

Being already socially excluded and economically vulnerable, people with disabilities (PWD) were more adversely affected by the tsunami than others, as their situation was exacerbated by the disaster. The Disabled Peoples' International Asia-Pacific Regional Office proposed a two-prong initiative: i) improving livelihoods for PWD in Phang Nga tsunami affected areas, through skills training and empowerment; ii) improving business opportunities in the hospitality industry by introducing “barrier-free concepts” and promoting accessible tourism. The first component included a survey and needs assessment of persons with disabilities in Phang Nga, peer counseling, skills training, self-help and advocacy and independent living training. The second included visits to hotels and parks to identify potential for universal access, as well as a seminar organized in collaboration with the Phang Nga Tourist Association, on barrier-free tourism and reconstruction of hotels and restaurants for 30 resort owners and contractors. The proposal also contained the services of an Australian Business Volunteer tourism official to help DPI carry out its work programme.

Specific activities which were carried out were: i) a training needs assessment; ii) training in leadership for self-help & advocacy. The idea was to promote the formation of self-help groups and also to educate the groups on laws and regulation affecting them, as well as to provide negotiation skills; iii) vocational training in producing flower plants, shoe repair, smelling Karabum and glass carving iv) peer counseling for post traumatic syndrome for people with disabilities and their families. The counseling was provided via a network of people with disabilities.



Participants from one of the workshops organized by Disabled Peoples' International

One of the outcomes of the project is the establishment of the Phang Nga Society of Disabled Persons (PSDP) which was set up and registered as a provincial self-help organization for some 4,000 disabled persons living in eight districts of Phang Nga Province. The Society is a development of the self-help group of tsunami survivors in Takua Pa and Tai Muang Districts, originally numbering about 100 persons. With support from an NGO in Japan, the PSDP has provided 60 wheelchairs to people with disabilities.

Another of DPI's immediate impact is the fact that ten resorts have integrated ramps and other means of universal accessibility and the National Park in Khao Lak renovated its premises to increase accessibility after DPI's visit. DPI now hopes to pursue this advocacy for universal access of parks at the national level.

A study conducted by the Open Doors Organization (ODO) in 2002, stated that adults with disabilities spent approximately 13.6 billion USD annually on travel and it suggested that revenues from this market could easily double if certain needs were met and obstacles removed. A recent poll conducted by Harris Interactive ® as a follow-up to the 2002 study, shows that travel of peoples with disabilities increased 50% in the past two years alone and that more than 21 million adults with disabilities traveled for pleasure and/or business in 2004.

Some of DPI's staff in Krabi and Phuket participated in the Get Ahead entrepreneurship training. One person has even become a trainer.

Trainings between August 05 – December 05

Description	Participants	Men	Women	Date
<i>Self-help & advocacy organization</i>	17	10	7	Oct 05
<i>Peer counseling</i>	6	2	4	Oct 05
<i>Skills training</i>	20	7	13	Oct 05
<i>Independent Living</i>	20	12	8	Oct 05
<i>Barrier free tourism</i>	26	13	13	Nov 05
<i>Self-help training</i>	35	25	10	
<i>Peer counseling</i>	7	3	4	Nov 05
<i>Disability workshop</i>	55	35	20	Nov 05
TOTAL	186	107	79	

Note: 42% of the trainees were women.