

**Baseline Study**  
**for**  
**Ecotourism Development in Mae Hong Son**

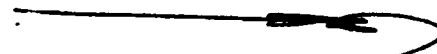
**Final Mission Report by Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I)  
for the United Nations Joint Program on Integrated Highland Livelihood  
Development in Mae Hong Son, Output 1.3, Ecotourism, June 2011**

## Foreword

The Mae Hong Son province, despite being one of the poorest regions in Thailand in terms of per capita income and other economic and social indicators, is very rich in terms of culture and physical, environmental and scenic landscapes. As such, it offers much potential for tourism and the tourism industry. However, to ensure its sustainable development and to benefit the local people, it must be based on sound information that has the support and input of the local people. It is precisely for this reason that the United Nations, under the United Nations Joint Programme on Integrated Highland Livelihood Development in Mae Hong Son (UNJP), has included the development of ecotourism as one component of its efforts and for which the joint efforts of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are working in partnership with the Provincial Office for Tourism and Sports (POTS) of the Mae Hong Son Provincial Government as well with the involvement of local stakeholders to pilot and promote ecotourism development there. The basis on which such development effort is being made is this Eco-Tourism Baseline Survey of Mae Hong Son province that was ably undertaken by the Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I) of Chiang Mai.

It is our hope that this baseline survey report will find use beyond the UNJP. The rich data and information contained herein provides valuable guidance to current and future ecotourism and tourism developments not only for Mae Hong Son but for elsewhere in Thailand.

I wish to thank Piyachat Pradubraj (UNDP), Vanessa Achilles (UNESCO), Churairat Preawprai (POTS), Potjana Suansri and Peter Richards (CBT-I) as well as Malcolm Hazelman (FAO) for their leadership in this work.



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Chairperson for the UN Task Force  
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and  
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Reporting was undertaken during May and June, 2011. The 3 person team was lead by Ms Potjana Suansri, Director of CBT-I, with Mr Peter Richards, Sustainable Tourism Marketing and Partnerships Specialist and Mr Thananchai Mungjit, Community Based Research Field Expert.

This study would not have been possible without the generous contributions of time, energy and good will made by many individuals and organisations. CBT-I would like to thank all Mae Hong Son tourism stakeholders who agreed to participate in the study, across the province

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The contents of this report, including any errors or omissions herein are the sole responsibility of CBT-I. Views expressed and conclusions reached in this report do not necessarily represent the views of the United Nations Joint Program or its partners.

CBT-I hope that this report makes a genuinely useful contribution to the development of tourism in Mae Hong Son which benefits local communities and businesses, conserves and replenishes the environment and celebrates Mae Hong Son's inspiring cultural diversity.

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## List of acronyms used in this study

### Organisations

BRT	Biodiversity Research and Training Program, Chiang Mai University
CBO	Community Based Organisation
DEQP	Department of Environmental Quality Promotion of Thailand Department for the Promotion of Exports from
CBI	Developing Countries of the Netherlands
DASTA	Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (Thailand)
ECEAT	European Center for Eco and Agro Tourism
EU	The European Union
MHS-CC	Mae Hong Son Community College
MOTS	Ministry of Tourism and Sports of Thailand
MAO	Municipal Administrative Organisation
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
PRLC	Project for the Recovery of Life and Culture (Mae Hong Son)
POTS	Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports
PAO	Provincial Administrative Organization
REST	Responsible Ecological Social Tours Project
SAO/TAO	Sub-District/Tambon Administrative Organization
CBT-I	Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute
TEATA	Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association
TEI	Thailand Environment Institute
TRF	Thailand Research Fund
TAT	Tourism Authority of Thailand
UNDP	United Nations Development Program
ESCAP	United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
FAO	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization
UNJP	United Nations Joint Program
UNWTO	United Nations World Tourism Organization

### Projects and Documents

ABC	Area-based collaborative research (Thailand Research Fund)
CSR-MAP	Corporate Social Responsibility Market Access Partnerships Project
NESDP	National Economic and Social Development Plan (for Thailand)
OTOP	One Tambon (sub-district) One Product (initiative)
SMCE	Small and Micro Community Enterprises
SWOT	Strength, Weakness, Opportunity, Threat Analysis

### Places

CNX	Chiang Mai
MHS	Mae Hong Son
MSR	Mae Sariang

## **Concepts**

<b>B2B/B2C</b>	<b>Business-to-Business/Business-to-Consumer (marketing)</b>
<b>CBT</b>	<b>Community Based Tourism</b>
<b>CBNRM</b>	<b>Community Based Natural Resource Management</b>
<b>FIT</b>	<b>Fully Independent Traveler</b>
<b>HRD</b>	<b>Human Resource Development</b>
<b>I(C)T</b>	<b>Information (and Communications) Technology</b>
<b>NRM</b>	<b>Natural Resource Management</b>
<b>SMEs</b>	<b>Small and Medium Enterprise</b>
<b>TO</b>	<b>Tour Operator</b>
<b>TG</b>	<b>Tour Guide</b>

## **Executive Summary of Priority Recommendations**

The United Nations Development Program (UNDP), United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) are participating in the ecotourism component of the UN Joint Program on Integrated Highland Livelihood Development in Mae Hong Son (UNJP). The overall Human Security Goal of this Program is to improve the quality of life and reduce poverty among vulnerable groups in underserved areas of Mae Hong Son through both protection and empowerment measures. Ecotourism and community-based tourism (CBT) have been identified as one of the potential areas to foster economic development, specifically under activity 1.3 of the program. This Baseline Study for Ecotourism Development in Mae Hong Son is a key activity to support the development of the UNJP Ecotourism strategy.

### **Outcome 1**

To enhance productivity, diversify the economic base and promote small scale business/enterprise development, thereby increasing income generation of vulnerable groups (agricultural communities in remote areas, ethnic minorities, refugees in camps and migrants) in underserved areas, through capacity building and targeted skills development.

**Output 1.3** Eco-tourism opportunities are identified and initiatives formulated with support from local authorities.

Carry out survey and assessment of development potentials.

Carry out strategic planning exercises with local authorities and communities.

Provide technical assistance, training and provision of inputs for implementation of action plans.

The tremendous growth in the tourism sector, especially ecotourism centred on visitation and enjoyment of Mae Hong Son's distinct and precious cultural and natural heritage has presented the province with a number of challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, tourism is generating significant foreign exchange earnings and fuelling local investment in tourism related services and infrastructure and creating jobs. On the other hand, partly because of the uneven capacity to plan for and manage tourism's negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts, the resources underpinning the national tourism industry are in danger of being irrevocably damaged.

The UNJP aims at strengthening the eco-tourism sector and providing opportunities in some of the targeted communities (i.e. some of the most vulnerable populations including ethnic minorities). The baseline survey will guide the program design by identifying existing activities, potential new activities, the best locations and methods to implement these activities.

