



University Engagement for Community-based Tourism Development: Case of Hmong Community at Mon Ngor Village, Chiang Mai

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Abstract: Mon Ngor village is a community within the responsibility of the Mon Ngor Royal Project Center in Mae Taeng District, Chiangmai Province. The area became well-known because it has a unique natural landscape, including the Mon Ngor mountain peak at Mon Ngor Village, which is one of the top panoramic sightseeing spots in the nation. Due to its unique mountainous landscape and the success of the Royal Project Center's agricultural development, tourists started to visit the area, with resorts and humble homestays burgeoning in the nearby villages. However, the village and its vicinity are still short of proper management and infrastructure for tourism development in a more sustainable approach although they possess significant cultural heritage—both intangible and tangible. Local community members rarely participate in the business that spearheads the direction of tourism development even though the collaborative team of the Royal Project Foundation, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi and Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna had presented a series of landscape development schemes to them. Therefore, the project was initiated to understand the social contexts of Mon Ngor Villagers and provide support to them with proper expertise to participate in tourism business with sustainable direction. As the field research reveals, communities in the region are facing complex challenges to establish tourism businesses. Most of the villagers are aging farmers who have worked with the Royal Project Foundation for over 40 years, while the younger generations have left to study in towns and rarely return. Moreover, given the Royal Project's focus on single cash crop farming, villagers participating in the project became dependent on the market economy and abandoned their traditional subsistence agricultural practices. This research project in Mon Ngor Village aims

to discuss the dilemma of modern agricultural development and how the community-based tourism approach could be one of the solutions for the community to sustain its unique way of life. Moreover, it will also illustrate how academic institutions can provide knowledge for local villagers to initiate their business in the direction of community-based tourism that can be developed as part-time vocations along with advanced cultivation to support sustainable livelihoods and stimulate local economic activities in this region.

Keywords: community-based tourism, sustainable tourism, community livelihood

Introduction

Since the 1970s, tourism has been a major source of revenue for Thailand (Peleggi 1996, p. 62), and has had significant impacts on local communities and the environment. After two decades of Bangkok-centered tourism in the 1970-80s, in the 1990s, Thailand's Tourism Authority began to promote the country's cultural and natural diversity as main themes, thus exposing more local villages and rural towns to tourism. As a result, local communities in major destinations across the country have experienced socio-cultural and economic changes and environmental degradation from largely unplanned tourism development. Thailand is not alone in this pattern of tourism development. As Reid (2003, p.134) has argued, conventional approaches to tourism found throughout the world have mostly disregarded communities as key stakeholders, allowing the state and businesses to invest and provide services to visitors, while local communities either adapted or relocated to other regions. In many cases, the indigenous ways of life and local livelihoods disappeared, replaced by new businesses operated by outside investors who usually had little understanding of local communities and their culture (Rasmi 2006).

As new and more pristine tourism destinations in neighboring countries such as Laos, Myanmar and Vietnam have emerged to compete with Thailand in recent decades, Thailand's Tourism Authority has recognized the need to reconsider its strategy to maintain the unique cultural identity of localities while developing services for tourists. Towards this aim, beginning in 2012, community-based approaches were incorporated into Thailand's tourism management strategy as a vital part of tourism development, as seen in both the Tourism Strategy Plan for 2012-2017 and the 11th National Economic

and Social Development Plan (Department of Tourism 2015, p.14-15,23). The Ministry of Tourism and Sports Strategy for 2012-2016 also emphasizes supporting community participation, providing community opportunities to manage tourism and funding community-based tourism (Ministry of Tourism and Planning 2012, p.18, p. 57). These plans acknowledge that community-based tourism is a more sustainable approach for development, insofar as it promotes inclusion of local communities in all stages of management and planning. Whereas traditional tourism planning is a top-down approach relying heavily on the intervention of state agencies to bring support and expertise and is short of community involvement (Reid 2003; Ryan 2002; Hall 2000; Joppe 1996; Murphy 1985), community-based tourism aims to mobilize the collective knowledge of communities through 'social learning' (Reid 2003, p. 127-138), in order to fully involve local residents who have to live with the consequences of tourism development.

