

TOWARD EMPOWERMENT: WOMEN AND COMMUNITY-BASED
TOURISM IN THAILAND

by

SUSAN DUNN

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Dr. Anita M. Weiss, Chair of the Examining Committee

Date

Committee in Charge: Dr. Anita M. Weiss, Chair
 Dr. Kathie Carpenter
 Dr. Galen Martin

Accepted by:

Dean of the Graduate School

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In recent years, tourism has garnered widespread support as a tool for sustainable development. Alternative forms of tourism have emerged such as ecotourism, pro-poor tourism, volunteer tourism, and in particular, community-based tourism. While sustainable tourism development strongly emphasizes environmental issues, it seems that sociocultural issues have been overshadowed. Gender considerations need to be included in a critical analysis of the sociocultural impacts of these emerging forms of tourism.

This research seeks to determine how a community-based tourism project promotes the empowerment of women, using a case study of one rural Thai community, Leeled. Empowerment is operationalized as a multidimensional process with political, psychological, social, and economic dimensions experienced individually and collectively. While community-based tourism projects have been successful in promoting

women's empowerment, they could be more successful and improve sustainability if development practitioners would incorporate a gender analysis assessment throughout the development process.

CURRICULUM VITAE

NAME OF AUTHOR: Susan Dunn

GRADUATE AND UNDERGRADUATE SCHOOLS ATTENDED:

University of Oregon
Southern Illinois University - Carbondale
University of Pittsburgh, Semester at Sea Program

DEGREES AWARDED:

Master of Arts, 2007, University of Oregon
Bachelor of Arts, 2005, Southern Illinois University - Carbondale

AREAS OF SPECIAL INTEREST:

Women's Empowerment
Sustainable Tourism and Development
Nonprofit Management

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE:

Program Assistant, Mobility International USA, Eugene, Oregon 2006-2007

Graduate Teaching Fellow, International Studies Program, University of Oregon,
Eugene, Fall 2006, Spring 2007

Fundraiser, Annual Giving Program, University of Oregon, Eugene 2005-2006

AWARDS AND HONORS:

Outstanding Scholar Award in Sociology, Southern Illinois University –
Carbondale, Sociology Department, 2005
Honor's Society

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
I. INTRODUCTION	1
Research Methods	2
Scope of the Study	5
II. REVIEW OF TOURISM, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT	7
Tourism and International Development	7
Tourism in Thailand	8
Sustainable Development	12
Sustainable Tourism	13
Community-Based Approaches to Development	13
Community-Based Tourism	14
Gender and International Development	17
Gender and Tourism	19
Women in Thailand	25
Gendered Empowerment	30
III. CONTEXTUALIZING THE RESEARCH FIELD	32
Economic History	35
Social History	38
Political History	40
Community Needs Identified	42
IV. LEELED COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM PROJECT	43
Motivation for Joining CBT	54
Barriers to CBT Participation	54

Chapter	Page
V. ANALYSIS OF THE CBT PROJECT	56
Psychological Empowerment	57
Social Empowerment	58
Political Empowerment	60
Economic Empowerment	62
VI. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	64
Linking Microenterprise with CBT	64
Increasing Women's Leadership	66
Networking Within the Community	67
Networking Outside the Community	67
Integrating Gender Analysis in CBT Projects	68
Future Research and Conclusions	69
APPENDIX: GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS	71
REFERENCES	72

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure	Page
1. Map of Thailand	33
2. Activity Profile	34
3. Access and Control Profile	35
4. Map of Leeled Villages	37
5. Organizational Mapping	44
6. Tourism Map	50
7. Tourism Activities in Leeled	53

LIST OF TABLES

Table	Page
1. International Tourism Receipts (by region)	9
2. International Tourism Arrivals and Receipts for Asia and the Pacific	9
3. Ecotourism vs. Community-Based Tourism	16

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In many parts of the world, community-based tourism is being promoted as an alternative to conventional tourism. It provides tourists with a more authentic view of another place and culture while preserving cultural authenticity, protecting the natural environment and ensuring local ownership. This is particularly relevant in Thailand, a country that markets its natural beauty and local ways of life. Nevertheless, the Thai people also fear the negative impacts that come with foreign intrusions. Community-based tourism provides a way to mitigate many of the negative side effects that have been associated with tourism and provides a viable opportunity for sustainable development.

In this research, I analyze the involvement of women in community-based tourism in Thailand. This perspective is important because Thai men and women experience this type of development in different ways since they have differing needs, roles and responsibilities within the community. Women in rural areas have limited options for employment and, as a result, many have to leave their families to find work in cities. Many women, especially from the northeastern region, find themselves in the sex industry, while others end up working in low wage factory jobs. Innovative opportunities that take a more holistic approach to development are needed so that women can strengthen their positions and have more control over their lives. This emerging form of

tourism, however, is still in its infancy and has rarely been analyzed from a gender perspective. In particular, there is scant research on the impact community-based tourism has on gender power relations.

During a ten-week period in Thailand, I explored women's involvement in community-based tourism. I conducted this research while doing an internship with the Responsible Ecological Social Tours Project (REST), a Thai nonprofit organization.¹ REST made arrangements for me to stay in a rural village where the local people were developing their own community-based tourism project. As a participant observer, I utilized their community-based tourism model as a case study to analyze its potential for empowering women in rural communities.

Research Methods

The methods employed in gathering data for this study included participant observation, informal interviews and a literature review. In the first phase of my research, I focused on gathering information in four general areas: tourism, international development, gender issues, and a background of Thailand including history, economics, culture, politics, and language. In particular, I conducted a literature review of Thailand and Southeast Asia's tourism industry, Thailand's gender issues relating to tourism and a broader view of community-based approaches to development. Following the literature review, I conducted participant observation research at a community-based tourism

¹ As of September 2007 REST has partnered with another organization to create the Thailand Community based Tourism Institute (CBT-I). The organization no longer identifies itself as REST. However, I will refer to the organization as REST, as that was the name of the organization during the period of research.

(CBT) project in the community of Leeled, a rural subdistrict in southern Thailand. The predominant method used for data collection was informal interviews with groups and individuals. Interviews took place in public places such as the community center, the government office, local restaurants, schools, and temples. I interviewed REST staff members, a CHARM (Coastal Habitat and Resource Management) staff member, a CBT board advisory member, the tambon leader and the vice president of the Tambon Administrative Organization (TAO). Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Other methods of data collection involved a mapping of the organizational network of government organizations, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and community groups. This mapping was used to determine the relationship between the various stakeholders and groups in terms of who provided funding and training for the project.

I used various participatory methods to organize and analyze data with the groups of community members as tools for gender analysis. I created activity profiles and calendars to compare men and women's work. Access and Control profiles compared men and women's control and access of several different resources including political, economic and social ones. The data collected generated further questions about the status of women in Leeled. I then focused our discussions on socioeconomic, political, cultural and religious influences that shaped their community, and identified what impacts and changes have resulted from the CBT project. From the information I gathered, I conducted a gender analysis to gain an understanding of how men and women negotiate resources and power between each other. Gender analysis questions include:

- What kind of barriers do men and women face?

- Who has what?
- Who owns what?
- Who makes decisions?
- Who gains and who loses?

These questions are meant to illuminate how vulnerabilities are created. Such vulnerabilities may be differences in qualifications and skills, the assumptions about who does what, differences in earning power, the freedom to move around, or vulnerability to violence (Buchaenko 2004).

To collect gender disaggregated data, I interviewed men and women in the CBT club separately. I employed a female interpreter when I interviewed women. She was also a member of the community and acted as a “cultural broker” between the community members and myself. This proved to be quite advantageous since she already had in-depth knowledge of the community. A male staff member of REST assisted me in interviewing men. Although a community member would have been preferred for the reason previously mentioned, there were no male community members who had sufficient English language skills or availability to assist with interpreting. After we met with CBT members, we then held further discussions with other community members who were stakeholders in the project. We met with government officials to gain further insight into political issues influencing the project. Discussions were also held with teachers that focused on education in Leeled and the role of the schools in community-based tourism. We also consulted other community members who were not directly involved in CBT to better understand the opinion of the general public about the CBT project. This group included people from a range of occupations: farm owners,

fishermen (and women), roof thatchers, palm leaf collectors, housewives, gardeners, cooks and health volunteers. We made attempts to speak with people from all eight villages, both men and women, ranging from ages 18-70.

Before leaving the study site, we held a community meeting to check accuracy of the collected data. REST staff members were present at this meeting for translation assistance. We opened a dialogue that allowed both male and female community members to discuss women's empowerment and power relations between men and women in the community. This exercise was very productive and people were generally comfortable with sharing their opinions. Men, however, were more likely to speak out during this time in mixed gatherings.

Scope of the Study

Due to the limitations of time and budget, this research was restricted to one community-based tourism project. A qualitative analysis was conducted in order to ascertain the potential for community-based tourism to serve as a tool for women's empowerment. I did not attempt to make a quantitative analysis of community-based tourism, as this approach would not be as suitable for the type of data collected. I also did not attempt to conduct an analysis of environmental impacts of the project. Although this factor is critical to the long term success of the project, the scope of this study was limited to addressing the social, psychological, political, and economic impacts on women.

As a researcher and an outsider, my role affected my access to information.

Although I did have an interpreter assist me when conversing with community members, a greater fluency in Thai would have clearly improved my understanding of the culture and given me greater access to more sensitive information. However, it was possible for me to quickly learn a large amount of Thai during the time I lived in the village as most people knew very little English. I spoke Thai as much as possible with community members. This helped build rapport immensely, and was especially useful during interviews.

In an attempt to offset my biases, I went into the field with certain objectives in mind. I intended to speak with as many different people as possible, especially marginalized people in the harder to reach areas. I wanted to go beyond the conveniently accessed information. However, due to my roles as a teacher and homestay guest, a disproportionate amount of time was spent in villages one and five, where the majority of CBT work was carried out. I would have liked to spend more time in the outskirts of the community talking to people who weren't able to travel to the community center as easily. My data might have been improved had I talked with more people who were not involved in the project to better assess the differences in women who participated and who did not participate in the tourism project.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF TOURISM, GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

As an international traveler and tourist for the past fifteen years, I have experienced many kinds of tourism, from expensive cruise ships to rustic desert shelters, from staged performances to authentic human interactions. During many of my encounters I found myself intrigued by these glimpses into other cultures, the fascination with the “other” and the motivations people have for traveling the world. As much as I loved traveling, I began to feel conflicted by the situation I had witnessed in less developed countries: the stark contrast of western-style luxury hotels juxtaposed with the dilapidated shanties of local housing. I couldn’t help but feel I was somehow contributing to this injustice. Was my love for travel destroying the very cultures I was seeking out? It wasn’t until I entered graduate school at the University of Oregon that I discovered an entire discipline where scholars are grappling with these same issues.

Tourism and International Development

From a development perspective, I am attracted to the potential tourism has as a tool for community development and the empowerment of women. According to the United Nations World Tourism Organization (“Why Tourism?” 2006), an organization

that promotes tourism as a development tool, tourism can contribute to the alleviation of poverty, provide jobs and promote peace between cultures. Unfortunately, much of the tourism over the last fifty years has not achieved these lofty goals nor provided many benefits for local communities. Many researchers argue that mass tourism has created vulnerabilities and relationships of dependency between developing nations and foreign-owned corporations (Britton 1982; Brohman 1996; Hills and Lundgren 1977; Nash 1989). The overemphasis on the needs of foreign travelers and foreign corporations in the tourism industry has, consequently, led many local communities to suffer as *their* needs and values have been shunted aside. The World Tourism Organization has acknowledged the need for sustainable tourism and pays particular attention to the interests of developing countries and the needs of host communities. At the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development in Johannesburg the UNWTO launched the ST-EP (Sustainable Tourism – Eliminating Poverty) initiative. The initiative promotes sustainable tourism development in the least developed and developing countries (“ST-EP” 2007). Those who promote sustainable tourism acknowledge that the future of tourism depends on the preservation of natural environments and cultural diversity on which the industry is based.