The original proposal required the team to make recommendations for action focused on 1) the provincial office for tourism and sports (POTS); 2) professional and community tour guides and 3) target communities. Based on the outcomes of the baseline study, CBT-I have worked on and expanded this frame, making core recommendations for action, on 3 levels:

- 1. At Provincial level,** focus should be on systematic support for ecotourism in/from **Mae Hong Son city**. This focus is due to the capital's key importance as a strategic 'provincial ecotourism driver.' Mae Hong Son is a base for most of the province's most experienced, committed tourism stakeholders, skilled in cultural heritage, CBT and ecotourism. The capital also has exceptional cultural and natural resources in its own right. However, MHS stakeholders are experiencing tough challenges, particularly increased competition and a gradual deterioration of product quality, undermining the provinces ecotourism USPs. **Now is the time to strengthen ecotourism in and from Mae Hong Son city. If ecotourism is not strong in the capital, it will much more difficult to drive success into the local level.**

1) Ecotourism Task Force      2) Service Providers      3) CBT Community

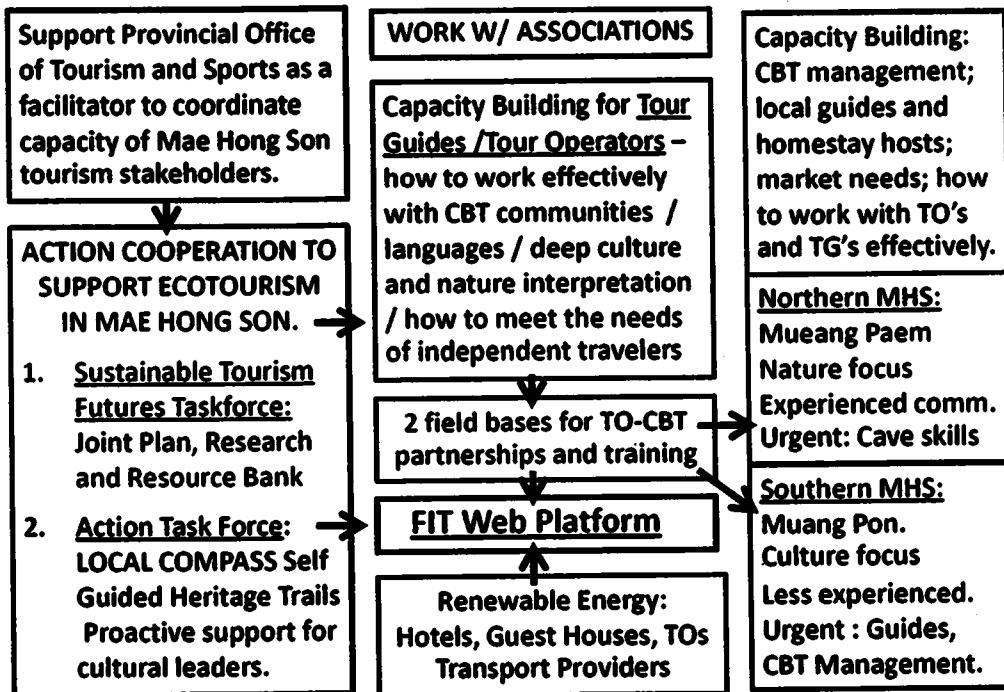


Figure 1: Showing a summary of key action recommendations

This should be achieved through 2 main strategies. Firstly, a **sustainable tourism futures taskforce** should be established, under the facilitation of the POTS. This taskforce of experienced and respected Mae Hong Son tourism veterans will have the job of leading the development of a tailored ecotourism development model for Mae Hong Son, based on broad stakeholder consultation and multi-sector, participatory planning. The taskforce will ensure that relevant tourism research is collected, disseminated and put to good use. Practitioners, including young blood, should be invited to join an **ecotourism action task force**, to build on exiting ecotourism and cultural heritage routes in Mae Hong Son, and strengthen Mae Hong Son's ecotourism and cultural community through special events.

Many stakeholders interviewed during the study shared the insight that more fully independent travellers (FIT) are visiting the province. This trend should grow, due to a lack of international flights, combined with the fact that 1) more travellers now research and book travel on-line, and 2) more travellers are driving to MHS by bus/car/motorbike (TAT). Activities need to be developed to meet the specific needs of these travellers, in particular the top end of educated FIT's who value exploration and quality experiences of nature and culture. This should be a combination of self guided city tours, excursions for self-drivers and quality ecotour programs offered by local tour operators when travellers arrive in Mae Hong Son's main hubs: Mae Hong Son, Pai and Mae Sarieng.

The task force should work on a 'Local Compass' for Mae Hong Son: self-guided, themed heritage and nature trails/maps with good quality information, allowing independent travelers to explore, appreciate the city's cultural and natural heritage, and support local community and environment friendly businesses. Local suppliers should be prioritized on these routes, and should be trained to welcome guests. Bicycle hire should be available. Simple, interactive activities for visitors should be developed. Tourists could collect stamps in a 'Local Passport', which could lead to a reward, such as a 'Green Guest' certificate. Road routes can apply the same concept to longer routes, linking destinations, based on clusters, and themes, such as 'cave exploration', 'meet the peoples', 'local food', etc.

2. **Linkages level**, actions at this level should focus on building the capacity of MHS ecotour operators and professional (licensed) tour guides. These key groups require tailored capacity building to better understand the needs of quality independent travelers (for example exploring, enjoying private time, and spontaneous interaction), and also to work (more) effectively with community CBT groups and community tour guides to deliver top quality services. Professional tour guides should receive special training to work as a team with local guides, and improve deep culture and nature interpretation, adding value for Mae Hong Son's guests, while optimizing benefits for the communities and environment.

Tour operators need training to develop 'win-win' tour programs with local communities, which make best use of the tour operator's skills and the community members' local resources, while meeting the needs of the target tourists. A later phase of training should focus on *participatory product development and formalizing roles and responsibilities of partners*. For example, developing a 'ready for market' checklist for CBT communities, and 'Responsible Partner' checklist for tour operators and guides. Formal agreements could also be reached between selected tour operators and target communities.

To improve their sustainability performance, hotels, restaurants and transport providers should receive training in how to reduce energy consumption, alternative and renewable energy, waste management and how to support community enterprises.

Due to the importance of FIT tourists and the increasing role of ICT in Mae Hong Son, a special web platform should be developed to promote MHS eco and sustainable tourism suppliers to independent travelers, including the Local Compass project. The platform should be interactive, making full use of social media channels and stimulating word of mouth recommendations. The platform could also prioritize promotion of tour operators/tour guides/communities which had successfully completed training programs.

Special events should be held regularly, opening a space for local suppliers and cultural leaders to creatively share ideas and achievements with each other and with the public.

3. **Community level**. Overall, capacity building should focus on CBT Management, building the skills of community guides and homestay hosts and working effectively with tour operators and tour guides. Communities also need assistance to differentiate between (the needs of) different potential markets, select priority markets and tailor their products.

Based on the need for field study centers, in addition to UNJP-development related criteria (poverty alleviation, vulnerability, NRM, etc.) communities should be selected partly based on their suitability as (contrasting) field centers for stakeholder training:

For this reason, the team suggest **2 top priority sites and actions** in target communities:

- 1) **Mueang Paem**, Pang Ma Pa district: this is an **experienced** community (the villagers have welcomed guests for more than 30 years), located close to Pai in **northern** Mae Hong Son. The people are ethnic **Karen**. Due to the proximity of Mueang Paem to an outstanding cave (Tun Yaow), specific capacity building related to appropriate development and guiding in caves is absolutely essential. Due to the availability of skilled resource people in Tham Lot sub-district, building local capacity to plan and operate sustainable, cave-tourism could best be approached at the tambon level. The focus of interpretation in Mueang Pon could be **nature** interpretation.
- 2) In **southern** Mae Hong Son, **Mueang Pon** should be the priority community. Mueang Pon is a relatively **inexperienced** community, with striking **cultural** resources. In Mueang Pon, focus should be on multi-stakeholder participatory planning and developing the community as a provincial field learning center for cultural heritage interpretation.