In the Thai context, Photchana Suansri (2003, p.12) also argues that community-based tourism should support the following aims: (1) community ownership, (2) community involvement in planning, (3) pride of community, (4) improvement of quality of life, (5) sustainable environment, (6) preservation of local uniqueness and culture, (7) sharing lessons among people from different cultural backgrounds, (8) respect of cultural difference and human dignity, (9) fair share of income to local people, and (10) income distribution for the public benefit of communities.

The approach of community-based tourism can be understood as a bottom-up approach to tourism planning and development that integrates local members in the planning process (Koster 2007). According to Reid's community-based tourism planning model (2003), community-based tourism planning requires a catalyst to initiate the planning process and outside experts to facilitate community involvement to create an action group for raising interest in products from tourism planning and generating the community's interest. In the final stage of planning, community awareness for tourism development needs to be raised and the community must decide on the actions to take and future of tourism developments. The implementation of this stage demands great skill for group facilitation and requires time and energy in organizing the community to take charge of the process (Reid 2003, p. 133).

Jamal and Getz (1995) suggested that collaboration for community-based tourism planning is a process of joint decision-making among independent

stakeholders in an inter-organizational community tourism area to resolve planning problems or to manage issues related to the planning and development of the tourist destination. Collaboration can be used effectively to resolve conflict or advance shared visions, where stakeholders recognize the potential advantages of working together (Gray 1989). Community-based tourism thus relies on the process of participation, cooperation and collaboration among autonomous stakeholders, including community members, public agencies, and private businesses. The success of community-based implementation depends upon mediating the different perspectives and distribution of benefits among stakeholders. Some stakeholders might compete for the limited resources and generate conflicts among the groups. Difficulties in accomplishing a collaborative solution are related to the different value orientation and legitimacy of the stakeholders (Brown 1991; Gray 1989). Gray (1985) recommended the use of a mediator to resolve disputes over legitimacy, and a convener to guide procedures. However, Tjosvold (1996) and Hardy and Phillips (1998) suggest that conflict enables an honest exchange of needs and interests among the stakeholders. Conflict resolution specialists who can coordinate efforts are important to set common goals, increasing the benefits for all (Timothy 1999; Tjosvold, 1996). In addition, there are two types of conflict: constructive and destructive. Constructive conflict should be pursued to improve relationships (Jamal and Getz 1999).

This research study is based on a higher educational institution's involvement in community-based tourism in a Hmong hill tribe village at Mon Ngor Peak, Chiang Mai. Drawing on the studies above, the research examines the role that educational institutions can play as catalysts and facilitators to support community-based tourism. The study found that educational partners can play a vital role in supporting community-based tourism by conducting research that not only provides technical assistance to solve the immediate problems of the local community but also engaging with them to understand their social context, interest, conflict and perspectives with other stakeholders. The research study also found that, by engaging with the community, the research team can also locate knowledge and expertise pertinently and, in some cases, reduce conflicts and tensions between the community and other agencies which could lead to long-term problems.

Hmong and most tribal groups in the region of Northern Thailand have been through a series of state interventions. Tribal minorities wandered in the forest back and forth across state borders practicing swidden agriculture (Kunstadter and Chapman, 1978). Moreover, Hmong, Lisu and Mien also conducted opium cultivation (Geddes 1970; Tapp 1986, p.19-28) Due to the problems with the Communist insurgency and opium cultivation, from the 1960s to the 1980s, highland communities in the north, especially Hmong ethnic groups, went through several interventions by Thai state authorities to change their agricultural practices (Walker 1992). The Thai state's attempt to settle hill tribe villages also infused villagers' lives with Thai language, culture, Buddhism and veneration of the monarchy (Reynolds 1991). However, the Hmong have a long history of connection with lowland populations while continuing to conserve their distinct way of life (Cohen 2000, p. 29). Tourism is an additional factor of change in many highland villages and could potentially introduce social changes that will further integrate them into the national market (Michaud 1995, 1997).