Tourism in Thailand

Asia is currently experiencing the most rapid growth in tourism worldwide. Research on the global trends in tourism reveals that popular tourist destinations have increasingly spread to less developed countries, particularly in Southeast Asia (UNEP

2002). The Asia and Pacific region is on a solid path of growth showing increases in number of international tourist arrivals and receipts. The World Tourism Organization predicts that the region will soon overtake the Americas as the second most visited region after Europe. Tables 1 and 2 compare tourist receipts and arrivals in each of the world regions and selected Asian countries.

Table 1. International Tourism Receipts (by region)

	\$US (billions)		
	2005	2006	Receipts per arrival in 2006
World	676	733	870
Europe	348.8	374.5	810
Asia and the Pacific	134.5	152.6	910
Americas	145.2	154.0	1,130
Africa	21.7	24.3	600
Middle East	26.3	27.3	650

Source: "Tourism Highlights" 2007

Table 2. International Tourism Arrivals and Receipts for Asia and the Pacific

	International Tourist Arrivals				International Tourism Receipts	
	(1000)		Change in %		(US\$ million)	
	2005	2006	05/04	06/05	2005	2006
Asia and the Pacific	155,272	167,228	7.8	7.7	134,473	152,615
Australia	5,020	5,064	5.2	0.9	16,866	17,840
Cambodia	1,422	1,700	34.7	19.6	840	963
China	46,809	49,600	12.1	6.0	29,296	33,949
Indonesia	5,002	4,871	-6.0	-2.6	4,521	4,448
Japan	6,728	7,334	9.6	9.0	6,630	8,469
Philippines	2,623	2,843	14.5	8.4	2,265	2,543
Thailand	11,567	13,882	-1.4	20.0	9,591	12,423
Vietnam	3,468	3,583	18.4	3.3	1,880	3,200

Source: "Tourism Highlights" 2007

Table 2 shows that after a full recovery from the 2004 tsunami, Thailand's performance in terms of international tourist arrivals has been the most impressive for the region, with a 20% increase in growth rate of tourist arrivals from 2005 to 2006 ("Tourism Highlights" 2007). Given the rapid growth and the impact that tourism has had on cultural diversity and the environment, it is important that the future of tourism in Thailand takes a direction which promotes responsible travel. Hence, Thailand's position as one of the most popular Asian travel destinations, coupled with the fact that it is a less developed country, made it a prime candidate for my research.

Thailand has aggressively launched many promotional campaigns for tourism most notably the "Amazing Thailand" campaign², and has successfully branded itself globally as a tourist destination. However, with that success, there is increased pressure to accommodate an ever-increasing number of tourists each year. As a result, much of the tourism in Thailand is growing rapidly at the expense of cultural and environmental preservation. Many areas in Thailand have already suffered from rapid tourism development. During my field work, I visited popular tourist destinations like Koh Samui and Phuket. Locals shared with me their concerns about high consumption rates and uncontrolled growth which have led to inadequate water and energy resources. Pollution, lack of waste management and planning in general have caused environmental

² The Amazing Thailand campaign was launched in 1998-1999 in response to Thailand's severe economic downturn during the Asian financial crisis. The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) is responsible for marketing and promotion, branding Thailand as a quality destination to attract quality tourists. This campaign has since been renewed and the TAT continues to aggressively promote and heavily invest in tourism development.

degradation. Social disempowerment has occurred as Thai culture is commodified and misrepresented. Sadly, these tourist destinations are almost completely devoid of authentic Thai culture. Negative impacts that have occurred as a result of uncontrolled mass tourism are prostitution, the spread of AIDS and loss of access to resources particularly land which has caused many locals to leave or sell their property.

Because of the link between natural beauty and tourism, the environment has already become a priority for Thailand. The Thai government has realized that poverty reduction and the environment are inextricably linked, and that economic growth does not have to be tied to environmental degradation. The King of Thailand has also been a driving force in pushing the country in the direction of self-sufficiency. Particularly after the 1997 financial crisis, the king's "sufficiency economy" philosophy is very influential in Thai development, promoting "moderation, responsible consumption, and resilience to external shocks" (Annan 2006). Also known as the 'development' king, King Bhumibol's theory of self-sufficiency is influenced by Buddhism, emphasizing the "middle path." The King has encouraged communities to return to their roots, be more autonomous and live more simply. This theory also provides farmers specific methods for sustainable farming and environmental planning (Maisirikrod 1999). In rebuilding Thailand's industrial base since the financial crisis, the government is clearly interested in investing in projects that address pressing environmental concerns, particularly in protecting mangrove forests and other biologically diverse ecosystems. The government, non-governmental organizations, academics, and local communities are working together to address poverty reduction and protect the environment. Some are promoting

sustainable tourism initiatives, including community-based tourism as opportunities to move toward sustainable development.

Sustainable Development

Defining sustainable development is problematic, as there are several variations. One often-cited definition of sustainable development comes from the Brundtland Report (1987), *Our Common Future*, which states that sustainable development meets the needs of present generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs. While this definition may be appealing as a philosophical statement, in practice it can be quite vague. Nor can we be certain what resources and tools future generations will have to meet their needs. Nevertheless, some attempts to formulate concrete definitions for sustainable development suggest that economic growth must be continuously rising (Allaby 1988). However, uncontrolled economic growth often leads to the deterioration of the environment. Munn (1989) argues that sustainability means improvement for any chosen indicators of development. These indicators could be economic, ecological, social, or technological. Furthermore, in many definitions, environmental sustainability is emphasized, notably, development that occurs within the natural carrying capacity of the natural resources to avoid the destruction of the environment (McCormick 1991). The key to sustainable development is finding a balance between three dimensions: economic growth, the limits of ecological carrying capacity and socio-cultural aspects. This is the definition of sustainable development applicable to this research and to defining sustainable tourism.

Sustainable Tourism

What is meant by “sustainable tourism?” Answering this question has been one of the major challenges for tourism industry operators, policy-makers and academics alike. There is no definitive answer and various labels such as “ecotourism”, “pro-poor tourism”, and “volunteer tourism” have been introduced making matters even more complex. Due to increased environmental awareness among travelers, there is a growing demand for eco-friendly travel. As a result, “eco” terms are often used excessively and irresponsibly. In many instances, they are buzzwords used merely as a marketing tool to attract tourists. Also known as ‘greenwashing’, tour operators often label activities that involve visits to natural sites “ecotourism” when in fact they do not adhere to principles of sustainable development. True sustainable tourism is understood here as tourism which adheres to principles of sustainable development. The push for sustainable development in tourism has been influenced by the successes, failures and lessons learned in the field of international development.

Community-based Approaches to Development

To better understand the rationale behind studying gender and community-based tourism, it is necessary to understand a few key trends in international development. One major paradigm shift in international development was the realization that top-down approaches to development were failing to “trickle-down” and benefit those in greatest need (see Chambers 1983; 1992; Conyers & Hills 1984; Freire 1971). Therefore, taking a bottom-up approach to development has gained more favor. Bottom-up projects have

proven to be more sustainable because they promote local capacity-building, local participation and local ownership of community development. Community-based approaches to development operate under the assumption that skills and knowledge already exist in the local community. Local people understand their problems and needs and they are capable of finding solutions. In addition, local NGOs argue that they are in a better position to build local capacity because they work on the ground and have close relationships with local communities. For these reasons, I have specifically chosen to study community-based tourism development supported by a Thai NGO where local ownership is a key component.

Community-Based Tourism

The definition of community-based tourism, according to REST, takes environmental, social and cultural sustainability into account. It is managed and owned by the community, for the community, with the purpose of enabling visitors to increase their awareness and learn about the community and local ways of life (Suansri 2003). As mentioned earlier, other new forms of sustainable tourism have emerged, such as ecotourism, pro-poor tourism and volunteer tourism. As these particular kinds of tourism are closely related to CBT, it is important to note what makes CBT distinguishable. CBT can be described as another label for ecotourism. In fact, some researchers would argue that there is no difference. According to Martha Honey, whose definition of ecotourism is widely accepted as the standard:

“Ecotourism is travel to fragile, pristine and usually protected areas that strive to be low impact and (usually) small scale. It helps educate the traveler; provides funds for conservation; directly benefits the economic development and political empowerment of local communities; and fosters respect for different cultures and for human rights”. (Honey 1999: 25)

She also provides several key elements that define ecotourism:

- Involves travel to natural destinations
- Minimizes impact
- Builds environmental awareness
- Provides direct financial benefits for conservation
- Provides financial benefits and empowerment for local people
- Respects local culture
- Supports human rights and democratic movements

This is ecotourism in its ideal form. However, of these elements, most often industry operators let local ownership of the tourism project fall through the cracks. This is the most time-consuming and difficult element to successfully apply. In practice, a more watered-down definition of ecotourism is applied by tourism industry operators. The definition applied in Thailand comes from the Tourism Authority of Thailand which represents one such watered-down definition of ecotourism:

‘Ecotourism’ is ‘responsible travel’ in areas containing natural resources that possess endemic characteristics and cultural or historical resources that are integrated into the area’s ecological system. Its purpose is to raise awareness among all concerned parties of the need for and the measures used to conserve ecosystems and as such is oriented towards community participation as well as the provision of a joint learning experience in sustainable tourism and environmental management. (REST 1997: 16)

According to REST, the difference between community-based tourism and ecotourism is shown in table 3, adapted from REST’s Community-based Tourism Handbook.

Table 3. Ecotourism vs. Community-based Tourism

	Ecotourism	Community-based Tourism
Objective:	Responsible management of natural attractions, local culture and the unique qualities of the destination.	Responsible management of the environment, natural resources, social system and culture in response to the needs of the community.
Ownership:	Unspecified	Community
Tourism Management:	Unspecified	Community
Tourism linkages:	Emphasizes tourism and the environment	Emphasizes holistic development.

Source: REST 1997: 17

Similarly, CBT could also be considered a form of pro-poor tourism. Pro-poor tourism (PPT) is any tourism enterprise that attempts to improve the local economy for poor people. PPT strategies include increasing local employment, mitigating environmental impacts, improving social impacts and increasing local participation in decision-making processes (Meyer 2003). Ultimately, pro-poor tourism consists of

creating linkages between local people and tourism business to increase net benefits specifically for poor people.

In addition, volunteer tourism is related to CBT, ecotourism and pro-poor tourism. Volunteer tourism offers tourists the opportunity to make a positive contribution to communities through, for example, environmental conservation projects. Volunteers usually pay a fee to come live and work in a community. Volunteer tourism represents an emerging tourism sector for tourists who want to make a contribution to places they visit (Coghlan 2006). The benefit of volunteer tourism is that it provides an opportunity for a mutual exchange of information. Working alongside community members also provides a stronger connection with local people. Volunteer tourism is included as one aspect of CBT.

While CBT shares similarities with all these alternative forms of tourism, its most distinguishing feature is emphasizing local ownership and management which promotes sustainable community development. Clearly, there many different labels for what falls under the category of sustainable tourism development. It is important to remember however, that essentially they are all trying to accomplish the same thing regardless of what they are called. The goals of trying to sustain the environment, build the community and provide some livelihood are common to all of these approaches.