**Other, specific recommendations, per target community are summarized below:**

### **Mueang Pon**

#### ***Organisation and people***

- Strengthening/training for the homestay group
- Local guide training in interpretation/language/local food for health
- Master plan: CBT development to Celebrate Local Crafts & Culture w/TAO

#### ***Product Development***

- Organic/Thai Yai coffee shop and restaurant
- Thai Yai cooking course and homestay
- Local arts and crafts workshop

#### ***Marketing***

- Product Design and Marketing training for local occupational groups
- Facilitate supply chain linkages with hotels/restaurants in MHS/CNX/BKK
- Training to understand different needs of tourists and target marketing planning

### **Mae Lui**

#### ***Organisation and people***

- Training: CBT Preparation Management
- Local Guide and Homestay Host Training
- Water and rafting safety training

#### ***Product Development***

- Well organised homestay and nature interpretation program in coordination with NP
- Learning and community service for students and volunteers (e.g. water testing)
- Could look again at natural dyed cloth for supply chain linkages

#### ***Marketing***

- Need to facilitate communication – phone
- Training to understand more about tourists, marketing partnerships and access
- Information about the community and tourism services

### **Mueang Paem**

#### ***Organisation***

- Organisation strengthening – CBT for NRM and CD. Accounts
- Use current buildings and develop better information for tourists
- English and Culture and Nature interpretation Training: LGs, youth guides, host families

#### ***Product Development***

- Caves (priority Tham Yaow): walkways, information, training for guides, solar powered lanterns, gate to close cave
- Weaving: design capacity building, techniques for selling politely
- New program to share NRM successes (community forest)

### **Marketing**

- Marketing and IT training for Thai markets (school has internet)
- Promotion of village
- Partnerships and linkages – tourism and weaving/textiles

**Tambon Level: Sustainable Cave Tourism Learning Center.** The superb quality of caves in this area, combined with their sensitivity, and the risks of not acting to protect them makes a Tambon-level approach attractive. There are highly experienced researchers and cavers in the area who could help build Tham Lot sub-district into a national – regional learning center.

Based on the success of the initiatives above, Mae Hong Son may be established in a future phase as **the center of best practice in Northern Thailand on CBT, Ecotourism and adding value to agricultural products through tourism linkages.** All of the province's wealth of ecotourism resources, research, lessons learned and best practice could be collected, as well as harnessing the skills and experience of tourism stakeholders into a training center for ecotour operators, ecotour guides, CBT practitioners, etc. The center could deliver courses linked with best practice ecotourism and CBT field sites, and a one stop service for tourists.

### **Additional Recommendations**

- Although they may be highlights, CBT/ecotourism projects do not sell Mae Hong Son. The destination of MHS sells CBT/ecotourism. Supporting projects in the field must take place alongside building the profile of MHS as an ecotourism destination;
- Development of a specialist, trained, multi-lingual Mae Hong Son Eco Guide Unit. Expand language opportunities to include French and German as priorities;
- Local product design/packaging to add value to local art and crafts, and a project to catalyze supply chain linkages focusing on Bangkok, Hua Hin, Chiang Mai, Brand.

### **The Environment, Natural Resource Management and Energy**

- Serious, quantitative and qualitative research to identify the resource limits in Pai, MHS and MSR and set resource use benchmarks. Zoning and tax for forest conservation;
  - Capacity Building in Energy and waste management for hotels, restaurants, TO's;
  - Provincial level promotion of Mae Hong Son as a "Green Lifestyle" city.
- **Priority recommendations for key responsible government agencies:**

#### ✓ **Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports (POTS)**

POTS as facilitator/secretariat, bringing expertise together from across sectors to facilitate an integrated approach for sustainable tourism development

Facilitate the development of a minimum standard for MHS ecotourism

Lead Guide Unit project for MHS, with urgent guide training for Mae Sarieng

Give certificates or stamps to eco-tourists on a MHS "Green Steps Passport"

Appropriate signage – competition to design local signs from local products

#### ✓ **Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Mae Hong Son**

Research on ecotourism markets for MHS – North and South

Develop an ecotourism marketing plan, through multi-stakeholder process

More information Thai/English/French/German

# 1. Introduction and Background to Mae Hong Son Ecotourism Baseline Study

## 1.1 Background to mission

FAO, UNDP and UNESCO are participating in the ecotourism component of the UN Joint Program on Integrated Highland Livelihood Development in Mae Hong Son. The overall Human Security Goal of this Program is to improve the quality of life and to reduce poverty among vulnerable groups in underserved areas of Mae Hong Son through both protection and empowerment measures.

Ecotourism and community-based tourism have been identified as one of the potential areas to foster socio-economic development and contribute towards sustainable cultural and natural resource management. The tremendous growth in the tourism sector, especially ecotourism centred on visitation and enjoyment of the Mae Hong Son distinct and precious cultural and natural heritage has presented the province with a number of challenges and opportunities. On the one hand, tourism is generating significant foreign exchange earnings and fuelling local investment in tourism related services and infrastructure and creating jobs. On the other hand, partly because of uneven capacity to plan for and manage tourism's negative environmental and socio-cultural impacts, the resources underpinning the national tourism industry are in danger of being irrevocably damaged.

The joint program aims at strengthening the eco-tourism sector and providing opportunities in some of the targeted communities (i.e. some of the most vulnerable populations including ethnic minorities). The ecotourism baseline survey will guide the program design by identifying existing activities, potential new activities, the best locations and methods to implement these activities.

## 1.2 Objectives of the Baseline Survey

The Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I) have been contracted by the UN Joint Program (UNJP) to implement the Mae Hong Son Ecotourism baseline study. The results will inform future ecotourism-related actions. The ecotourism baseline survey has three main objectives:

- **Objective 1: Provide a picture of the ecotourism sector in Mae Hong Son**
- **Objective 2: Describe the role and capacity of the Provincial Tourism Office (PTO) and Mae Hong Son branch of the TAT office**
- **Objective 3: Identify areas and delivery system for programme activities**
  - (a) Proposed activity 1: building the organizational capacity of the provincial tourism office;
  - (b) Proposed activity 2: developing a guide training system;
  - (c) Proposed activity 3: recommended process for developing tourism activities in communities.

## 1.3 Expected Outputs

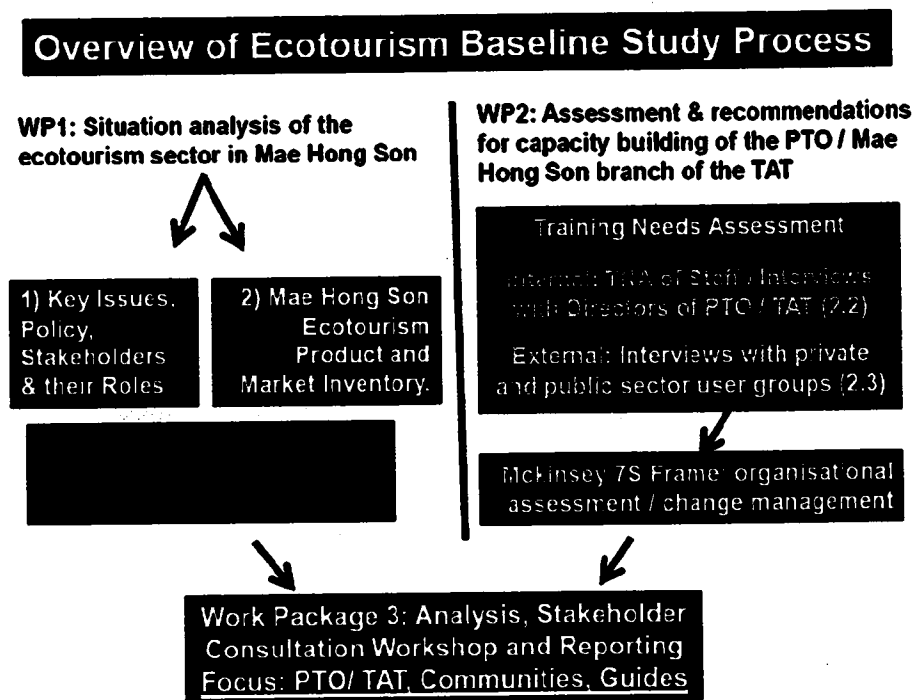
- ✓ A comprehensive situational analysis of the eco-tourism sector in Mae Hong Son.
- ✓ A provincial organizational capacity assessment in the eco-tourism sector.
- ✓ A set of recommendations on development intervention in the eco-tourism sector in response to the proposed activities, target implementation geographic areas, implementation strategy and revised workplan for the eco-tourism component of the project.
- ✓ Present results to the Mae Hong Son stakeholders during a debriefing meeting.