The Royal Project Foundation was initiated by the previous monarch to improve the living conditions of local hill tribe minorities and coordinate with fragmented local state agencies. The foundation is not part of the state bureaucracy, but is rather an integral part of the network of royal projects that, through their coordinating role with various government agencies, academic institutions, businesses, local farmers and media over five decades, became influential in leading the government's development policies (Chanida 2007, p. 471-491). The foundation itself became an authoritative figure with higher legitimacy than state agencies in the world of local minorities.

Drawing on lessons from the case study of the Hmong Village at Mon Ngor Peak, this research attempts to provide guidelines for how higher education institutions can play the role of facilitator and mediator to improve the livelihoods of local communities through community-based tourism development. How can an academic institution provide technical assistance for collaboration with all stakeholders who have different perspectives, expectations and benefits from tourism development in complex social and historical contexts? How can local, regional state agencies, non-government organizations, and community members build trust and collaborate to create a tourism development plan suitable for Mon Ngor and its neighboring villages?

Mon Ngor Case Study and Methodology

This research offers a case study of tourism development in Mon Ngor village, which employed a community-based tourism approach. Mon Ngor is a Hmong community within the Mon Ngor Royal Project Center in Mae Taeng District, Chiang Mai Province. Mon Ngor village was identified for tourism development because it possesses the unique natural landscape of the Mon Ngor mountain peak, which is one of the top panoramic sightseeing spots in Chiang Mai. With the distance of less than two hours from Chiang Mai on the route to Pai, Mae Hong Son, Mon Ngor has high potential to be the new tourist destination. Due to its unique mountainous landscape and the success of the Royal Project Center's agricultural development, tourists started to flow into the area for camping and sightseeing. In 2008, the initiative for developing the area was spearheaded by the center of the Royal Project Foundation at Mon Ngor and the Highland Research and Development Institute (HRDI) to persuade local villagers to form a task force to manage tourists at the mountain peak. Soon afterwards, outside investors started to build resorts and accommodation in the surrounding area, while the village and its vicinity were still short of proper management and infrastructure for tourism development.

Subsequently, a collaborative team comprised of King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT) and Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna (RMUTL) were asked to provide expertise for the physical improvement of Mon Ngor Peak. Since 2015, the team from RMUTL-KMUTT Collaborative Center for Royal Project Foundation have presented a series of landscape developments and improvements of public facilities to village headmen and local state authorities at the meetings organized by the Mon Ngor Royal Project Development Center. However, these physical improvement plans have received a limited response from villagers of Mon Ngor and the local municipality. This situation reflected the problems associated with the top-down tourism management pattern described by Reid above, inasmuch as the proposed changes were driven by government agencies and experts, without adequate input from local residents who would have to live with the consequences of tourism development.

Although the Royal Project Foundation is not a state agency, it is an institution founded by the late king aiming to improve the lives of hill tribe citizens. From 1958 the royal-initiated projects became a part of the state's development movement but independent from government control (Chanida 2007, p. 477). A total of 38 centers of the Royal Project Foundation are predominantly established in the national forest reserves surrounded by indigenous hill tribe villages. The centers of the Royal Project Foundation are also responsible for coordinating all state agencies to provide facilities within the areas under its responsibility, thus their relationship to communities is not different from state agencies. The centers support local communities in the mountainous areas to promote agricultural development through a contract farming system. Therefore, it is the main employer of the area and its influence on local villages is significant.

King Mongkut's University of Technology (KMUTT) has a longstanding history of providing technical knowledge assistance for the Royal Project Foundation, starting with the operation of the first royal factory in Fang District of Chiang Mai in 1982. At the beginning of the 1990s, KMUTT expanded to provide assistance for agricultural systems in the highland area and started collaborating with Rajamangala University of Technology Lanna (RMUTT). The RMUTT-KMUTT team has been working with the 38 centers of the Royal Project Foundation, mainly in providing technical support and improving the efficiency of agricultural production. In addition to the collaboration with royal projects, KMUTT also started working with other non-governmental organizations and state agencies to assist highland communities. From 1997 to 2007, KMUTT and RMUTT began to assist communities in northern Thailand through the Royal Project Centers with a framework of 'social enterprise', wherein the universities provided technical experts, academic staff and alumni to the areas. Universities, in return, offered students new experiences and hands-on problem-solving with real users, in classes structured as 'social labs'. In the case of tourism planning for Mon Ngor, the framework of social enterprise for supporting communities proved to be too rigid, since the Mon Ngor Royal Project Development Center and HRDI lacked staff with the experience and capacity to engage with villagers beyond providing technical support for agriculture. The staff member who worked in communities around the Mon Ngor Royal Project Center was in fact an agricultural specialist in developing tea products but after the center reduced support for cultivating tea and coffee beans, he informally became a community liaison officer but