Gender and International Development

Another major paradigm shift in international development planning is the idea that women and men have different needs and are differentially affected by development

projects. Thus, new ideologies were born in which gender became a focus for development practitioners. It was soon realized that development projects targeting women were more likely to improve families and communities as a whole. The first model of development that focused on women was the Women in Development (WID) approach. In the 1970s, this approach aimed to include women in the development processes introduced in their countries. Over time, the focus of WID shifted to development projects that centered on women and their own development. These approaches promoted small-scale, women-only projects, so as to avoid male dominance (Crush 1995). In the 1980s, another major approach to women/gender and development emerged. This was known as the Gender and Development approach (GAD). GAD does not focus solely on women, but rather on the social construction of gender roles and power relations between men and women (Marchand and Parpart 1995). As these roles and relations are socially constructed, they can be deconstructed and therefore changed. GAD also stresses the need to involve men in efforts to improve the status of women. The support and acceptance from the entire community, men and women, is needed for development to be sustained. In some cases, projects can even be sabotaged if men are not supportive. Some men may even feel threatened when women move into positions of power. In the current discourse on sustainability in a community-based approach to tourism, there are calls for more research on power relations (Saarinen 2006). Exploring these power relations is necessary to avoid potential barriers to the success and sustainability of a project. From a Gender and Development perspective, I focus my

research on illuminating the power relations that exist between men and women in a community-based tourism project.

Gender and Tourism

Extensive literature has been devoted to the subject of gender and tourism. (see Gibson 2001; Hemmati 1999; Kinnaird & Hall 1994; Swain 1995; Wilkinson & Pratiwi 1995). Tourism has long been an easily accessible employment option for women. According to Hemmati (1999), women currently represent 46% of the world's tourism workforce. This is higher than the global workforce in general of 34 - 40%. Women's participation in the tourism industry is an increasing trend worldwide, specifically for developing countries. Therefore, the tourism industry is a particularly important sector for women.

The nature of participation in the tourism industry differs for women and men. Women tend to be employed in more part-time and temporary positions than men. Although arguably this gives women the flexibility to accommodate other responsibilities such as child rearing, the seasonality of the tourism industry can cause financial insecurity. This is especially true for females who are heads of the household and depend on a year-round income. As a result, women are more likely to be concentrated in low skilled and low paying jobs and find it difficult to obtain positions of leadership in the tourism industry.

“Tourism may invoke change in a number of facets of community life including family structure, child rearing patterns, employment, marriage, dating patterns and

behavioral expectations” (Gibson 2001: 33). Changes that challenge current gender roles are not always well-received by the community. Therefore, women’s work is often similar to women’s domestic roles and typically does not challenge existing gender roles. Women’s work in the tourism industry usually involves activities such as cooking, serving food, cleaning, doing laundry, and sewing. Wilkinson and Pratiwi (1995), in a study of Indonesia, found that as long as women’s roles in the tourism industry resembled their domestic roles, women would take active roles in tourism. The study also showed that villagers did not regard the job as a tour guide as appropriate for a woman. In fact, five women who were tour guides were regarded as prostitutes, as their interaction with the tourists was not considered appropriate behavior for a local woman.

Although it is common for gender roles and stereotypes to be perpetuated in the tourism industry, emerging forms of alternative tourism may provide opportunities to challenge gender stereotypes. This is particularly true for small-scale tourism enterprises that promote entrepreneurship among women. Some researchers have noted the differentiation between mass-scale and small-scale tourism. Norris and Wall (1994) suggest that scale is an influencing factor in the nature of women’s participation in the tourism industry. With mass tourism comes low-paid, service sector jobs, whereas small scale tourism development provides opportunities for women to run their own small businesses such as guest accommodations or craft production. Therefore, small-scale tourism development can potentially challenge gender roles by providing women with more economic independence and increased self-efficacy.

Regina Scheyvens (2000) presents an example in her research of a successful ecotourism project owned by women. A cooperative created by women in Belize shows how a tourism enterprise can come to be valued by the whole community. The Sandy Beach Women's Cooperative was formed by 12 women who wanted to supplement their family incomes. The tourism project initially challenged existing gender roles. As the women took on responsibilities for the project, they learned about marketing, business management and ecological conservation. Women's roles were no longer restricted to domestic duties. They successfully established a lodge for tourists interested in nature tours of the area. The tourism venture has earned respect from the entire village by promoting local culture and environmental sustainability. Many have benefitted economically, as the cooperative supports the community by relying on the use of local materials, local labor for the construction of the lodge, local foods, local crafts, and local performers, demonstrators and tour guides.

Other community-based tourism projects have successfully challenged gender roles as well. The Mountain Institute incorporates gender analysis into their tourism development initiatives. The U.S. based NGO is committed to developing community-based mountain tourism initiatives in three world regions: the Appalachian Mountains, The Andes, and the Himalayas. One project in Nepal has had a positive impact on women's role and status in the community. The Mountain Institute has achieved this by providing gender sensitivity training in the communities they serve. Specifically they have developed a gender checklist for women's involvement in projects. According to Wendy Lama (1998), who studied a community-based mountain tourism project in

Nepal, one way they have successfully integrated women in the community-based tourism development project is to hold community meetings to discuss the roles and responsibilities of women in tourism and the unique skills women have to contribute. Tourism development practitioners used participatory rural appraisal methods to generate discussion on the value of women's work in the community. Use of visuals is particularly effective with populations with low literacy rates. Such gender analysis tools included venn diagrams, showing the relationship of women's groups in the community, trend lines, tracking the historic changes in women's village activities, and seasonal calendars, showing the various tasks of women year-round. This opportunity effectively raised community awareness about understanding the value of women's work, their strengths and contributions.

Scott Walker (1998) also analyzes the impact of community-based tourism on mountain women. In his case study, he addresses the impacts community-based mountain tourism has had on women's workloads. Women in one community reported that the CBT project had favorably affected their workload. They enjoyed being able to spend more time participating in tourism activities and less time in the drudgery of agriculture. In the planning phase, it is important to consider men and women's workloads. A CBT project may fail if men and women do not have the flexibility in their workloads to take on more responsibilities, let alone leadership roles.

As international tourist arrivals continue to increase in developing regions, greater sociocultural impacts are likely to occur. "The cultural differentiation between First and Third World countries is more pronounced. The differences in values and beliefs,

appropriate modes of dress and behavior and the status of women can lead to conflict between hosts and guests” (Gibson 2001: 19). Of course these conflicts may produce positive or negative results. Nevertheless, as more women come into contact with outsiders, particularly women from other countries, they are more likely to be exposed to new ideas about the advancement of women and challenge current gender roles.

Manuel Pleno’s (2006) case study of women’s empowerment in Philippine ecotourism reveals that women experienced increased social interaction, notably with other women. Women reported that training seminars improved their communication skills and made them friendlier people. They were able to spend time interacting in groups and sharing ideas. They found it particularly useful to exchange and share ideas about money. Women commented that they did not spend as much time at home and enjoyed the opportunity for social interaction. Although NGOs supported and facilitated the initial creation of this eco-tourism project and provided gender sensitivity training, some husbands still became suspicious and were uncomfortable with their wives’ new outgoing behavior. Initially women involved in tourism may face resistance from men, namely husbands, fathers and community leaders. If benefits are spread equitably throughout the community, for example, a tourism enterprise brings in more money and that money is spent to improve the community, views begin to change and the value and status of women’s work increases.

Further research relevant to discussion on gender and tourism is the sexual objectification of women. Tourism brochures often perpetuate gender stereotypes. Marketing of tourism in developing countries often portrays women as an exotic

commodity. In an analysis of tourism brochures for Pacific Island countries, Oppermann and Mckinley (1997) found indigenous people were usually depicted as young and beautiful, clothed in traditional dress and presented in such a way that they appeared exotic and objectified for the gaze of the tourists. This study also revealed that developing countries were more likely to use sex in their tourism promotion materials and the developed countries were least likely. This is indicative of the inequitable power relations that exist between developed and developing countries in international tourism (Gibson 2001). This inequitable relationship has also fueled the sex tourism industry, which has had a major impact on the lives of women throughout the world.

Sex tourism is particularly well developed in less developed countries, “somewhat due to the international division of labor, but also because of the attraction of the exotic ‘othered’ women” (36). The sexual objectification of women in tourism is of particular concern in a country such as Thailand where the sex tourism industry has had such a strong influence on the international portrayal of Thai women. The image of rural Thai women as sex workers has come to represent the deterioration of Thailand’s image and culture. Consequently, this has become a national source of shame for Thailand.

In the past, tourism has played a role in the empowerment and disempowerment of women. It has perpetuated gender stereotypes and challenged them. Through a gender-aware framework, we can continue to understand the influence of tourism on gender power relations between men and women. With this knowledge, we may then be able to plan tourism development that provides equitable benefits for women and men.

Women in Thailand

To further explore the significance of community-based tourism as a strategy for successful development in Thailand, I include a brief history of Thai development and the position of women. Pongsapich (2006) provides a useful summary of Thailand's history of economic development: Thailand's economic development can be divided into three stages: industrialization (beginning in the 1960s), the economic crises (1995-1999) and the current situation. During the industrialization phase, the government implemented social and economic plans that directed Thailand toward export-oriented production. At this time, many men made the transition from agricultural work and began migrating to work in factories. Eventually, men's income alone could not support the family and women also went to work for cash. Unmarried women went to work in factories with men. Women with families preferred to work in the informal sector, selling street foods or handicrafts, because it provided them with the flexibility to look after their children. Even today, women are restricted in employment opportunities by their household responsibilities. Migration to find work in the industrialization phase brought about many changes in families and communities some of which were especially hard on women, such as the loosening of kinship ties and the disappearance of the extended family.

The economic crises from 1995-1999 came as a result of many foreign investors channeling money into Asian economies, particularly Thailand, and then later pulling out which created a domino effect. In the early 1990s, the Thai economy was an attractive investment with relatively good infrastructure, a devalued currency and a surging export industry. When other Asian economies later entered the market, Thailand was unable to

compete effectively and investors pulled out. The Asian financial meltdown began in Thailand, then spread to other neighboring economies as well. The economic crisis had severe effects on women, in particular, as they occupied the most low-level and therefore vulnerable jobs. Women were laid off from working in the financial sector and the manufacturing sector during the economic collapse. Many returned to their villages and began to make crafts and garments from home. Women in Thailand have learned to organize to form the social networks that are necessary to survive through economic hardships.

Clearly, women in Thailand have experienced some negative effects from development both before and after the economic crises. Thai women also continue to suffer the cultural and traditional prejudices of a male-dominated society. Most notably they are under-represented in government and lack influence in the public sphere. The position of women in Thai society is also shaped by Buddhist religious traditions. Under Theravada Buddhism, the most widely practiced religion in Thailand, it is believed that women are not meant to play an active role in monastic life. Boys are favored for the economic contribution they can potentially provide the family; but mostly they are valued for bringing their parents honor by becoming monks. Girls do not have the option to be ordained as do boys (UNDP 2006a). According to tradition, a women's duty is to care for her family, which often includes the family's economic well-being.

Therefore, in addition to women's responsibility to maintain the household, women experience pressure to seek paid work. The workload of women is doubled and even tripled when women must work in the formal sector, informal sector and maintain

the household. In extreme cases, many women also face the pressures of being coerced into the sex industry in order to provide enough income for their families because of the lack of viable alternatives. Prostitution is not legal in Thailand, yet the country is notorious for its provocative sex tourism industry. During the Vietnam War, American troops spent their time in Thailand for 'rest and relaxation'. This, in turn, led to a boom in the sex industry that would later continue through sex tourism.

