of frequency is important to local people as they are able to obtain consistent outcomes from Intrepid trips. This consistency has contributed to the success of the craft market and the massages, as local people are motivated to continue their involvement.

- Motivations of travellers.

Travellers who attend Intrepid trips to Khun Puai are seeking opportunities to experience living in a hilltribe community and interacting with local people. Given this motivating force, it is not surprising that all were keen to modify their behaviour and dress to ensure that they did not offend or upset their hosts.

- Size of groups.

The maximum size of Intrepid groups is twelve. This small number not only provides more opportunities for individuals to interact with local people, but also reduces physical impacts such as crowding or pressure on waste facilities.

- Food and water required is supplied by Siam Adventures.

All food and water consumed whilst in the village is bought in by Siam Adventures. While this doesn't place any pressure on limited resources, it does restrict the possible economic

outcomes to local people who could benefit, for example, from selling water to travellers.

### **8.7.2 Factors determined by the community.**

- Specific household factors.

Specific household factors including the diversity of livelihood options available and the amount of rice fields owned by a household, determined to a great extent their need to become involved in Intrepid visits. Those households more vulnerable within the community were more heavily involved in activities such as the craft market.

- Existence of material traditions in Khun Puai.

The existence of material traditions and their continued relevance to households within the community, has allowed women to develop exquisite goods for sale at the craft market. The authenticity of these products to travellers contributed to the astonishing success of the craft market.

- Passenger activities are confined to a small area in the village.

Passenger movements within the community are limited and generally occur in a small section of the village. This reduces any physical impacts and ensures that most people who live in the village don't even notice the presence of tourists within the community.

- Craft producing activities occur mainly during the non rice producing season.

Women produce most of the crafts sold at the market during the off season. This means that important seasonal activities such as the planting and harvesting of rice fields is not disturbed by Intrepid visits.

- Opportunities for all households.

Any household within the community has the opportunity to obtain some economic benefit through the craft market. Very few opportunities exist for households to have a direct involvement in Intrepid trips. Financial benefits can be substantial.

- Motivation of local people to be involved.

The motivations of local people to obtain some financial benefit from Intrepid trips has driven the development of the craft market and massages to travellers.



- Only three men are directly involved.

Only three people within the community are directly involved in each Intrepid trip. These are the two porters and the accommodation provider. These three are the only people in the community who receive a direct payment from Siam Adventures for their services each trip. The small number of people directly involved limits the socio-cultural impacts of Intrepid s trips.

- Direct interaction between travellers and local people.

Most of the interaction that travellers are able to have with local people, excluding the porters, is with young children. Most of this interaction occurs during the singing activities between both groups. Interaction with local people was a key factor in determining a travellers experience within Khun Puai.

## **8.8 Recommendations.**

- Provide opportunities for local people to have more meaningful roles in Intrepid visits.

Local people need to be more actively involved in presenting their own community to visiting travellers. This could be through a range of activities including village walks which visit various parts of the village such as the rice fields or forest areas. Developing a walk around the village using a local person would provide travellers with a rare insight into the village community. Sam, a local person I used as an interpreter, could easily fill this role as he speaks excellent English.

- Monitoring of trips.

This is something that is needed on all trips. Monitoring of all trips should be the responsibility of not only the in - country Responsible Travel Coordinator but also could become the responsibility of a senior leader in the country. I believe it is far too difficult to expect the leader to do this role during a trip. A standard monitoring form or agenda will have to be worked out for this. Discussions with Siam Adventures would be part of this monitoring process.

- Community Support Fund.

Develop a community support fund. Money for this fund would be based on the number of travellers visiting the community. This fund would be jointly administered by Siam Adventures and the village and spent on activities identified by the community. The Intrepid in - country Responsible Travel Coordinator or an experienced leader would also be involved. Funds would be provided for short term projects with set deadlines.

- Trip specific feedback forms for travellers.

Trip specific feedback forms would allow for a more sophisticated method of monitoring travellers' enjoyment of trips. Questions specifically related to travellers time in Khun Puai and other areas visited would allow programme managers to monitor passenger enjoyment of specific aspects of trips.

- Notes on Khun Puai.

Detailed but concise notes on Khun Puai could be completed from this report. These could be provided to all Intrepid leaders visiting the village and to interested travellers.

- 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. Aspects of Siam Adventures trip to Khun Puai could be used as a model for what could be done on many of Intrepid's community visits; particularly the method that is used in the village to spread the benefits of Intrepid's visits.

- Intrepid's community support programmes.

This trip could be tagged within the brochure as one of Intrepid's 'community support programmes'. Travellers would be made aware that a small percentage of the payment made for the trip would be supporting a specific project within the community they are visiting.

- Promotion of Community support programmes already operating.

Some of the programmes already implemented by Siam Adventures such as the sponsoring of

books and uniforms should be promoted more regularly through the Intrepid web site.

- 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.