still worked on various agricultural projects in the area. The Highland Research and Development Institution (HRDI) was also short of staff. It had only about 22 staff including 3 administrators working for communities around 38 Royal Project Development Centers for tourism and cultural issues. This means that every staff member would take care of communities of two or three Royal Project Development Centers. Thus, in 2014, a new framework for 'social engagement' was introduced, encouraging KMUTT and RMUTL to exchange knowledge with local residents, understand the local situation, by collaborating closely with the community and jointly formulate management plans with the Royal Project Development Center and other state authorities.

This research project was initiated by the RMUTL-KMUTT team to better understand the social contexts of Mon Ngor villagers, including the network of local authorities, to assist communities to participate in tourism development through the process of social engagement. The process of social engagement undertaken with communities can be divided into 12 stages. First, field research was conducted to gather background data on the community, such as the local history, social structure, culture, politics, and economic situation of the population. Second, village data were analyzed to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the community, as well as to identify change agent(s) to spearhead the development. Third, a community-wide meeting was organized to foster dialog and understanding of the research and to collaboratively develop a project framework and timeline of tasks. In the fourth stage, the team worked to establish alliances bringing together state agencies and local businesses within the community who share a similar goal of sustainable development. Fifth, workshop activities were organized for strengthening the capacity of villagers. Sixth, capacity-building activities focused on strengthening the skills and expertise of local leaders and change agent(s). Seventh, knowledge-exchange activities were conducted between groups of experts and leaders in specific fields. Eighth, the network was expanded further to other state agencies and businesses in the region that could collaborate in tourism activities. Ninth, a specific working group was created within the community. Tenth, the community was provided with appropriate technology to improve the capacity of the project. In the eleventh stage, the team measured the results of the project development with local community members and analyzed the key successes of the

project as a reference for the future. The final stage focused on returning knowledge to the community using media technology as a tool to transfer knowledge. These social engagement processes provided an opportunity for collaborative social learning and social mobilization in focusing on the community as a center of development. A summary of findings from this process is described in the following sections.

Social Engagement for tourism development of Mon Ngor Community

Fieldwork in Mon Ngor Village

From the fieldwork interviews, it was found that families from the Thao lineage of ethnic Hmong migrated to present-day Chiang Mai from Sibsong Panna in Southern China in 1936 to find new land for opium cultivation and found that the Mon Ngor mountainous area was a suitable location because of its abundant water resources. More Hmong families soon followed and finally established the village in 1939. Living in isolation, upland rice and vegetables were grown and livestock were kept for household consumption, while opium was the major revenue for Mon Ngor villagers. In 1966, government agencies stepped in to abolish opium and introduce cash crop agriculture, but poor road conditions led to the failure of this effort. Buddhism entered the area in 1969, and a temple was built in 1985. Between 1972 and 1981, major public facilities, including a road, electricity, school and waterworks were established. The Royal Project Foundation established its center at Mon Ngor in 1985 to support villagers in growing foreign fruits and produce such as Chinese plums, Chinese pears, peaches, Japanese pumpkin, passion fruit, Arabica coffee, and other similar market crops. Then in 2008, the center of the Royal Project Foundation launched the tourism planning for the village, and the RMUTL-KMUTT Collaborative Center began to assist the center of the Royal Project for technical support. The team of KMUTT architectural students helped to develop the master plan for a camping ground, five resort bungalow units and a restaurant in the office area of the center of the Royal Project Foundation in 2009. Moreover, solar cell, wind turbine, electric power and other facilities were installed at the mountain peak in 2012 by the RMUTL-KMUTT Collaborative Center.