It is interesting to explore in more detail how circumstances would allow the sex industry to flourish in Thailand, as commercial sex services are highly stigmatized in many Asian cultures. Research shows that women in impoverished rural areas are the most vulnerable targets for recruitment into the commercial sex industry (International Labor Organization 2004). The disproportionate representation of northern Thai women in the sex industry points to some of the root causes for perpetuation of the sex industry. Behrer's (1997) research on the history of northern hill tribes provides more evidence:

"For northern Thai men in earlier times, having multiple wives and other sex partners was a privilege of prosperity... Slave wives were common for those who could afford them... The modern trade no doubt has continuity with this tradition. The current emphasis on monogamous marriages has been seen by cultural historians as an adaptation to exposure to the West; earlier northern Thai traditions placed little emphasis on monogamy as a virtue for men" (Behrer 1997: 27).

While men are autonomous in their sexual freedom, women are more restricted in their sexual freedom. Pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex and multiple partners are strongly discouraged in Thai culture. Why, then is it tolerated for women to work in the sex industry? The apparent social acceptance of women working in the sex industry is perhaps based on the fact that families see this as a necessary sacrifice. There is a

particularly strong expectation for girls from the northern region to take care of their families. The expectation for daughters to care for parents rather than sons forces impoverished women who have low levels of education and lack of skills to seek employment in the sex industry. Many women who engage in sex work claim to do so for economic reasons, sending home remittances to support their families in rural villages. Thai culture strongly emphasizes social acceptance and social harmony as well and this may explain why women are later accepted back into their communities after working in the sex industry.

Since prostitution is illegal in Thailand, statistics on the sex industry are difficult to track. The UNDP (2006a) estimates there are more than 200,000 sex workers in Thailand. The industry generates approximately twenty billion dollars each year according to the International Labor Organization (1998). Thai women in general have received an unfortunate reputation worldwide as a result. In 1999 for example, there was controversy over the unfair treatment of Thai women by Hong Kong immigration officials. Due to its anti-prostitution policy, Hong Kong officials were asking every Thai woman visiting the country for the first time if they were prostitutes (Subhramos 2006).

On a more positive note, women in Thailand have made considerable progress in terms of life expectancy, maternal health, education, and literacy standards. According to the UNDP's 2006 *Human Development Report*, Thailand ranks as a medium human development country. Life expectancy for females is higher than for men. On average women live for 74 years versus 66.7 years for men. Women almost equal men in literacy rates, with 90.5% literate females compared to 94.9% literate males (UNDP 2006b).

Female children are also highly valued because they provide care for the family and maintain the household. Consequently, Thai women traditionally wield more power in the household than is typically found in less developed countries. Women are often in control of household money. Over time this tradition has changed, but it is still true for many rural areas.

Women in Thailand have been active leaders in environmental advocacy (Pongsapich 2006). Women's roles as defenders of the environment grows out of their direct contact with natural resources such as gathering plants, water, and wood for fuel. Women gather a greater variety of natural products than do men and appear to spend much more time at gathering than do men. They also have knowledge of medicinal plants (Sowerwine 1999). In Leeled, women gather a variety of plants to make paper, herbal medicines, natural dyes, thatch roofs, and wrap desserts. They possess a wealth of local wisdom about the mangrove forest and its abundance of natural resources. As stakeholders in tourism projects, Thai women offer strength in mobilizing the community and are a great source of knowledge concerning the natural environment. Therefore, women's involvement and contributions in development projects are vital for long-term success.

A community-based approach to development in which women are more centrally involved has a greater potential for meeting the needs of the entire community. When compared to other job options currently available to women in Thailand, the advantages of community-based tourism initiatives become apparent. The development of community-based tourism may be the key to providing many women and girls in rural

areas with a viable alternative to the lure of the sex industry or other forms of demeaning labor. In addition, it can be the potential catalyst for changing the international image of Thai women. The success of women's involvement in community-based tourism could serve as an opportunity for individual as well as collective empowerment.

Gendered Empowerment

There has been much academic discussion and analysis of the term empowerment. Development practitioners recognize that empowerment is intrinsic to the process of community development and gender development. However, the definition of empowerment is vague. Because of this vagueness, development practitioners have been able to define the term in a way that best fits with their organization or project. Thus, many ways to define and measure empowerment have been proposed. In this research, empowerment is defined as a personal change in consciousness moving towards control, self-confidence and expansion of choices. Empowerment is considered to be both a process and an outcome. In the process of empowerment, women overcome their fears, anxieties and feelings of inferiority. According to Paulo Freire (1971), a highly influential Brazilian theorist and educator, the disadvantaged must learn of social inequality before they will want to change. Women must become aware of gender inequality and "internal oppression". Once they become aware of gendered power structures they are able to define their goals and act upon them. Empowerment is facilitated by providing encouraging factors (exposure to new activities) and eliminating inhibiting factors (lack of access to resources). There are personal and collective forms of

empowerment. Regina Scheyvens' identifies four distinct forms of empowerment in her study of ecotourism projects. Borrowing from Scheyvens' typology, I analyze empowerment as multi-dimensional and explore it in four parts: psychological, social, political, and economic.

Furthermore, since empowerment is a unique process, indicators used to measure empowerment must be appropriately developed to suit each specific context. A specific context refers to a particular cultural, ethnic, historical, economic, geographic, political, or social location out of which the empowerment process arises. Jo Rowlands' research on women's empowerment suggests that that the uniqueness of the empowerment process in a specific context requires flexible indicators which may change over time.

“For a woman for whom it is a major challenge to attend meetings, initially her presence at meetings might be the measure of her empowerment; later, it might be her regular active contribution to discussion; later still, it might be her ability to initiate group activities. Given the often intangible and nebulous psychological and social processes involved, it can be easy, too, to miss the significance of particular events or inputs” (Rowlands 1997:140).

Rowlands proposes an approach that allows researchers to think more effectively about the process of empowerment in development planning. In analyzing empowerment, I looked specifically for examples in which women had improved self-confidence and areas in which women lacked self-confidence. I then attempted to determine what factors promoted empowerment (encouraging factors) and which factors prevented empowerment (inhibiting factors). Identifying these factors helps to clarify strengths and weakness of the empowerment process. The following chapter presents a brief history of Leeled and the role of women in the community.

CHAPTER III

CONTEXTUALIZING THE RESEARCH FIELD

Leeled Tambon (sub-district) is a coastal community situated near Ban Don Bay in the Phun Phin district of Surrathani (a southern province). The tambon consists of 8 villages and the population is approximately 3,800. Leeled is surrounded by a fertile mangrove forest to the north and is criss-crossed with many large and small canals. The traditional mode of transportation in Leeled is by boat and all the houses were originally built along the canals. The use of boats in daily transportation is a unique part of Leeled's culture as other areas have abandoned the use of boats and rely exclusively on automobiles. Boats in Leeled are also used as floating markets as well as for transportation to school and work. In addition, infrastructure development has brought electricity and roads to Leeled so it is possible to reach every village by road.

Figure 1 shows the location of Leeled.

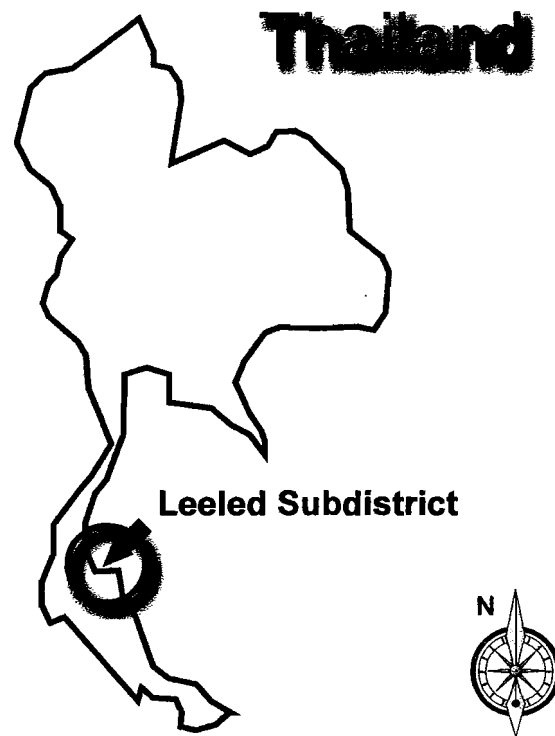


Figure 1. Map of Thailand

To gain a better understanding of life in Leeled, I asked CBT members to share information about their daily routines. The following data was gathered primarily through group interviews with men and women. I used gender analysis tools to compare men and women's work in the community. I asked about location and time spent on each activity as well as the gender and age range of individuals who performed these tasks. I included paid and unpaid labor as well as community activities.

Socioeconomic Category	Activity	Location	Time/Duration	Men/Women	Age
Productive (paid work)	Coconut Garden: peeling and selling	Home	6 hours/day but not everyday	men and women	20-50
	Shrimp farming	Shrimp Farm	4-6 hours per day Every 3-4 months shrimp can be harvested	men and women	15-60+
	Making Shrimp Paste	Home	A few hours everyday	women and children mostly	15-60+
	Factory (rubber, seafood)	20-50 km from home	8 hours/day 6 days/week	men and women	16-50
	Making desserts to sell	Market in next tambon (10km from home)	4 hours cooking, 4 hours selling, 4 days/week	Women	50+
	Fishing	sea and canal	seasonal and depends on tide can be an all day activity, 4-6 hours avg per/day	men mostly	15-60+
	Making rolling papers	Home	A few hours everyday	women mostly	50+
	Roof thatching	Home	6 hours/day 3 or 4 days per week	Women	50+
Reproductive (unpaid work)	Cooking	Home	1-4 hrs/day everyday	Women	young + old
	Cleaning	Home	1-2 hrs/day everyday	Women	young + old
	Child care	Home	all day	women and men	elder
	Elder care	Home	all day	women and men	young
	Health care	health center	2 times per month	women mostly	Elder
Community	Give alms	Temple	4 days a month and holidays 2-3 hours in the morning	women and men	Older

Figure 2. Activity Profile

Filling out an activity profile with groups of CBT members helped to generate further discussion about inequalities of access and control over various resources. I used another tool for gender analysis to determine men and women's access and control of various resources. Figure 3 show the results of these group interviews.

Resources	Men	Women
Economic -land -cash -credit	Control Access Control	Access Control Access
Political	Control	Access
Education/Training	Access	Control

Figure 3. Access and Control Profile

These tools proved to be useful in providing a context for understanding Leeled's community as well as the division of labor and relations between men and women. The following information provides more details gathered during small group discussions.

Economic History

The main occupations that exist in Leeled today are shrimp farming, coconut gardening and fishing. Before shrimp farming became popular, people also worked in the rice fields. In 1982, organic shrimp farming was introduced and rice fields were converted. Seven years later industrial farming techniques brought the use of chemicals. From the early to mid-1990s shrimp farming became a very successful business and many people took out loans and sold their assets to make the large investment in the

shrimp farming business. During this period of economic growth beginning in 1996, many people were able to buy luxury items while others preferred to reinvest their profits. However, shrimp farming proved to be a high risk investment causing environmental degradation. Problems with disease and chemicals compromised the health of farmed shrimp and the value of shrimp fell in the market. When the shrimp industry finally declined in 2002, a dichotomy resulted: the creation of rich and poor in Leeled. Even though shrimp farming still provides the most income for people in Leeled, it is considered a high risk business. Consequently, many people have been left with the burden of loans creating more hardships than they had before. Both men and women can work on the shrimp farms, but most of the work is carried out by Laotian and Burmese migrant workers. Recently, many shrimp farms have been converted to crab, fish or palm oil farms. The villages farthest away from the center of the Tambon are the most poor. These areas are farthest away from the government office and more difficult to access. Only until recently was a road created to reach village 2. Prior to this, it was only accessible by boat. Harder to reach areas were less likely to receive infrastructure development and, as a result, have not received as many of the developments they would like. These are villages 2, 4, and 8. Villages such as village 1 have very few shrimp farms and are the most developed, in terms of modern amenities. For example, many village 1 residents have electric washing machines, refrigerators, televisions, and microwaves. Coconut gardens are commonly found in this area and homes are on relatively small plots of land compared to the expansive land areas in villages 7 and 5, which have the most shrimp farms.