## 1.4 Proposed Working Process

Based on the objectives and expected outputs of the Mae Hong Son Ecotourism Baseline Study, a working process was developed by CBT-I, based around 3 Work Packages (WP's), combining desk research, stakeholder interviews and field visits to target tambon:

- ✓ Work Package 1 is a Situation Analysis of the ecotourism sector in Mae Hong Son. This analysis comprises of a desk study, field surveys in UNJP target sub-districts and stakeholder interviews. Desk research will cover the 2 core areas of 1) "Key Issues – Policy, Stakeholders and their Roles" and 2) "Mae Hong Son Ecotourism Product and Market Inventory." Additional research is being conducted to identify examples of how tourism has created positive and negative impacts on society, economy, culture and environment.
- ✓ Work Package 2 is an Assessment and recommendations for capacity building of the Provincial Tourism Office (PTO) and Mae Hong Son branch of the Tourism Authority of Thailand. This will focus on fact finding to identify user needs, gaps and interventions.
- ✓ Work Package 3 is Analysis, a Stakeholder Consultation Workshop and Reporting.



**Figure 2: Overview of the proposed Mae Hong Son ecotourism baseline study process**

## 2. Stakeholder Consultation

### 2.1 Mission Inception and Stakeholder Consultations

#### 2.1.1 Inception Meeting to present the Mae Hong Son Ecotourism Baseline Study process to key stakeholders, 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011, at Mae Hong Son City Hall

On the 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011, the CBT-I team facilitated an *Inception Meeting for the Baseline Study for Ecotourism Development in Mae Hong Son*, at Mae Hong Son City Hall. The meeting was attended by more than 20 key provincial tourism stakeholders, including senior staff of the Provincial Tourism Office (PTO), Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Provincial Administrative Office, Mae Hong Son Chamber of Commerce and local community leaders from UNJP target sub-districts.

During this meeting, the UN Joint Team presented the role of ecotourism in the overall context of the Joint UN Program on Livelihood Development in Mae Hong Son. Subsequently, the CBT-I team presented their proposed process and action plan to implement the baseline study to the participants.

Following the presentation, there was a lively discussion with exchange of opinions and ideas for almost 2 hours. Feedback by the participants was extremely valuable for fine tuning the baseline study process, and for ensuring that the proposed activities would best meet stakeholders' needs. Following the Inception meeting, the CBT-I and UN Joint team representatives met again on the 8<sup>th</sup> February to review key suggestions and feedback communicated by participants during the inception meeting, and to consider how to adapt the action plan to be most responsive to stakeholders' needs:

	Suggestion/Feedback	Response/adaptation
1	<i>"The decision has already been made to concentrate on 4 target sub-districts. Broad information about tourism in MHS already exists. There is less need to conduct a study at the provincial level. A broad study risks consuming time, diverting attention from target sub-districts and may therefore not help the project to reach its goals."</i>	Success of ecotourism in MHS needs to be based on a systematic approach, including information from across the province and an informed policy environment. Target sub-districts cannot be considered in isolation from the overall situation. Therefore, an updated picture of ecotourism in Mae Hong Son remains useful for ecotourism development in the province and in target areas.
2	<i>"Information gaps are at tambon level. The analysis should focus on the situation and needs in the target tambons. However, the planned field visits in the 8 tambons are too short to go into detail. The team should spend longer in the target communities."</i>	The team accepted this feedback and agreed to reduce the proposed number of field surveys from 8 to 4 villages. The surveys will focus only on prioritized villages in the 4 UNJP target tambons. Additional time will be spent to survey each target tambon as broadly as possible.
3	<i>"It's not necessary for the project to 'assess the capacity' of the PTO and TAT. The Thai government already assesses this 3 times per year. Information is available."</i>	CBT-I will interview the PTO/TAT to clarify their main strategies, services and skills. CBT-I will also conduct a broad needs assessment of key user external groups. When provincial organizations know more about the needs of their users, then they can help assess gaps and propose specific capacity building needs, for the next phase.

Figure 3: Key suggestions/feedback from stakeholders and project team responses

**Additional feedback from Inception meeting participants and CBT-I team responses are as below:**

- ✓ Make use of all the information which already exists
- ✓ Make sure to include a focus on supply chain linkages for agriculture products/souvenirs.
- ✓ Make sure to include a focus on renewable/clean energy opportunities.
- ✓ More focus on formal/informal education sector re: training, guides, including Amphoe level

The team agreed to take note of all suggestions when implementing the action plan.



**Photo box 1: Mae Hong Son Ecotourism Baseline Survey Inception Meeting**

### **2.1.2 Follow Up Meeting with the Provincial Tourism Office (PTO)**

On the 9<sup>th</sup> February, Ms Potjana Suansri, Team Leader and Mr Peter Richards, Marketing and Partnerships Specialist met with Ms Churairat Preawprai, Director of the Provincial Tourism Office to present a revised plan. The core difference between proposed and revised plans was to remove the capacity assessment of the PTO and TAT and spend more time identifying the needs of target users of PTO/TAT services, and gaps. Gaps will be used as a foundation for recommendations to provincial tourism organisations. The PTO supported the revised plan.

## **2.2 Adaptations to proposed process, based on the results of stakeholder consultation**

Important changes to the proposed process were that the proposed internal capacity assessment was not implemented for the POTS or TAT. Instead, the team interviewed a greater cross-section of stakeholders in order to identify their needs for government support; areas they considered that their needs were already being adequately or well met; in which areas they needed more assistance from the government; and their priorities for support.

Changes to the process enabled the team to focus on gaps of provision of tourism-related services to tourism stakeholders in the province. Outcomes of the survey showed that many different public offices provide different services to meet needs of tourism stakeholders. The revised process allowed the team additional time to go into the field, assess the level of synergy between these organisations, and vision a further coordinating role for the POTS. Therefore, the changes proposed may well have enriched the overall baseline study process.

### **3. Overview of final research methodology and activities**

#### **3.1 Overview**

**Note:** There are some differences between the proposed and actual methodologies for the Baseline Study, in particular the methodology proposed by CBT-I to implement objective 2 "Describe the role and capacity of the Provincial Tourism Office (PTO) and Mae Hong Son branch of the TAT office." Adaptations to the process were the result of input by stakeholders at the *Inception Meeting to present the Mae Hong Son Ecotourism Baseline Study process to key stakeholders* on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011, at Mae Hong Son City Hall (see section 2 above).

The objectives and outputs of the study were achieved through 3 Work Packages (WP):

#### **Work Package 1: Situation analysis of the ecotourism sector in Mae Hong Son**

The situation analysis was divided into 2 main sections:

- 1) Key Issues, Policy, Stakeholders & their Roles and
- 2) Mae Hong Son Ecotourism Product and Market Inventory.

Each section included desk and field study. The results were synthesized into this final report.