As a consequence of living in isolation in mountainous terrain, the Mon Ngor community maintained their unique cultural heritage—both intangible

and tangible— that is rooted in their Hmong ethnic identity, such as in traditional culinary arts, medicine, music, dance, crafts and village rituals. For instance, the Hmong have traditionally raised a local breed of black chicken cooked with local herbs as traditional cuisine. Eighteen species of local herbs also were used with rituals for curing sickness. The Hmong belief system is rooted in worshipping spirits of place and ancestral spirits determined their daily lives, rituals and festivities. Doors, herbs, forest and trees have spirits and must be respected. Rituals related to the spirits are practiced throughout the year and for auspicious occasions, from celebrating the birth of newborn babies, weddings, curing rites, and funerals to celebrations of the new year and harvest. Moreover, in the past, the villagers skillfully wove bamboo for utensils, tools and musical instruments.

However, with better access to public health, modern products and the market, the Hmong of Mon Ngor have gradually abandoned their subsistence agriculture, as well as traditional culinary practices, herbal medicine and rituals. Traditional products made of bamboo also disappeared and were replaced by cheaper plastic baskets and tools. Local groceries bring more canned food and ingredients from outside. Moreover, the establishment of the Buddhist temple and public schools led to a reduction of practices related to worshipping spirits among the new generation of Hmong. With the increase of tourists in the area, the unique culinary practices were more in demand from visitors, but villagers lacked confidence to cook traditional food again as they had not cooked special dishes for years. Tourists also expressed an interest in learning about the cultural practices of the Hmong, many of which had already faded or been abandoned.

Given the Royal Project's focus on single cash crop farming, villagers participating in the project became dependent on the market economy while traditional subsistence farming of upland rice, corn, and livestock were abandoned. Within the boundary of Mae Taeng National Forest, Royal Project agricultural land is limited, thus farmers are in high competition for efficient cultivation. Contract farming work with the Royal Project Center consumes most of the farmers' daily life, and thus they are unable to grow food for their own consumption. Only 10 out of 60 households cultivate their own upland rice. Villagers now are dependent on the market in town for their daily supply of food. Moreover, unstable demand and supply of agricultural produce in the market economy system occasionally caused

tension between farmers and the Royal Project Center. As for the Mon Ngor case, one of the major clients cancelled their order of Japanese pumpkin, creating a burden on the Royal Project Center and the delay of buying produce from villagers.

As of today, the total population of Mon Ngor is 432 people within 60 households. Half of the population is older than 40 years and more than a quarter is over 50 years-old. Only a quarter of the population is of working age, between 20-40 years-old. Most farmers are aging villagers who have worked with the Royal Project Foundation for over 30 years and their physical strength has gradually reduced. With the improvement of living conditions, the farmers of Mon Ngor can afford to send most of the young generation to study, who later wish to work in town but rarely return to work in the village. Therefore, the villagers expressed reluctance to participate in tourism activities since their time was barely adequate to work on their cash crops and they had no assistance from the younger generation. Moreover, they were doubtful that if they invested in the physical improvement of the camping area and provided more services, income earned from tourism activities would be enough to cover the lost opportunity of cash crop cultivation.

While Mon Ngor people were reluctant to participate in tourism development, investors from Chiang Mai and Bangkok were not. Between 2009 and 2015, four well-designed resorts and an upscale café were built and opened to serve both Thai and foreign visitors in the vicinity of Mon Ngor Peak. These resorts required a steady supply of food and services. However, lacking community support to supply local products, they brought most of their supply from the markets in town, and thus income from the budding tourism industry was not shared with local people. To counter this trend, communities initiated some services to share the revenue from tourists. With support from the Royal Project Center and the Highland Research and Development Institute (HRDI), a group of local homestays was established by the communities at Baan Lao and Baan Mueang Kai villages, and later received best practice awards from the Tourism Authority of Thailand. Mon Ngor Tourism commission also managed facilities for tourists at the Mon Ngor Peak. They collected an entrance fee for 20 baht, provided a security guard at night and rented tents to visitors for 150 baht, but still lacked public facilities and clear guidelines of service. For instance, at the height of 1320 meter, the peak is one of the best panoramic view spot

in Chiang Mai but the area of camping can accommodate not more than 50 tents and the sightseeing spot on the cliff is dangerous. There were no security measures for a walking trail from the camping to sightseeing spot and the public restroom was dilapidated without a stable water supply system. The villagers needed to bring water from the village to fill the tank. Mon Ngor villagers also participated in a group to provide transportation for visitors with cost around 700-2,000 baht depending on the negotiated price.