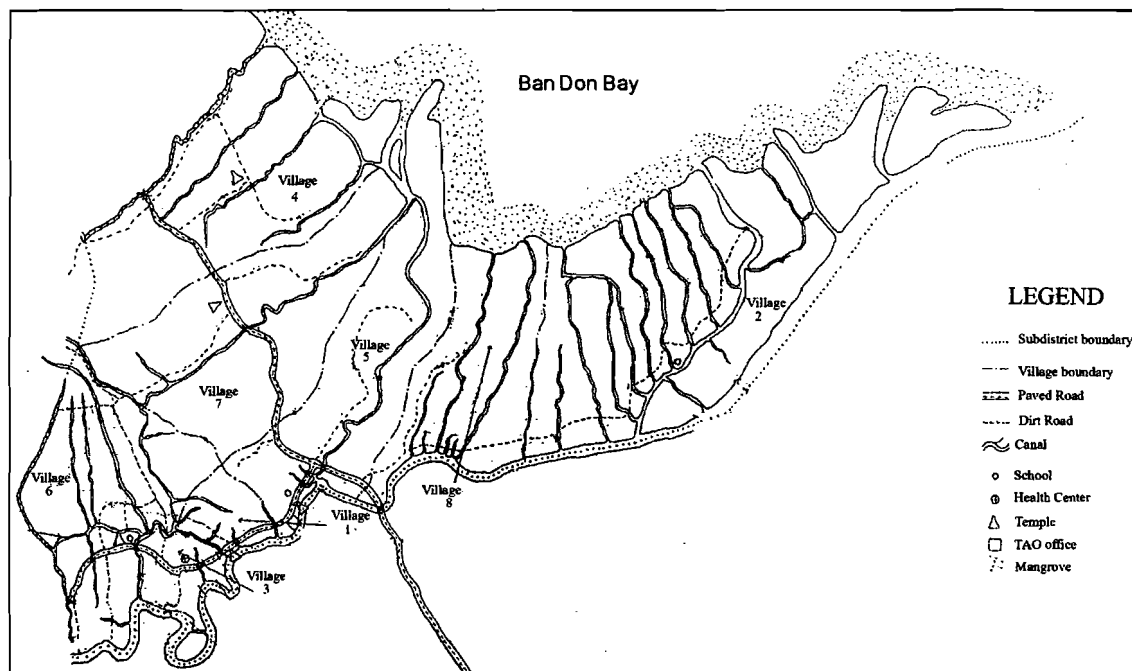


Figure 4. Map of Leeled Villages

Source: Adapted from Leeled Tambon Administrative Organization. 2007. No scale given. Map of Leeled Subdistrict. Leeled, Phun Phin, Surrathani, Thailand.

Traditionally women take care of the household and men go out to earn cash.

However, women have control over cash income and household decision making. I was told that this is most typical for rural areas in Thailand. Men have more access to credit and control of land. To help women earn their own independent and supplementary incomes, occupation groups have been created. These occupation groups are typically work women can do from home. These groups are initiated by the local community and are funded by government and non-governmental organizations. These groups, all led by women, are the worm farm group, the Nipa Palm leaf group, and the shrimp paste (gapi) group. These occupation groups are currently geared toward Thai consumers. In the

past, there was an herbal group. However, this group is currently inactive because the materials needed to be imported from other areas as the herbal plants cannot grow in a salt water environment. There are only two members of this group and they do not have much time for these activities anymore, since they must look after young children during the day. Making the herbal products requires a complex process with equipment and it is not possible to do these activities with the presence of children. Another way of earning a supplementary income is basket weaving. However, this is not an organized group. It is something people do in their spare time. Both men and women can make baskets while children are sleeping. Baskets were selected as Leeled's official OTOP (One Tambon, One Product).³ Products made in the village are predominantly sold in Suratthani city and at the local market which is held every Monday.

Social and Cultural History

Extended families are common in Leeled. Grandparents often take care of young children while the parents go to work during the day. Gender roles remain in keeping with tradition and are slow to change. Women have more responsibility than men to take care of their families. It is also common for the husband to go live with his wife's family after marriage, especially if she is expected to care for her parents.

Religious devotion is strong in the community, particularly among women.

Temples appear to be the central meeting place for community members. Funerals and

³ One Tambon One Product (OTOP) was borrowed from the successful OVOP (One Village, One Product) program in Japan. In 2001, the Thai government selected products from each Tambon for quality and exportability. These products typically include handicrafts made from local materials. This economic development strategy was designed to bring economic benefits to the local level and help to alleviate rural poverty. This strategy has also encouraged tourism to rural villages.

fairs occur frequently. The practice of making merit is an important religious concept in Theravada Buddhism. It is the concept of doing good deeds to achieve a fortunate rebirth and liberation. Monks make merit by meditating, chanting and performing other spiritual rituals. Others, particularly women, make merit by giving to the poor and being generous to friends and family. It is common for older women to go to the temple daily to make merit. They devote much of their time by volunteering to cook food for events, such as funerals. Male children are more valued than female children for their ability to bring their parents merit by becoming monks. Men are not required to become monks for any specific length of time, and service may range from two weeks to several years.

In educational attainment, women and girls have made considerable progress. Villagers reported that up to the 9th grade males and females have equal education but high school and university education is more common for women. This is due to the fact that men were more likely to drop out of school than women. Statistically, Thailand has eliminated gender disparity in education and significantly closed the gap between rural and urban education. However, women's education and training emphasizes traditional women's work such as nursing and teaching. Teachers commented that girls were more motivated in school, partly because girls are more controlled by their families. Girls have more responsibility than boys. Boys have more mobility and freedom to go to the cities. Consequently, males become more involved in destructive behaviors such as drinking, smoking and taking drugs.

Currently, crime is not perceived to be a major problem for Leeled, with the possible exception of illegal fishing. People commented that 40 - 50 years ago there were

many thieves coming to the area. The thieves were pirates that came from other areas to steal boat engines but this has changed. Villagers said the reason they believed this was no longer happening was because of their Buddhist principles of cooperation. They also mentioned that the thieves are too old now and many have died. Occasionally there are still incidents where outsiders steal motors used to aerate the water in the shrimp farms.

Political History

In the 19th century, King Rama V introduced an administrative system to take care of the people in Thailand. Each village elects a leader or the Poo Yai Baan. While there are currently no female village heads, the Thai government passed a law fifteen years ago that allowed women to be village heads. Since then one woman has been chosen to be a village head. Women commented that this set a precedent for women as leaders in Loeled. The term limit for village leaders is five years and salary is 4,000 baht (\$100) per month. Each leader has four assistants who each receive 2,500 baht (\$62) per month. Among the village leaders, one person is chosen to be the leader of the sub-district. This leader is called the Gamnan.

The Gamnan's responsibility is to resolve conflicts in the villages. The community-based tourism club members also elected the Gamnan to be the president of Loeled's CBT project. Community members commented that the Gamnan was well-liked and respected by most people, but that there were some people who did not agree with his handling of issues. For example, some people want to engage in illegal fishing and the Gamnan disapproves. This was proposed as a reason why some people might chose not to

join the CBT club. Overall, most villagers see him as very committed to the well-being of the community and to the development of community-based tourism.

Another new political system in Leeled is the Tambon Administrative Organization (TAO). Ten years ago this new system of government was established and wields more political power because it receives a budget from the Thai government for development. Responsibilities of the TAO include infrastructure development, economic development and collecting taxes. Two members are elected from each village and they serve four year terms. Currently, the TAO membership consists of 5 women and 11 men. TAO candidates campaign by going to community events and leaving pamphlets at people's homes during election time.

The TAO budget is mostly directed toward infrastructure development such as building new roads and electricity. It also provides some funding for cultural activities at the temples and schools. For example, the TAO funding provides for teachers' salaries at the three public primary schools, milk is provided to children at these schools and prizes are provided at temple fairs. This year the TAO is planning to fund new projects in waste management, environmental planning and tourism. In the past the TAO did not fund CBT activities but the elected officials were more cooperative in trying to assist in finding alternative sources of funding for CBT. Currently, there is less cooperation but the TAO has tentatively agreed to provide 30,000 baht for printing a tourism brochure. As of yet, this has not happened.

Community Needs Identified

When asked what development they would like to see in Leeled, everyone mentioned infrastructure development to me. They need better roads and water pipes. However, women tended to have more ideas than men about what needed to be improved in the community as far as social development. These ideas also tended to be more detailed. Men tended to have more overall vision for development because they have more access to the outside world. One man commented that, “if men and women can bring together the big picture with the details then they would have a complete plan for development”. Some men commented that they were content and already had everything necessary for their lives. Women commented that they would like access to more affordable healthcare, training in implementing exercise programs, and a place for senior citizen activities. Women wanted to develop more occupation groups and products to sell. Women felt the community would benefit from better technology (computers and internet), especially in the schools. The ability to speak English was highly desired, mostly among women. Many people reported that they wanted to learn English so that they could communicate and network better with the outside world. Both men and women agreed that they would like Leeled to be more well-known. Men and women both mentioned the importance of training in environmental conservation, although men seemed to have more interest in this subject. All the CBT members recognized that more cooperation and social awareness from other community members was needed as well.

CHAPTER IV

LEELED COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM PROJECT

The community-based tourism project is a combination of environmental conservation and social development. To achieve its goals, REST has partnered with a government initiative called CHARM (Coastal Habitat and Resource Management). Support for the CHARM project comes through a matching grant from the European Union to the Thai Government. Thai foundations provide funding as well. CHARM has a five-year project timeline devoted to conservation of coastal areas in five southern provinces (Krabi, Phuket, Trang, Phang Nga and Surrathani). Leeled's mangrove forest was chosen as one of many sites for conservation activities. REST and CHARM work with local organizations such as the volunteer health group and the primary schools. Figure 3 shows the relationships between organizations involved in the project.

Mapping of CBT project resources: Funding and training

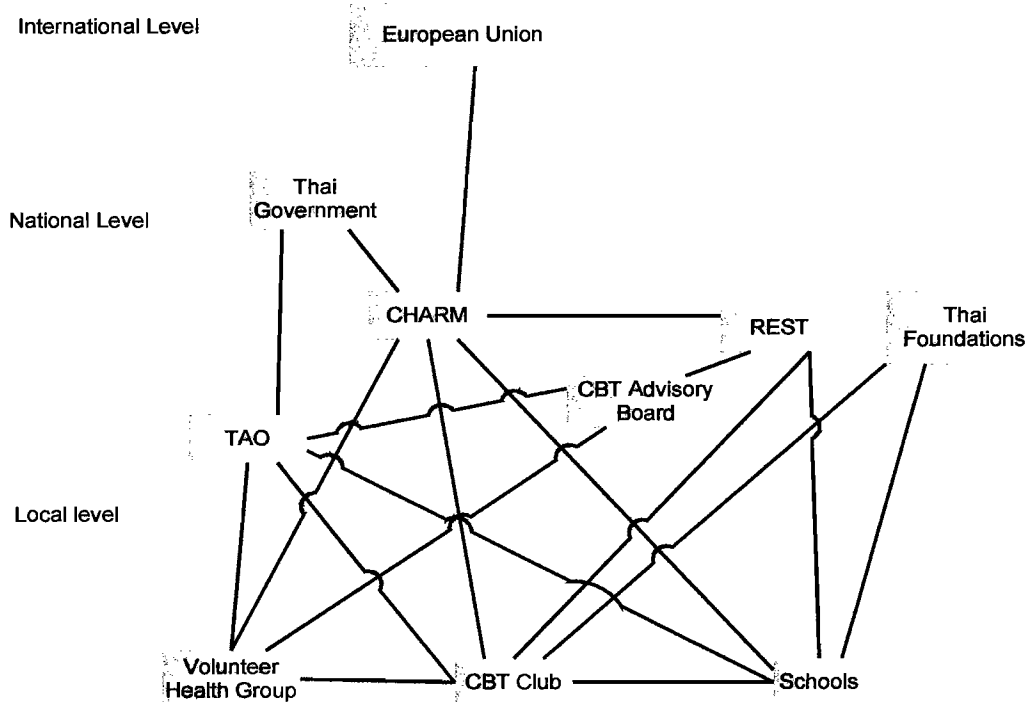


Figure 5. Organizational Mapping

Various projects have been completed during the CHARM project timeline. A bamboo barrier was constructed around the mangrove for protection. In only a few years there are visible results, with many new trees growing in the protected area. An observation platform was also built to monitor illegal fishing. There are fishing techniques which are very harmful to the ecosystem and the community is working to train fisherman in legal, environmentally friendly techniques. The tour guides attested

that illegal fishing has decreased since the project began. As a result the amount of seafood has increased.