#### **Overall**

- Desk studies and literature reviews covered research papers, articles in traditional and new media and tourism websites. Sources were identified by consulting professional networks (recommendations) and through internet search;
- Structured and semi-structured interviews were conducted with a broad cross-section of over 60 stakeholders across the province, including government, tour operators and guides, academics, and NGO workers;
- To accurately assess the situation and needs of local communities, field surveys were conducted, including rapid assessment of communities' tourism potentials, resource mapping, observation and interviews. 4 sub-districts were selected for field surveys, based on the UNJP priority work areas: Mok Champae, Mueang District; Tham Lot, Pang Mapha District; Mae Suad, Sop Moei District and Mueang Pon, Khun Yuam District.
- The assessment of the opportunities and risks of tourism development focused on socio-economic, socio-cultural, environmental and market issues. Tools included SWOT, and in-house tools developed by CBT-I including CBT Resource Mapping and 'CBT-I 50 Criteria – Community Based Tourism Ready for Market Checklist);

#### **Work Package 2: Assessment and recommendations for capacity building of the Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports (POTS) and Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Mae Hong Son**

The team originally proposed to adapt McKinsey's 7S frame for organisational assessment and change management to conduct a Training Needs Assessment (TNA) of the POTS and TAT. Following feedback from the POTS, CBT-I prioritized an extended, externally focused assessment of how far government organisations responsible for tourism were meeting the needs of their key user groups. This was done through interviews with a range of public and private sector tourism stakeholders in Mae Hong Son's urban centers and UNJP target areas.

#### **Work Package 3: Analysis, Stakeholder Consultation Workshop and Reporting**

Team meetings to analyse results, and a participatory stakeholder consultation workshop.

## **Details of activities conducted**

### **3.2 Work Package 1: Situation analysis of the ecotourism sector in Mae Hong Son**

#### **Activity 1.1 Team meeting and clarification of common frame and expectations**

Initially, the CBT-I team met with the UNJP team in Mae Hong Son to update information, share resources and clarify the process, tools, roles and responsibilities for the mission.

#### **Activity 1.2 Desk Review Part1: Key Issues, Policy, Stakeholders & their Roles**

The team leader conducted a desk review and interviewed responsible government staff in order to overview Ecotourism related policies, strategies, actions and resource allocation at national, provincial cluster and provincial levels. The Provincial Master Plan, its tourism and sustainable development related elements, actions and budgets were studied in detail.

The desk study covered the policies, actions and tourism related budgets of 15 organizations. 10 key provincial organizations with a tourism mandate were interviewed in person. These included National Parks, the provincial offices of culture and agriculture, the Community Development Office, the Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO), the Mae Hong Son Community College and organizations with a mandate to give seed funding to SME's.

The review also identified academics and NGO workers who are key observers and influencers in MHS tourism development, and clarified their positions and roles in issues where tourism interacts with culture, socio-economic development, environment and agriculture.

22 research papers were reviewed (e.g. TRF, BRT) along with media articles related to MHS tourism policy. Resources were identified including lessons learned and best practice cases.

This part of the situation analysis identified training and support services currently linked to ecotourism and made an initial assessment of the accessibility of people from Mae Hong Son to these services. The study included a focus on training for communities and guides.

#### **Activity 1.3 Desk Review Part 2 – Product and Market Survey**

The ecotourism marketing and stakeholder partnerships expert and local Community Based Research Field Expert, conducted a review and compiled an inventory of over 160 Eco, Agro, Cultural and Community Tourism products. Information was sourced from tourism stakeholder interviews (prioritizing the private sector, to balance the public sector focus of part 1), reviewing printed media, tourism websites and chat rooms in Thai and English. The review included an overview of different types and locations of rural tourism products in Mae Hong Son, and positive and negative impacts in cases where they were reported.

Part 1: Frame for Inventory of tourism products:

- i) Classification (e.g. hospitality, heritage site, nature site, community tourism);
- ii) Type of supplier (e.g. hotel, restaurant, spa, CBT, rafting, elephant riding operator);
- iii) Highlights of services being promoted (from media – e.g. websites, brochures, etc.);
- iv) Market profile/level of Mass Tourism (where possible);
- v) Initial assessment of accessibility/distance from transport hubs/tourism facilities;
- vi) Sustainability profile (e.g. reference to links between supplier/product and nature or culture conservation or socio-economic benefits for local people).
- vii) An overview of seasonal attractions which could be integrated into programs.

#### **Activity 1.4 Field surveys to inform the situation analysis and future actions**

The main goal of the field trips to the UNJP target areas was to inform future activities related to objective 3 of the ToR (identifying areas and delivery system for program activities). However, the journey across every district of Mae Hong Son also gave the team a great chance to visit many tourism sites identified during the product-market inventory on route.

A two person team, composed of the CBR Field Expert and the Marketing and Stakeholder Partnerships Expert conducted rapid (1.5 day) field surveys in the 4 selected sub-districts.

The field visits included observation, rapid tourism resource mapping, structured interviews with community leaders, and semi structured interviews with community members.

Through these actions, the team clarified the situation in the target communities, including:

- i) Ethnicity, tangible/intangible cultural heritage, local wisdom, living cultural practice;
- ii) Local livelihoods and relationships with the environment and natural resources;
- iii) Tourism resources, (nature, facilities, activities, highlights, links w/development);
- iv) Confirmation of information related to local festivals/traditions/agricultural cycles;
- v) NRM/conservation (including assessment of low or renewable energy initiatives);
- vi) Vulnerability assessment: e.g. poverty, drugs, legal status and land tenure, gender;
- vii) Experience of the community/community organisations with tourism and tourists;
- viii) Observed levels of local participation in tourism management (rapid assessment);
- ix) Current level of market awareness;
- x) Clarification of any private or public sector partnerships/potential local networks;
- xi) Actual accessibility/distance from transport hubs/availability of tourism facilities;
- xii) Initial confirmation of beneficiaries/benefits/impacts;
- xiii) Levels of experience and training of local community tour guides.

#### **Case studies of the positive and negative impacts of tourism in Mae Hong Son**

Based on the results of the baseline study, the team proposed examples of best practice to inform future tourism development, as well as examples of tourism impacts.

#### **Activity 1.5 Interviews with key stakeholders in Mae Hong Son and Chiang Mai**

To complement the desk study and community surveys, the team conducted structured interviews with key stakeholders in Mae Hong Son and Chiang Mai to clarify their roles, needs and viewpoints on issues such as:

- i) Overall, what is being done well, what could be improved, and what should be prioritized;
- ii) Tourism policy and actual tourism management (including tourism training access);
- iii) Tourism products: successes, failures, gaps and opportunities;
- iv) Key markets for MHS, and their needs, expectations and behavior;
- v) Stakeholder cooperation and conflict in MHS tourism;
- vi) Socio-cultural, socio-economic, environmental benefits and costs of tourism.

The team conducted interviews with 25 MHS tourism stakeholders, including:

- i) Provincial government officers responsible for Tourism, Culture, National Park and Agriculture, as well as organisations with a mandate to give seed funding to SME's;

- ii) Active NGO's and academic researchers in relevant fields;
- iii) Tour Operators and Associations and the MHS Chamber of Commerce;
- iv) Licensed Thai Tour Guides (including additional questions on their training needs);
- v) Restaurant owners and hoteliers in MHS city;
- vi) Transport providers.

### **3.3 Work Package 2: Assessment and recommendations for capacity building of the Provincial Tourism Office (PTO) and the Mae Hong Son branch of the TAT office**

#### **Activity 2.1 Survey and in depth interviews with targeted 'Users' of the PTO and TAT services to identify how far their needs are being met at present**

The team designed a questionnaire for targeted PTO/TAT service users on how far government tourism services were meeting their needs. Users included Tour Operators, Tour Guides, Community members, Transport providers, restaurants, hotels and tourists.