Mon Ngor analysis (SWOT)

A strength of the Hmong community of Mon Ngor is the natural environment with a panoramic view of Chiang Mai. The village also generates good agricultural products. Moreover, another strength of the Mon Ngor village is the unique cultural heritage of the ethnic Hmong. One weakness of the community is a consequence of agricultural development, in that it requires full-time attention from local farmers, making them dependent on the market economy. Abandonment of traditional subsistence agriculture also made local culinary practices disappear from their daily lives thus they were not confident to serve visitors. A major threat for Mon Ngor is the shortage of working-age population, since most young people have left the village. New tourism business development from outside investors could also overrun the Mon Ngor community. However, Mon Ngor still has an opportunity for sustainable tourism development at the mountain peak provided that the community focuses on agro-tourism and healthy food services. If sustainable community-based tourism planning becomes successful, it could be the solution to persuade younger generations back to the village. The revenue from the tourism business also helps support villagers and reduces pressure of the center of Royal Project Foundation when the demand for the main agricultural produce decreases in the market.

University engaging the community

The information from in-depth interviews in the village was reported to local agencies at the general meeting held by the Mon Ngor Royal Project Development Center and Mon Ngor village tourism commission. The commission was formed in 2008 with the assistance of staff from Mon Ngor Royal Project Center and the Highland Research and Development Institute to manage the site of Mon Ngor Peak and provide facilities and activities for

visitors. The former village headman was assigned to run the committee with six other members in the community but has now retired from office.

The field research also found several conflicts and tensions among community, local state agencies and non-governmental organizations that could inhibit tourism development. For instance, while HRDI and Mon Ngor Royal Project Development Center initiated tourism development at the local level, the headquarters of the Royal Project Foundation was concerned that producing goods and services for tourists could lower the output of agricultural products if farmers chose to abandon agricultural production in favor of tourism. On the other hand, some villagers also articulated tensions with the Mon Ngor Royal Project Center due to the delayed purchase of agricultural produce that the center introduced. Unreliable demand and supply in the national market economy also frustrated the relationship. The price of produce was high in the early years after introducing new market segments, but after villagers under the center became successful and other farmers could produce more to compete, the price dropped creating significant skepticism for the next development project.

In this case of conflict, the research team also acted as a facilitator to reduce the tension. The RMUTL-KMUTT team provided calculations proving that the amount of produce proposed for tourism services was insignificant compared to the annual products Mon Ngor delivered. On the other hand, producing goods for tourists could be a means to demonstrate the quality of the Royal Project's products. In addition, the seasonal income from services and products to tourists could diversify the sources of revenue, thus providing better financial security to farmers. After the field research was presented and conflicts were discussed in several meetings, all stakeholders agreed that the work on tourism development at Mon Ngor should sharpen its focus on community members and support those who are willing to instigate more participation in tourism activities.

The first change agent identified by the project was Mr. Hue Sengla. He is the former headman or 'Por Luang' of Mon Ngor who has worked tirelessly with tourists and the Royal Project Center with positive influence. It was found that Mr. Hue or Por Luang Hue was the only farmer in the village who still grows coffee and supplies coffee beans to the Royal Project, but who lacks equipment to process the final product of fresh brewed coffee. He

was frequently asked by tourists about the availability of local food and drink at the camping area, but no villagers wanted to provide food since most of them were preoccupied with farming work. Providing fresh brewed coffee at the mountain peak thus became the first initiative project. The team from RMUTL-KMUTT invented a simple coffee roasting tool using materials in the area and loaned an espresso maker for opening a café on the mountain peak. Most of the tourists who camped at the peak bought brewed coffee, thus the revenue increased from selling fresh coffee beans at 120 baht/kilogram to 4-5,000 baht/kilogram. The first season of the café's operation generated an income of more than 15,000 baht and the second year saw revenue jump to 40,000 baht. The coffee maker also created jobs for other related local products such as bamboo cups for coffee. It also became a stimulator to other villagers to provide traditional food and products.