CHARM and REST are working with existing community groups, particularly the volunteer health group (consisting almost entirely of women), to establish a waste management program and build a waste bank. It is a significant concern for the community since many people throw their trash into the canals and on the ground. Educating community members about ways to reduce, reuse and recycle and why it is important to take care of their environment has gradually started to change people's behavior. Since the project began, people throw less trash on the ground and encourage each other to pick up trash when they see it. Another reported effect from environmental planning has been the improvement of water quality. Preventing the drainage of salty shrimp farm water into fresh water canals has decreased the occurrence of skin rashes.

To further educate the community, a curriculum will be developed for the primary schools. A youth camp was held with local students to experiment with the development of this curriculum. The new curriculum will teach students about local culture and the environment and train grades 5 and 6 to be youth tour guides. All children must attend primary school. Therefore, partnership with the local schools is crucial for raising community awareness as this provides a connection with all families in Leeled. REST and CHARM would also like to make a monthly newsletter to keep the community better informed about community events and CBT activities.

REST's role in the process of CBT development is in training and marketing CBT. REST offers consultant services to train communities in CBT development and

they also market the CBT brand nationally and internationally. REST has been assisting the community to establish its CBT project for the past 3 years. This is the last year REST will work directly with the community. After this year, REST will come to visit once every three months. Initially, tourists are introduced to the community by REST, and, over time, the community develops the capacity to attract tourists on their own. Primarily REST brings student as tourists who are interested in studying CBT or environmental conservation. This gives the community the opportunity to practice with 'mock tourists'. This is also very beneficial for the students who learn about community development and environmental conservation. An important part of the initial development phase is building the community's capacity for marketing and promotion.

One way REST has ensured marketing and promotion is by placing a tourism marketing expert to serve on a CBT advisory board. I was able to speak with this board member during a trip to the city. He shared with me his prediction on the future success of Leeled's CBT project. "Leeled is in a convenient location for tourists (near to Surrathani city and Koh Samui). It is easy for tourists to access." Leeled is only a 15 minute drive outside the city. He expressed his dismay of witnessing the uncontrolled and irresponsible development of tourism on Koh Samui, where he owned a hotel for the past 20 years. With his knowledge of the harmful effects tourism can potentially bring, he is committed to being a part of responsible tourism development through assisting Leeled's CBT club. He currently owns hotels in Surrathani city and is interested in marketing Leeled's CBT tour by displaying and distributing their brochures in his hotels.

The CBT advisory board also serves to facilitate cooperation between stakeholders. The CBT advisory board meets once a month is made up of professionals with diverse skills and knowledge. They assist in establishing networks of support and help to secure funding sources. Currently, the CBT advisory board consists of a hotel business owner, a teacher from a community college, the district headman, a provincial fishery official, the subdistrict headman, the TAO president and TAO secretary. This board meets to discuss the progress of CBT and how they can lend their skills to the community members.

REST begins CBT projects by looking for a community that has an attractive culture, interesting lifestyle and appealing natural scenery. However, the goals of the CBT project are ultimately defined by the community. REST takes groups of CBT members to visit other CBT projects. This helps them understand what to expect from a CBT project and to start thinking about how they would develop their own unique tour. The community then develops a tour based on their needs, what they are proud of and what they would like to share with tourists. CBT tours are best described as culture and nature-based, hands-on, real-life experiences.

REST's CBT proposal attracted the attention of the Gamnan, who was very interested in implementing the project. His commitment to the project allowed him to be selected as the president of the CBT club. He began a public relations campaign to propose CBT to the villagers and invite community members to participate. He used the local television station as one channel of conveying the message. He also went to all social events to talk with people about CBT. His community outreach attempts were

successful in convincing many people of the potential benefits of CBT. The current CBT club consists of 33 members. There are 4 CBT club coordinators, 12 homestay families, 11 boat drivers, 4 car and van drivers, 12 local guides, and 1 president. Some members have overlapping roles, for example, one person might serve as a CBT club coordinator, a local guide and a driver.

Community members interested in joining the club had to fill out an application and pay 150 baht (\$4) for the application fee. This money was pooled to buy life-jackets and other supplies for a CBT tour.

There are certain standards CBT members must meet to qualify. REST and CBT members developed a CBT handbook to outline these standards. A few standard requirements are as follows: To be a CBT member everyone in the family must be willing to participate. You must be a polite person. Boat drivers must have a larger boat and a noise control device. Benefits must be distributed evenly between all CBT members. For example, homestay families are on a rotation system for hosting visitors. When visitors come to Leeled they do not get to choose whichever homestay they want, they must stay with the family that is next in the queue. CBT members must also attend meetings. CBT meetings are held twice a month. Members are informed well in advance of the meeting time and place so that people are able to coordinate their schedules. Initially, REST had some difficulties in achieving regular attendance from CBT members, which slowed progress. However, this has become less of a problem, as several people are now strongly committed to the project and regularly attend.

There is a community fund to which tourists must contribute to when they come to Leeled. This expense is included in the fee and is based on the number of days you stay in the village. In addition, 10% of CBT income goes toward this fund. The community fund now consists of approximately 50,000 baht (about \$1,400 U.S.). The president of the CBT club has the ultimate decision-making authority about the allocation of the funds. The community funds have been used to buy trash bags for cleaning up the villages, signage, equipment for mangrove planting, photographs and buying food for meetings. Donations are also made to the local schools, temples and the volunteer health group. This ensures that benefits from tourism activities are spread throughout the community. This is important to prevent feelings of jealousy from non-CBT members. The CBT president also mentioned that in the future he would like to use these funds to build a barrier at sea for better protection of Leeled's conservation zones. The problem of illegal fishing and garbage from nearby areas is a growing threat.

To ensure that the local community has the capacity to sustain the project after REST leaves, a local person is hired to work for them. They have employed a young woman. REST has trained her to be a leader in community development. This also helps to establish better rapport and trust with the community. It also seems that the presence of female REST staff members as role models encouraged women's participation in the project. REST was particularly interested in hiring her because of her intelligence and her English language skills. She is also enrolled in distance education courses through a University.

Figure 6 shows a tourism map of Leeled.

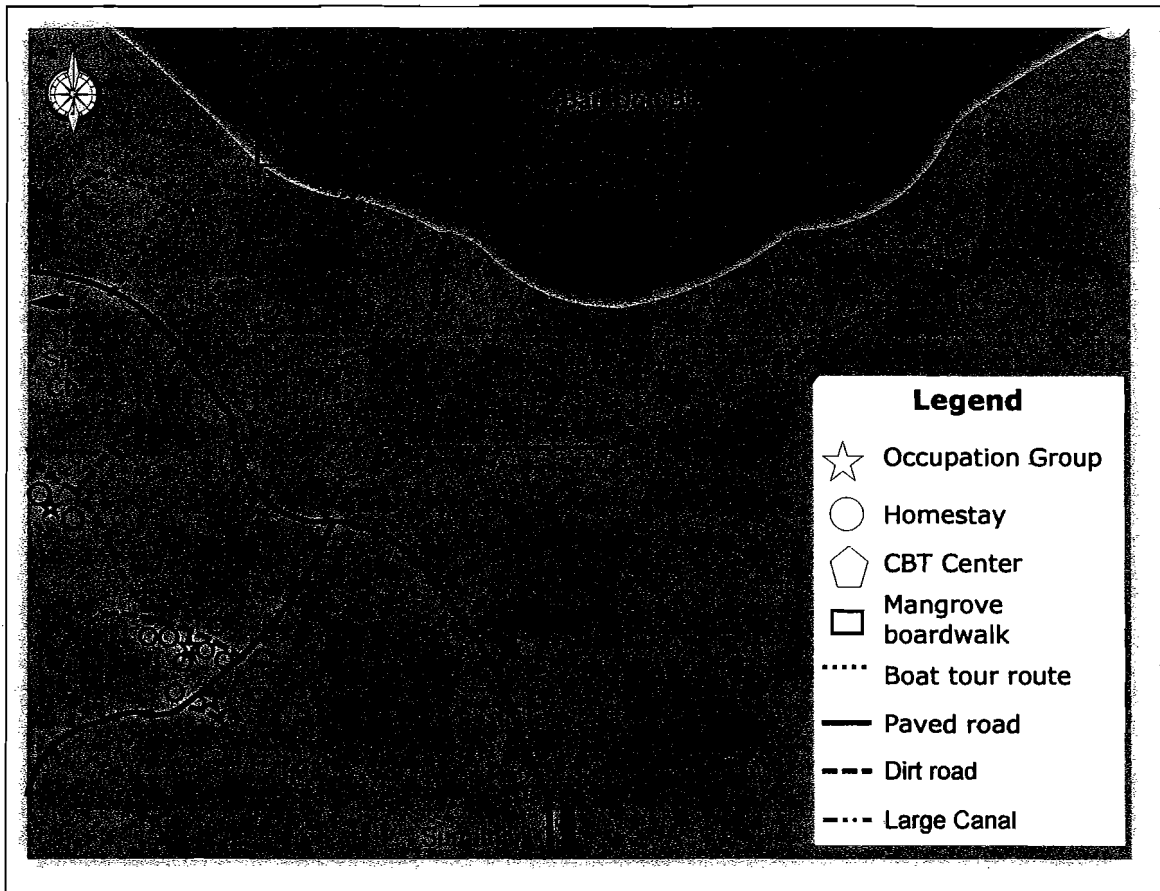


Figure 6. Tourism Map

To date, Leeled has hosted approximately 2,000 tourists, many of whom have been students arriving in large groups for study tours. Upon arrival in Leeled, visitors are brought to the CBT center, a building situated next to a large canal. There is an illustrated map of the community and pictures of past visitors posted on the walls. Any CBT members who are available will be there to greet visitors. The long tail boat drivers soon arrive and everyone is given bottled water, life jackets and traditional hats for protection from the sun. The CBT club has chosen the mangrove forest as the main focus

of their tour. Tours of the mangrove by longtail boat educate visitors about the importance of this ecosystem, as a natural resource and for protection from natural disasters. A CBT tour allows visitors to have interaction with the environment and use all their senses. Various activities are chosen by the tour guides. There are currently nine male tour guides and three female tour guides. Activities include planting mangrove trees, fishing, clamming, eating fresh seafood, and viewing wildlife. During my CBT tour, a REST staff member translated for the guide. We stopped several local fisherman during the tour and asked if they had caught anything. After collecting a variety of seafood, we stopped at a building on stilts above the water. It served as a lookout post to monitor illegal fishing in the area. We dropped off the food to be cooked there and continued on with the tour. One of the main highlights of the mangrove tour is a walkway and sitting area with information boards situated in the mangrove. All of the signs are written in Thai with future plans for translation into English. As of now, many of Leeled's tourists are Thai people from other regions of Thailand. The reason for this is that the CBT project is still in preliminary stages of development and they are gradually working toward marketing to international visitors.