#### **Activity 2.2 Summarise outcomes/GAP Analysis of PTO/TAT**

The team leader analyzed the outcomes of activity 2.1, identified strengths and gaps in the provincial tourism organizations' capacities, and drafted recommendations for how the relevant organisations could best meet their users' needs. Recommendations to optimize inter-agency cooperation between the PTO and stakeholders were proposed.

#### **Activity 2.3 Draft report – Provincial Capacity Assessment**

The report include SWOT analysis of the PTO and TAT; staff and user needs assessments; an analysis of existing cooperation mechanisms between the PTO and TAT, assessing levels of effectiveness and identifying strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities for improved coordination; capacity building recommendations and a draft action plan. Coordination of PTO and TAT work with the overall development plan of the province will also be discussed.

### **3.4 Work Package 3: Analysis, Stakeholder Consultation Workshop and Reporting**

#### **Activity 3.1 Team meeting to share and synthesize outputs, and prepare debriefing**

#### **Activity 3.2 Debriefing and Stakeholder Consultation**

The team presented the outcomes of the MHS tourism situation analysis and user needs' analysis to 20 core stakeholders on the 31<sup>st</sup> March, 2011, including the following activities:

Present the Mae Hong Son Tourism Situation Analysis

- 1) Key Issues, Policy, Stakeholders & their Roles
- 2) Mae Hong Son Ecotourism Product and Market Inventory

Present the results and recommendations for developing tourism activities in communities,

Present the assessment and key recommendations for capacity building of the Provincial Tourism Office (PTO) and the Mae Hong Son branch of the TAT office.

#### **Activity 3.3 Final Reporting**

## **4. Brief introduction to Mae Hong Son Province**

### **4.1 Location**

Mae Hong Son is located in far north-western Thailand, 924 km from Bangkok, with a total area of 12 681.259 sq. km, or (7 969 750) Rai. It is the 3<sup>rd</sup> largest province in northern Thailand, and the 7<sup>th</sup> largest province in Thailand. The length of the province from North to South is approximately 250 km, and the province is 95 km at the broadest point. All districts border Myanmar, along a total distance of 483 km. Land borders make up a total of 326 km, River borders are a total of 157 km (Salawin 127 and Muay 30). The borders are as follows:

- North: Borders with southern Shan and Kayah states of Myanmar.
- East: Borders with Chiang Mai province: Viang Haeng, Mae Tang, Mae Jaem, Hot and Om Koi districts.
- South: Borders with Ta Song Yang district, Tak province
- West: Borders Myanmar: Kayah and Kor Tu Lay States

### **4.2 Geography**

Mae Hong Son is remote and mountainous. Topographically, the province is a high plateau region with a varied terrain ranging from 100-2 000 metres above mean sea level. This difficult terrain has kept the province relatively cut off from the rest of Thailand. Of the total area of the province, 89.66% is forested. 81.19% is protected areas. The Daen Lao and Thanan Thong Chai mountain ranges run from north to south. The western Thanon Thong Chai range runs along the Thai-Myanmar border. The central Thanaon Thong Chai range runs between the Yuam and Mae Jaem rivers. The eastern Thanaon Thong Chai range is the border between Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son. Mae Hong Son's highest peak is Mae Ya mountain in Pai district, 2 005 metres above sea level. Despite many improvements in infrastructure and transport services, it still requires a lot of time and effort to reach and travel in Mae Hong Son.

### **4.3 Natural Resources**

The forest is regarded as the most important natural resource in Mae Hong Son. Forestland is mixed deciduous, mountain pine, hill evergreen and forest plantations. Several rivers, such as the Pai and Yuam, have their origin in Mae Hong Son. Moreover, Mae Hong Son is still the main source for fluoride and barites. The local population has used these and other natural resources for their livelihood through forest product collection as well as food and medicinal plant sources. These natural resources also play an important part of Thailand's main ecotourism and biodiversity conservation resource base (Source : Mae Hong Son Provincial Millennium Development Goals Report 2005 UNDP)

### **4.4 Climate**

Mae Hong Son has 3 seasons: the hot season is between mid March and mid May, with an average highest temperature of 43°C. The rainy season runs from mid May to mid October, with an average rainfall of 1 480.5 mm. Rainfall is heaviest in July and August. The cool season runs from mid-October to mid-March. The lowest temperatures occur between the end of December and the end of January, falling below zero in the higher mountain areas.



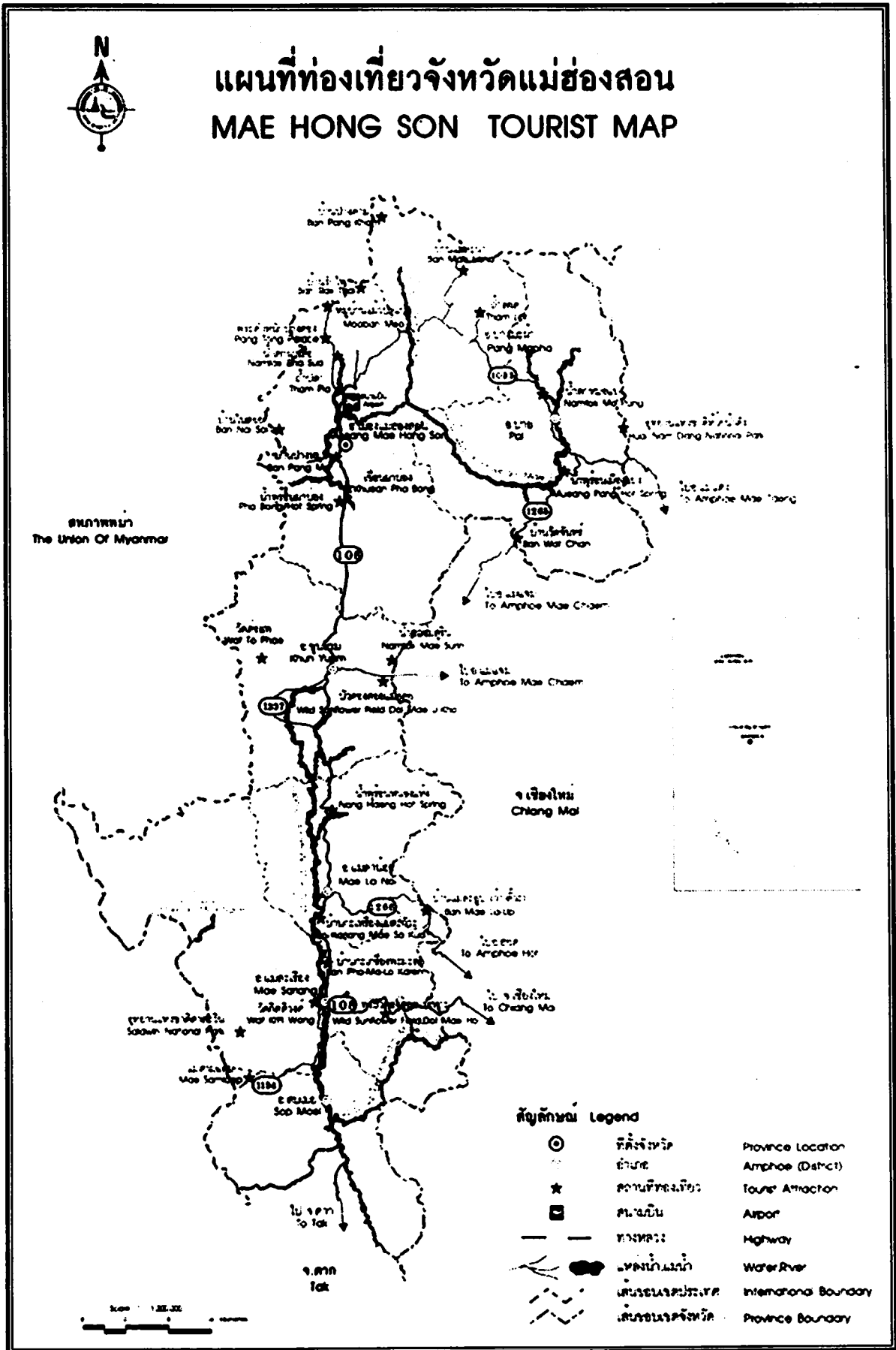


Figure 4: Map of Mae Hong Son Province, produced by the Tourism Authority of Thailand