The second change agent was a grocery storeowner named Mae Yua. She was the only woman in the village who participated in the tourism commission and the only vendor selling instant food and local products at the peak. She and a group of village housewives also prepared local food for Mon Ngor meetings when staff from the Royal Project's center and other state agencies visited. Finally, Mae Yua and the group of Mon Ngor young housewives requested the training for standard food preparation and sanitary practices, paving the way to revive traditional culinary traditions. Twelve of them participated in the training provided by a RMUTL-KMUTT team, with an expert team from the National Science and Technology Development Agency (NSTDA), and two are ready to offer food in the high season of 2016-2017. A group of older housewives also worked with RMUTL-KMUTT researcher to develop traditional charms as souvenirs for visitors. The Na-Sua amulet was traditionally a herbal medicine for curing symptoms of cold and congestion, wrapped with the Hmong's unique fabric. The charm was traditional for greeting a newborn baby to have a strong life but was now offered for sale to tourists who rented tents and paid the entrance fee to enter Mon Ngor Peak.

The third change agent was a young housewife who works at the tea plantation of her uncle-in-law, called Dech or 'Loong Dech' in Thai. The tea plantation in the village nearby of Mueang Kai was one of the first to grow a local tea called 'Miang' which was traditionally consumed by chewing. With the assistance of the Royal Project Foundation, Uncle Dech began to

grow Oolong tea and became famous for supplying it to RPF. People began to know the place as Loong Dech's tea plantation. Visitors who came to test the tea also asked for dessert and food. His niece in-law, Ms. Jaem, came to help, providing local food for tourists who visited the tea plantation. She began to develop local dishes from products in the area such as tea-leaves, pumpkins and coffee beans. Jaem and Loong Dech discussed the initiative with staff from the Royal Project and RMUTL-KMUTT Collaborative Center. Three workshops and tours were organized to bring experts in food manufacturing and from the College of Agricultural Technology, RMUTL Lampang campus to the area. The experts ran training for the community on how to turn an oversupply of agricultural products into food products by using simple utensils and low energy.

A series of workshops were organized all year long by RMUTL-KMUTT Collaborative Center team to provide technical skills to villagers as they expressed their ideas to RMUTL-KMUTT staff. Faculties of various disciplines of RMUTL and KMUTT were encouraged to provide expertise to the area. This series of workshop created part-time employment and supplementary income for young villagers and housewives. Oversupply of fresh products such as soybean, pumpkins, coffee and others was transformed into new products that can serve tourists at major tourist destinations in the region. Soymilk, stuffed buns, fried dough, cookies and bread can now be produced by the groups of young housewives in the neighboring villages around Mon Ngor. More change agents in the younger generation emerged from the workshop and grouped together with friends in the neighboring villages to initiate food businesses and find local markets. Now, pumpkin cookies and other snacks baked by the group serve not only tourists but local municipalities as well. This generated more jobs in the region and stimulated the local economy. Locally made food also helps reduce the flow of instant products to the area and consequently are lowering the amount of waste from tourists since most of the tourists brought instant food and drinks themselves. The workshops also indirectly stimulated the Mon Ngor community to rethink how they could offer more variety of food and services to tourists.

Student fieldtrips from faculties of KMUTT and RMUTL were conducted to bring students and lecturers to visit Mon Ngor and neighboring villages to learn about the problems that change agents were struggling with and to brainstorm about different solutions and planning strategies. Some research

projects were established following the visits to support proper technology for local communities and businesses. The trips from academic groups were also an assessment for testing the community's capacity to accommodate tourists. Moreover, students and faculties exchanged new ideas with local folks and created a continuity of activities with the villagers, therefore giving the community more confidence and strength to participate in tourism activities.