In addition, tour guides occasionally bring tourists to the neighboring subdistrict of Sri Vi Chai, where tourists can climb stairs to a beautiful hill top temple. The tour guide proudly explains the history of this sacred site and the ancient artifacts on display. Another popular tourist activity is viewing fireflies that light up the Lumpoo trees at night. The thousands of fireflies found in these special mangrove trees is an indicator of

a clean environment. The fireflies can be viewed either by boat or on foot along the canals.

Leeled's CBT tour also takes tourists to see the different occupation groups, which are all run by women. The process of each occupation is explained by the tour guides. At the shrimp paste occupation group visitors can try pounding shrimp paste. At the worm farm, tourists have the option to eat worms. The worm farm is a newer occupation that began a few years ago. It has become quite a lucrative business, as coconut worms are a popular delicacy among Thai people. At the Nipa Palm group, tourists can help prepare the palm shoots to be made into beedie (cigarette) rolling papers.

The shrimp paste group and nipa palm group are also homestays. This gives visitors a chance to participate in the occupation group even further. The homestay gives visitors a unique and meaningful experience of life in a Thai village. The women take primary responsibility for the homestay experience, as they do the cooking and provide other kinds of hospitality. Typically, overnight CBT trips are very short, lasting from one day up to two weeks. I was the first visitor to stay in Leeled for a long period of time. I was fortunate to have the opportunity to stay at all thirteen homestays during my three months of research. The laidback lifestyle in the Thai countryside can be quite charming and peaceful. Visiting the Thai countryside is not only of interest to international tourists but is appealing for urban Thai people as well. The homestay experience gives visitors a deeper connection with the community and insight into traditional Thai culture and customs. Homestay families also have a strong interest in learning about the

backgrounds of their guests as well. Guests who stay longer are given a mode of transportation. I was given a bicycle and motorbike to explore my new surroundings. I would also attend community events with my host family. Nearly every day there was a reason to go to the temple whether it was a fair, funeral, holiday, wedding, or a monk's ordainment ceremony. Before guests leave their homestay they are asked to sign the guest book.

Figure 7 shows all the possible activities tourists may participate in during their stay in Leeled. The CBT club may decide to add or take away certain activities depending on the interests of particular tourists.

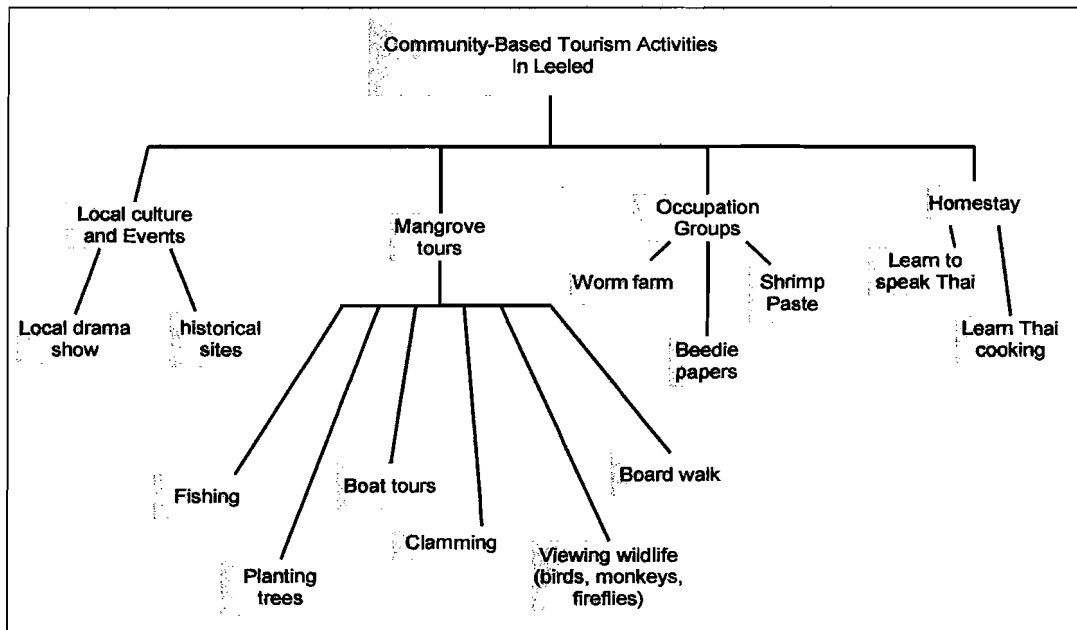


Figure 7. Tourism Activities in Leeled

Motivation for Joining CBT

When asked why they wanted to join the community-based tourism project, women and men had similar reasons. They wanted to help with conservation of the environment and improve their management skills. They were interested in meeting new people both in their community and outside their community. Women expressed more interest in wanting to learn English. Men expressed more interest than women in joining to earn a supplementary income. They also reported that their current jobs allowed them to have free time that enabled them to participate in CBT activities. CBT members were generally more interested in volunteer work, as well.

Barriers to CBT Participation

When CBT members were asked why others did not participate in CBT, several answers were offered. Mostly people are worried about their incomes and lack flexibility in their current jobs. People who are unable to participate must spend all their time working to afford their living expenses and their children's education. They do not have or they do not think they have the time to engage in CBT activities. Nonparticipating community members usually stated lack of time as the main reason they were not involved in CBT. Some mentioned that in the future they would like to join when they have more time. One male CBT member stated that this was just a polite answer and that the real reason was they didn't value environmental conservation. Several other CBT members agreed with this statement.

Others mentioned that people may not have the self-confidence necessary to voice their opinions and therefore did not want to get involved. This feeling was confirmed by a young woman who was not participating in CBT, who told me, "I'm different from the people who work in CBT. They have skills and confidence to do that work that I don't have."

Another possible reason was that people think there is not enough work to do at the present time or are not well-informed about CBT activities. Villages farther away from the CBT center were less likely to know about CBT activities. People commented that they intend to join when CBT gains more momentum and there are more tourists to accommodate. Others are just skeptical about the success of CBT and are waiting until it has proven to be a worthwhile endeavor.

Another interesting reason for not participating is that some people are not attracted to the idea of working in the tourism industry. One CBT member reported she had been told by another villager, "I cannot serve people like you do". A staff member of REST suggested that some community members may perceive CBT as "just tourism". It is understandable that some people do not enjoy working in the service industry. While homestay families and tour guides may be involved in service related work, there are many other opportunities for involvement in CBT that are not service positions. These opportunities include environmental planning and political campaigning. The CBT club is working diligently to frame their roles as conservation and community development workers, and not as just a typical tourism project.

CHAPTER V

ANALYSIS OF THE CBT PROJECT

I found many examples of women's empowerment through CBT development. Overall, it was apparent that CBT was very effective in terms of psychological, social and even political empowerment, as many women reported feelings of increased self-confidence in each of these areas. However, at this time, there does not appear to be a very strong impact in terms of economic empowerment.

One reason for the current lack of economic development could be that more time is needed, as capacity building is a long-term process. The community has been developing the CBT project for three years. Nonetheless, with so much empowerment in other important areas, men and women in Leeled should be in the position to develop successful economic enterprises. It seemed as though everyone, especially women, realized that this was the logical next step in their CBT development project. It is also important to remember that CBT was never encouraged to be a primary source of income. Based on the King's sufficiency economy, it is not advisable for villagers to become vulnerable to foreign shocks through complete dependency on tourist arrivals. This is a unique feature of Leeled's tourism project.

The following are examples of various forms of empowerment men and women experienced through participation in the CBT project. I include several different indicators of empowerment.

Psychological Empowerment

Psychological empowerment means that a community is optimistic about its future, has faith in the abilities of its residents, and pride in its culture and traditions (Scheyvens 2000). Community-based tourism is a very effective way to generate pride in local culture. There were many examples of psychological empowerment found in the CBT project. Women reported that there was an increase in interest in cultural traditions such as local drama. Young and old generations have now taken an interest in preserving this tradition. A group of actors perform on special occasions. Elderly men and women played leading roles in the local drama shows which also included performances by elementary school children. Bringing older and younger generations together in the revival of this cultural tradition was very powerful and a source of pride for many people in the community. Men and women noticed that people were also participating more in community cultural activities than before.

Both men and women commented that participation in CBT activities helped to build their self-confidence, especially because of their improved skills in public speaking. This has led to several women going back to school to receive their secondary and high school diplomas. CBT members also commented that they now have increased responsibilities and have had to improve their time management skills. One woman

commented, "Before I was involved in CBT I had lower self-confidence, now I can do anything and go anywhere. I even go to other communities to speak about CBT."

They also feel empowered with the knowledge of conservation techniques. One woman commented, "I didn't fully understand the value of our mangrove forest before I got involved in the project". Men expressed interest in expanding their knowledge further in conservation practices. Homestay hosts mentioned that they were given advice on how they could make their homes cleaner and more inviting for guests. This raised their awareness on the importance of waste management. People throw less garbage on the ground and in the canal. Many community members commented that they are proud of their achievements in preserving and protecting their valuable natural resources and this has contributed to an overall feeling of pride among Leeled residents.

The only example of psychological disempowerment mentioned was that people felt their work was not yet widely respected by the community. "I think it is because people don't understand the value of environmental conservation or maybe they don't care," said a female CBT member. However, attitudes of community members outside the project are slowly changing as more people are beginning to see the tangible improvements and benefits CBT has brought to Leeled.

Social Empowerment

Social empowerment refers to social cohesion and organization brought about through the development project. Examples of social cohesion that can be attributed to the CBT project are the formation of groups and networking between groups. Social

cohesion and cooperation are strong values in Buddhist communities. Prior to the CBT project, Leeled already exhibited many examples of social cohesion, which perhaps contributed to the overall success of the CBT project. The health volunteer group, which was established long before the CBT project, consists almost entirely of women, and signifies a strong commitment of women in promoting the health of their families and communities. I found that they had also established a senior citizen group, a community aerobics class and a housewives group prior to CBT.

Despite already having a strong network of social organizations, men and women involved in CBT verified that their organization skills had further improved through participation in the project. They reported an overall increased sense of community and stronger network among participants. Since the project began, youth camps have been organized to raise environmental awareness among children. The CBT group has also forged a strong cooperative relationship with the local schools. CBT members reported that the opportunity to make new friends in their community was a great benefit of participation.

There is even a clean village competition, in which all 8 villages compete to determine who has the cleanest village. This has enhanced community cohesion. People are more concerned with making a good impression to outsiders. People commented that Leeled was becoming more well-known to outsiders and developing a positive reputation. Many people now know Leeled as a nice place to visit with friendly people.

While there are many examples of social empowerment before and after the introduction of CBT, the cohesion of the whole community could still be improved.

Currently there have been some difficulties in solving problems as a unified community in Leeled. Primarily these involve lack of cooperation from government organizations. More details on this conflict are provided in the next section on political empowerment.

Political Empowerment

During discussions men indicated that they were more interested in politics than women. I also observed that more men attend political meetings with the TAO. This is because TAO meetings consist of elected members. Consequently, men have more knowledge about political matters than do women. It is apparent that women are lacking representation in political arenas. Men commented that women must lack confidence in their ability to campaign for elections. Yet, four out of five women who were elected village representatives are also CBT members. The correlation between CBT leadership and political leadership is strong. Their commitment to the community through CBT has offered them a new way to gain prestige and recognition. Women who were CBT members and TAO members commented that CBT training helped them improve their leadership skills for entering politics. They gained better persuasion and reasoning skills. Women have been strengthened to take action in political arenas because the CBT project involves women at all levels of decision- making from implementation to monitoring and evaluation. This has been key to promoting political empowerment.