## 4.5 Governance and people

Mae Hong Son is the 8<sup>th</sup> largest and 3<sup>rd</sup> least densely populated province in Thailand. It is divided into 7 governing districts: Pai, Pang Mapha, Mueang, Khun Yuam, Mae La Noi, Mae Sariang and Sop Moei. Each district is sub-divided into 'Tumbon' or sub-districts, composed of several 'moo baan', or villages. Mae Hong Son city is the capital and seat of provincial government. Mae Sariang is the capital of southern Mae Hong Son. The province is well known for its cultural diversity. Each district has distinct differences of geography and ethnicity. Important ethnic groups are the Shan (Thai Yai) and Karen, Yunan Chinese, Lahu and Lawa. Buddhism, Christianity, Animism, and Ancestor Worship are all common.

## 4.6 Livelihoods and agriculture

Mae Hong Son is a large province. However, it has very little area for cultivation. Human settlements and agricultural activities can be found only in the confined plains located in valleys, resulting in agricultural constraints and thus semi-dependency on Chiang Mai for supplying needed goods and services. Economic activities can be divided into two general sectors – agricultural and non-agricultural. Key crops are paddy field, garlic, soya bean and cabbage. Non-agricultural productivity is based on wholesale, retail and other trading. There are a total of 211 413 Rai of registered farmland, equal to a meagre 2.6% of the area of the province. The average area of farmland per family is 11.8 Rai. 54.1% of farmland is used for cultivating rice, 25.8% 10.5% cultivating fruit. (Source – Provincial Development Plan 2010).

## 4.7 Transport

### Overland Travel

It is possible to reach Mae Hong Son by road or air. There are 5 inter-provincial highways, requiring different travel durations:

Highway:	Distance (km)	Time (hrs.)
▶ 108 Chiang Mai, Hot, Mae Sariang, Mae Hong Son	350	7
▶ 1095 Chiang Mai, Mae Taeng, Pai, Mae Hong Son	245	5
▶ 1085 Mae Suad, Tak, Mae Sariang, Mae Hong Son	394	7
▶ 1295 Mae Jaem (Chiang Mai province), Khun Yuam	95	5
▶ Minor Road 5030 Wat Chan (Mae Jaem, Chiang Mai, Huay Puling, Mae Hong Son)	87	10

### Air Travel

Two airlines serve Mae Hong Son, Nok Air and Kan Air. Air schedules change frequently.

Nok Air currently have 2 flights operating in both directions between Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son – morning and afternoon departures. Kan Air currently have 2 flights operating in both directions between Chiang Mai and Mae Hong Son – morning and afternoon departures, as well as 1 flight per day exclusively between Chiang Mai and Pai.

## 4.8 Brief Introduction to Tourism Development in Mae Hong Son

Tourism began with Trekking Tours in the 1970s. The private sector initially responded to more demand for authentic and exotic ethnic culture by organizing tours along the Pai River. The tour packages included elephant riding, river rafting, mountain trekking and at least one overnight stay at a Shan, Lisu, Karen or Hmong village. Villagers also provided a variety of other services to tourists, though on a small scale, for example, as local guides and porters.

The government began formally promoting tourism to Mae Hong Son Province in 1987 with the implementation of the Sixth National Economic and Social Development Plan (1987-91). In the same year, the "Visit Thailand Year" promotion was launched. Mae Hong Son was heavily promoted as a tourist destination, attracting both Thai and foreign visitors. In the 8<sup>th</sup> Development Plan, the TAT directly promoted ecotourism. Mae Hong Son was a key areas for implementation of eco and community-based tourism. Preparation included training workshops, awareness raising, institutional development, the establishment of rules for community members and visitors, and benefit sharing systems. Work was implemented by public and private sectors. NGOs like REST (Responsible Ecological Social Tours Project), the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) and the Project for Recovery of Life and Culture (PRLC) (local MHS NGO) played major roles in the initiation of CBT projects in Mae Hong Son in the 1990s.

By the 1990s, there had also begun to be serious encroachment on protected forests in Mae Hong Son to fell trees to build rafts and dwellings for tourists. The rapid growth of tourism also generated concern about the socio-cultural, economic and environmental impacts on societies and communities. Wildlife was disturbed and there was an increase in water pollution, not to mention a rise in drug abuse and prostitution. There was also a resultant increase in noise pollution and rubbish-disposal problems. (Duangjai LORTANAVANIT 2009).

A key issue in the history of Mae Hong Son tourism is air transport. In 2010, Thai Airways cancelled flights to Mae Hong Son. Flights were operated by the domestic airline, Nok Air (a subsidiary of Thai Air). The result of this decision was that it was no longer possible for tourists to travel to Mae Hong Son easily on international flights. A change of airlines was necessary. The number of arrivals by air fell by 8% in January 2010, a further 21% in February, 53% in March and 55% in April. (Provincial Tourism office of Mae Hog Son). This has meant that, although some tour companies do continue to operate series trips to the province, independent travelers including self-drivers, became highly important markets.

**Table 1: Tourist Arrivals and income, 2002-2010, Mae Hong Son**

Mae Hong Son	Data: Tourism Authority of Thailand				Data: Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports www.tourism.go.th				
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010 (working)
Pai						169 910	330 684	244 724	110 402
Mueang						244 770	437 544	313 150	143 894
Total	236 993	27 9516	311 031	329 580	367 869	414 680	768 228	557 874	254 296
	1 000	1 143	1 286.55	1 506.22	1 629.48	1 897.19	2 103.97	2 435.19	

**Observation:** although tourist arrivals have been decreasing since peaking in 2008, the total income has grown consistently. This contrasts with responses from interviewees in MHS city, who reported that their overnight stays and income have also decreased in the past 3 years.

## 5. Results: Work Package 1, Part A): Key Issues, Policy, Stakeholders and their roles

This part of the study addressed the institutional and policy context of ecotourism, focusing on organisations and policies with a role in tourism development, and mechanisms and tools for (eco)tourism support. The research team gave weight to national and provincial level policies, in order to understand their frameworks, priorities, directions and impacts on tourism in the province. Provincial level study focused on provincial tourism development strategies, roles of different organisations in supporting and developing tourism (directly and indirectly), projects related to ecotourism, target areas, budgets and inter-organisational cooperation.

### 5.1 Ecotourism-related Policy and Mechanisms at the National Level

#### 5.1.1 Master Plan: The National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP)

Thai development planning is influenced by Thai priorities, world movements and interest in developing democracy. The blueprint for national development is the National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP). In Thailand, sustainable tourism, including ecotourism, is considered as a sustainable development tool. The concept of 'sustainable development' begun influencing Thailand around the World Summit on Sustainable Development (1992).