For instance, a team of students from the Institute of Field Robotics, KMUTT, visited and created detailed aerial photos and 3-D images of the Mon Ngor Peak area by flying drone airplanes. A team of students of the Geography Department of Chiang Mai University surveyed tourist destinations and created a more accurate topography map of the Mon Ngor Peak area. Industrial Design students interning with KMUTT developed a map for sightseeing spots providing details of distance and elevation and a security map of the Mon Ngor Peak area. Therefore, the transportation group had a reference that members can charge tourists for a reasonable travel fee. Moreover, the first change agent, Por Luang Hue, and Mon Ngor Tourism Commission discussed and produced the plan for improving public facilities and security. More students from the Industrial Design Program of KMUTT and RMUTL helped to develop bamboo products for the tourist market.

The team of 15 furniture design students and faculty of RMUTL collaborated with villagers to build a wood terrace and bamboo fence along the walkway on the cliff from the camping ground to the panoramic view sightseeing spot. More faculty members of economics and management spent time in the field to help the community develop a market strategy for local products and a tourism business plan. The field trip thus supported change agents for developing their skill by exchanging ideas with lecturers and stimulated other villagers by hiring them for cooking food and preparing accommodation for students during the program.

The Mon Ngor village and panoramic sightseeing spot has now gained more attention and potential sources of funding from higher government agencies and organizations at the provincial level of Chiang Mai, such as the Mae Taeng District Director Office and the Office of Community Development, Chiang Mai Province Office of Energy, Chiang Mai Province Office of Tourism and Sports, and Chiang Mai Tourism Business Association.

Internationally well-known corporations such as the SUPPORT Arts and Crafts International Centre of Thailand (Public Organization) also visited the area for potential joint development of local highland craft products. The community's next step is the challenge to conduct self-evaluation of the results of their past work, create their own maintenance system, and plan for natural environment preservation that will support the sustainable livelihood of the village.

Conclusion

The key for tourism development at Mon Ngor is the changing approach of teamwork. The team of RMUTL-KMUTT Collaborative Center changed its focus from working with the Royal Project Center as a first priority to centering in communities around Mon Ngor Peak. The top-down approach that saw a flow of experts and scholars from universities and other agencies was changed to a grassroots approach that worked in collaboration with the community. The experts were led by a RMUTL-KMUTT team to observe the values and difficulties of all ages of villagers from young generations to working populations and senior members of the community. The information from experts was discussed with state agencies and the center of the Royal Project Foundation. The working task force discussed widely and openly with villagers who were willing to experiment and implement new ideas in the community. Working at the village level also helped experts understand everyday life aspects of villagers and to appreciate the uniqueness of their cultural heritage, therefore helping them identify the right expertise they need to develop their skills, products and services. The tourism development at first was focused only on the physical development of the sightseeing spot and food products of the Royal Project Center but now highlighted the local community's ability to protect their everyday culture, maintain their ethnic pride and negotiate the external influences.

Within the two years that the RMUTL- KMUTT Collaborative Center has operated within the framework of social engagement for community-based tourism, Mon Ngor villagers and their neighbors gained more skills in developing local products and participating in tourism-related business. Moreover, villagers can manage extra revenue from the tourism business for increasing community savings funds and elderly welfare, thus fortifying community security and stability. Prior to the initiation of this project, the

community lacked confidence to participate in the new business of tourism because of insufficient knowledge and direction, but with the framework of social engagement from the RMUTL-KMUTT Collaborative Center, a partnership was built, knowledge was exchanged among stakeholders and community confidence grew. Mon Ngor villagers now can operate mechanisms for managing their tourist-related business. Social engagement in fact is similar to the process of social learning and mobilization for community-based tourism that centers on the community. A small group of community members now were empowered and enabled to decide the direction of tourism development in their area and protect their own cultural heritage. However, this is the case of tourism development, empowering a several villagers within the total population of 60 households. The village of Mon Ngor will face the national government agencies with the large funding for tourism development followed up with real estate businesses buying lucrative land. It is the challenge for the village tourism commission, change agents, Royal Project Center and the academic team of RMUTL-KMUTT to hold their partnership and strength to steer the development for the benefit of the community and environment in the future.

Notes

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