Another way of promoting women's leadership was to have strong female role models in the REST staff. I believe it was a strategic decision on the part of REST to hire

a local young woman in the community to work for them. Perhaps this was influential in encouraging more women to be involved in the project.

In less formal meetings with the village leaders, women did not appear to have any restrictions from attending meetings or making their voices heard, as women usually outnumbered men. In CBT meetings especially, the number of women compared to men is usually double. Male CBT members will occasionally send their wives to represent them at the meeting when they are unable to attend.

Overall, the women in CBT who participate actively in government are setting an example for other women to get involved in the political process. Increasing development of leadership among women in CBT should lead to increased representation of women in government positions. This development will also help secure funding for the project from the TAO, as women expressed a greater concern with investing in projects that build social capital.

A major barrier for CBT is that a conflict of interest has caused a rift in the political agendas of community members. Long-term development plans consist of each village laying out its individual plan. The problem is there is a lack of communication between the villages with no strategic plan to unite development. The community is divided in half. Many people are skeptical about community-based tourism and do not believe CBT will succeed. Therefore, they are skeptical about funding the project. They do not want CBT to take away from the funding of other projects such as infrastructure (roads). At this point, many people do not see the value in investing in cultural and environmental activities. A young man commented that, “ many people are still not

confident in expressing their opinions". Therefore, the participation process in community meetings could be improved.

Economic Empowerment

As noted previously, the economic status of women is relatively low. Currently, the highest income earning occupations are held by men. There is very little sharing of household chores or unpaid work between men and women, as women take nearly all of the responsibility for these activities. Women spend a great deal of time on household chores. There appears to be resistance to changing this tradition as young men generally do not take on responsibilities for housework. More sharing of these activities would give men and women more equal opportunities to participate in other activities.

Although this is a cultural tradition in rural areas, it does not mean that people would not be open to change. Indeed, a few men do help with housework, such as sweeping, laundry and cooking. In one such case, a woman was managing her own business while her husband shared responsibility for household chores.

Men and women also commented that men have better access to credit. This is because men have time to go to the meetings where they can learn about obtaining credit. Young women have the least options for employment in Leeled. Most young women go to Surrathani City or nearby factories to find work because most of the jobs in Leeled require too much physical labor (fishing and agriculture).

However, income generation is not the first priority of CBT for good reason. REST emphasizes and warns communities that it is difficult to rely on tourism as a main

source of income. Therefore, CBT is considered a supplementary source of income. A REST staff member pointed out, "if the tourists don't come then the people will still have a primary source of income". Rather than making their income dependent on tourists coming and vulnerable to external influences, people are strengthened in other occupation groups which are not directly related to the tourism industry. Although REST has not initiated any occupation groups yet, the worm farm was created since the introduction of CBT three years ago. The other occupation groups have both been around for 13 years or more. The worm farm is an example of a new occupation group and could be used as a model for developing other new occupation groups. Coconut worms are in high demand at the market and fulfill a niche market. More unique occupations such as this would ensure economic sustainability of CBT.

Many critics of CBT believe that CBT projects fail because they are unable to deliver significant economic benefits. Economic development has definitely been slow for Leeled's CBT project. Perhaps more emphasis on training in small business management and marketing is needed for CBT projects to be successful in terms of economic empowerment. However, it is important to keep in mind that this is the most difficult goal to achieve in CBT development and requires careful long-term planning.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on this case study, I determine that CBT is especially accessible for women's participation, and in many ways, has excellent potential for women's empowerment throughout Thailand. If a CBT project is developed in a culturally and environmentally sensitive manner, such as the one in Leeled, there will be very few negative impacts. Women have experienced increased self-esteem and status within their community. Women are more actively involved in decision-making in their community and have taken on new leadership roles. CBT is an opportunity to develop multi-dimensional empowerment at both the individual and collective levels.

However, there are things that CBT can do to expand its scope and generate more positive impacts. The following recommendations are meant to encourage more gender equality and inclusive development within the community and the tourism project:

Linking Microenterprise with CBT

CBT has promoted economic empowerment through the development of occupation groups. Many women commented that they would like to develop more products to sell. Of course, these new products and services would be carefully selected,

with the help of the CBT advisory board, to ensure that there is adequate demand in the marketplace. However, I was concerned with the lack of job opportunities for young women. The women who participate in the CBT club tend to be older. Younger women were rarely seen in Leeled and efforts should be made to increase involvement of young women in the CBT project. This may help to prevent urban migration of women.

Microenterprises developed through CBT may help to involve more young women in the project, while providing a sufficient income. Participation of younger generations would strengthen their commitment to the project and possibly generate some new ideas for future occupation groups. Additionally, in creating future occupation groups, women should expand beyond activities that are traditionally women's work. The tendency is for women's involvement to be centered around cooking and other domestic tasks. Women should start a co-operative to develop green products, and learn the necessary management and marketing skills.

REST is already working to assist in the design and development of green products. Green products refer to products made from all natural materials. Since CBT promotes environmental preservation, new occupation groups that will be included as part of the CBT tour should be based on principles of environmental sustainability. Ideas have already been proposed to develop products made from clam shells and desserts made from bananas, which are all abundant local resources. One local school has been involved in making very attractive paper products for gifts. The school has gained national recognition for the outstanding quality of their work. However, the paper making process involves chemicals such as caustic soda which are harmful to people and

the environment. REST is working with the community to find new ways to make paper from all natural materials. Other communities involved in CBT have created jewelry from coconut shells and batik clothing. Micro-credit programs should be linked to community-based tourism initiatives in order to fund the development of new products. Women would benefit from training in how to obtain these microcredit loans as well as grant writing to secure small grants for investing in new occupations. Women-focused training and workshops on receiving micro-credit loans and small business management could help women to build more self-confidence in managing their own small businesses. Workshops should be scheduled during a time and at a location that is convenient for women to attend.

Increasing Women's Leadership

More of the homestay CBT members should be taking leadership roles and responsibilities. While the Leeled CBT project exemplifies excellent leadership among several women, there are still plenty of underutilized skills among other women in the community. Perhaps a meeting to discuss what skills women have to offer and what skills they would like to develop would encourage more participation. For example, more women could be trained as tour guides.

More women should campaign for office in local government. This would likely influence better cooperation and secure more funding for the project. The CBT advisory board could also recruit more women as representatives to achieve a gender balance. A

female role model in this position may help set an example for other women in the community to take on leadership roles.

Networking Within the Community

To find solutions to community conflicts, the CBT advisory board is in a crucial position to facilitate cooperation and networking between groups. The CBT advisory board could play a more pivotal role in bringing various community groups together to collectively solve conflicts. New strategies for public relations could be devised. Villagers farther away from the project reported that lack of information about CBT prevented them from getting involved in activities. New CBT endeavors might seek to mitigate these feelings of isolation by including more diverse locations as site visits within the CBT tour.

Networking Outside the Community

In addition to improving techniques for raising community awareness, women should also attempt to increase awareness among people outside the community (nationally and internationally). When traveling in other parts of Thailand it was apparent that Leeled was generally not well known by people in other provinces. Improving computer and internet access within the community is one way to facilitate networking and share information and ideas with groups outside their community. Tapping into resources at local schools, which already have a few computers, students and teachers could be recruited to maintain an educational website about the CBT project

in Leeled. In addition, women should attempt to build their technological skills and learn to use the internet as a networking tool. One way they could increase visitors and awareness of their tourism project is by improving the CBT website's link popularity to other web sites. Although gaining computer skills would be very valuable for women, it is particularly challenging to learn for those who cannot read English, as most computer language is based on English terms. To start, those women who already have some English language skills might take a computer class in the city.

Integrating Gender Analysis in CBT Projects

REST's approach to tourism is holistic and the Leeled CBT project provided an excellent example of women's involvement. I think that REST realizes the importance of women's contribution to CBT, but CBT lacked specific guidelines for inclusion of women and, more importantly, for raising awareness among men and women about gendered power relations. Developing standards to achieve these goals would be beneficial in implementing CBT in any community. Suggestions for developing a standard include the use of a gender checklist, requiring a certain percentage of project stakeholders to be women and facilitating workshops on gender and tourism. These gender-sensitivity trainings should promote dialogue between men and women about existing power relations. Specifically, these workshops should use participatory tools to explore the differing roles, responsibilities and expectations of men and women in the community. These roles, responsibilities and expectations include paid, unpaid and community work. Discussion of these roles often helps men and women to realize the

value of women's work, their contributions to the community and the barriers women face. It is only through gender-sensitive practices that community-based tourism can provide equal benefits for men and women and not perpetuate inequality. Therefore, fully integrated gender analysis should be a part of community-based tourism projects.

Future Research and Conclusions

For future research, comparative analysis of several CBT projects would help to further illuminate the effects and results that can be directly attributed to CBT, rather than other variables. I presume that women's high participation and domination of the CBT project in Leeled was somewhat unusual. In comparison to other CBT projects it would be interesting to note what circumstances or factors may have contributed to this high level of participation. A follow-up study would also be beneficial in tracking long-term sustainability of the project. CBT development must occur in gradual stages. It wasn't until the third year of implementing the project that they began to focus on microenterprise development. Therefore, I believe it is too early to assess the economic impact of CBT. In doing a follow-up study, I would be particularly interested in looking at CBT's influence on economic development.

Despite a few obstacles, the Leeled community already has a strong group of men and women prepared to lead the way toward empowerment and long-term success. As long as the power continues to be shared and spread equally throughout the community and between men and women this will lead to an improved social order. Community-based tourism must be carefully developed and monitored, and, in turn, it can promote

cultural pride and environmental conservation. As mentioned previously, sustaining culture and environmental resources are necessary for tourism to continue.

As tourism spreads throughout less developed countries, this will inevitably bring many changes for the lives of women. REST hopes to change the way people think about tourism by promoting tourism as a tool for sustainable community development and cross-cultural understanding. Although there are certain aspects of this case study that may not be generalizable to all CBT projects, there are some elements that can be usefully applied. Best practices from Leeled's CBT project provide a model for CBT projects throughout Thailand and other countries as well. To maintain and improve community cohesion, Leeled's CBT project exemplified that it was beneficial to distribute donations through a community fund, share profits evenly among all stakeholders and promote cultural activities that bring together younger and older generations. To promote the empowerment of women, as Leeled's CBT project has done successfully, CBT projects need to include women at all levels of decision making in CBT development, link CBT with the activities of existing women's groups in the community and find women who are willing to take on key leadership positions. Overall, the key to empowerment through tourism lies in local ownership by the community and the full integration of women (and other marginalized groups). As the international community of governments, NGOs, and academics learn important lessons from CBT, we find that in many ways tourism can be successfully employed as a means toward local empowerment, sustainable development and fostering relationships of peace and respect between cultures.

APPENDIX

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CBT	Community Based Tourism
CBMT	Community-Based Mountain Tourism
CHARM	Coastal Habitat and Resource Management project
GAD	Gender and Development
Gamnan	Community Leader
Gapi	Shrimp Paste
ILO	International Labor Organization
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
Nipa Palm	A species of palm tree found in Leeled's mangrove forest
Oboto	Local Government office
OTOP	One Tambon, One Product
Poo Yai Baan	Village Leader
PPT	Pro-poor Tourism
REST	Responsible Ecological Social Tours project
TAO	Tambon Administration Organization
Tambon	Subdistrict
TAT	Tourism Authority of Thailand
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization
WID	Women in Development

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