In order to assess progress towards sustainable development, Thailand decided to conduct a study on the results of previous national development plans (1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup>). A key conclusion of this study was ***"The economy has grown, but society and the environment have deteriorated. This is not sustainable development."*** The 8<sup>th</sup> NESDP (1997-2001), moved from a segregated to an integrated approach, striving for greater balance between economic, social and environmental development. The plan also paid more attention to civic participation at every level of society. People were positioned at the centre of development. His Majesty the King's "Sustainable Economy" concept was introduced into the 9<sup>th</sup> NESDP (2002-2006), alongside a continued focus on integration and people participation. The 10<sup>th</sup> NESDP (2007-2011), aims at a "Green and Happy Society, under the concept of sustainable economy."

The 11<sup>th</sup> NESDP (2012-2016) will aim for a "happy society treated with equality, fairness and immunity to changes." Parts of the plan relating to Tourism aim to: create a knowledge-based economy; create a facilitating environment and improve the capacity of Thai service industries to be competitive by harnessing "Thai-uniqueness;" improve quality of life; manage tourism sustainably; support the strengths of private sector, local communities, SMEs and local enterprises in the tourism industry and establish strategies for the sustainable management of natural and environmental resources. The aspiration of the 11<sup>th</sup> NESDP is that more efficient use of resources across production and service sectors will lead society to be environmentally friendly. The plan also encourages service industries to drive the green economy by creating and growing market opportunities for environmentally friendly products and services.

#### 5.1.2 Historical Background of "Ecotourism" in Thailand

In Thailand, ecotourism is considered to be one potential strategy to achieve sustainable development. Eco-tourism is considered as a type of sustainable tourism. Between the years 1995-1996, the Tourism Authority of Thailand developed a National Eco-Tourism Plan. The TAT defined ecotourism as ***"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 create an 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."*** (Tourism Authority of Thailand, 1997) (<http://conservation.forest.ku.ac.th/ecotourdb/english/Definition/definition.htm>)

This definition covers four main elements 1) tourism Nature-based Tourism, 2) Sustainably Managed Tourism, 3) Environmental Education-based Tourism and 4) Community Participation-based Tourism. It illustrates the importance of community participation in Thai eco-tourism. This is a defining feature in the development of Thai alternative tourism, which developed from community-based natural and cultural resource management strategies.

The ecotourism plan was developed in the same period that Thailand began the 8<sup>th</sup> NESDP, (1997-2001) emphasizing people participation, holistic, balanced integrated development. The eco-tourism policy was designed to follow and support the NESDP. In 1998, the Thai government declared the National Eco-Tourism Policy. Unfortunately, however, the Asian economic crisis pushed the government to turn to tourism as a tool to restore the national economy. In 1998, the TAT prioritized marketing a "value for money" message through the slogan, "Amazing Thailand," which defined the image of Thai tourism, in place of ecotourism. This decision, while understandable, had the effect of drawing visitors to Thailand in the short term, rather than driving long-term benefits for environment and culture, through the Ecotourism Policy and Plan. The development and promotion of eco-tourism slowed down.



**Photo box 2: Ecotourism Activities**

### **5.1.3 Tourism organizations in Thailand – National Level**

Between 2002 and 2011, tourism in Thailand has changed enormously. There has been a fundamental restructuring of government organizations which are responsible for tourism. A National Tourism Act has been passed and Tourism has been declared as a national agenda. Moreover The National Tourism Plan was drafted. These initiatives aim to build the capacity of Thailand's tourism industry to be competitive. Important developments include:

- In 2002 the **Ministry of Tourism and Sports** was established. The promotion of tourism was separated into two sections, namely: 1) the development of tourism attractions, services, Tourism Business and Guide Registration to be managed by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports and 2) marketing efforts to be administrated by **Tourism Authority of Thailand**, which runs as State Enterprises under the Ministry of Tourism and Sports.

- Under the MOTS, **The Office of the Permanent Secretary, Tourism and Sports** acts as the central administration of the MOTS in developing strategy and converting policy into action. Provincial offices of tourism and sports are managed under this office. The **Department of Tourism** (formally the Office of Tourism Development) is mandated to promote the development of tourism attractions, services and standards.
- In 2003 the **Designated Areas For Sustainable Tourism Administration** was established. DASTA is a Public Organization under the Office of the Prime Minister. Its mission is to coordinate sustainable tourism management by acting as a coordinator between government organizations, state enterprises, and local government in destinations declared as "special areas for sustainable tourism". DASTA aims to meet the needs of local people and to promote social and economic growth in local communities. Their work is conducted in cooperation with target communities and other stakeholders concerned with sustainable natural resource use and the fair distribution of benefits.
- In 2008, the **National Tourism Act** was passed, aiming to define systematic, coherent tourism policy and management, across national, regional and local levels. This act also established the "**Thailand Tourism Promotion Fund**", to be used as a revolving fund for tourism development, strengthening competitiveness, the conservation of community tourism resources and preserving the quality of tourism attractions.
- In 2009, following global and national financial crisis, political unrest and outbreaks of disease, the government announced Tourism as a **national agenda**. The government gave priority to the tourism sector, to assist recover from the crisis. This led to a **crisis recovery plan** and many special measures to stimulate tourism between 2009-2012.

### **Budget allocated to implement the crisis recovery plan 2009-2012**

On April 17, 2009, the cabinet announced Tourism as a National Agenda and introduced a crisis recovery plan and strategies to promote Tourism between 2009-2012. A massive budget was allocated, approximately 30 000 million Thai Baht with the objectives of promoting tourism, creating active awareness of sustainable tourism, environmental preservation, preventing climate change, local participation in tourism management, tourism development planning in provincial clusters and building up the uniqueness of each place. This huge investment in tourism illustrates the great importance of the industry to the Thai economy and national development planning.

**Table 2: Breakdown of Budget allocated to implement the crisis recovery plan 2009-2012**

	<b>Development strategies (MOTS are responsible)</b>	<b>Value Million THB</b>
1	Infrastructure	6 165
2	Quality Tourism	4 500
3	Ensure safety and security	2 350
4	HRD/building human potential	1 200
5	Creating tourism activities and models	4 500
	<b>Total</b>	<b>18 715</b>
	<b>Marketing Strategies (TAT are responsible)</b>	<b>Million THB</b>
1	Restore image and increase confidence in Thai tourism	7 947
2	Stimulate international travel	1 590
3	Stimulate domestic tourism	1 748
	<b>Total</b>	<b>11 285</b>

#### 5.1.4 Other important mechanisms and tools to promote Ecotourism – National Level

Other important mechanisms and tools that support Eco tourism include:

- **The Tourism Council of Thailand** is a private sector organization that plays a juristic role. It is responsible for implementing objectives laid down by the Tourism Council of Thailand Act of 2001. The council works as a representative of tourism industry operators to promote coordination between the state and private sector and within the private sector. It encourages operators to establish certified quality standards systems and business quality assurance systems for goods and services for tourists, and finally to promote quality and ethical performance among operators.
- **The Board of the National Tourism Policy** was created by the National Tourism Act of 2008 and is responsible for the following:
  - To prepare and recommend to the Cabinet strategies, policies, and measures to promote the development and management of tourism;
  - To prepare a comprehensive plan for National Tourism Development;
  - To delineate the areas and scope of Tourism Development;
  - To consider, approve, and supervise the performance of regional tourism;
  - To define standards and certify tourist attractions and the industry.
- The Committee is composed of representatives of the civil government, including the President of the **Provincial Administration Organization Council** of Thailand and the President of the **Tambon Administration Organization Council** of Thailand. Although local organizations are active mainly at the local level, they also play a role in policy formulation and management of tourism for the country as a whole.
- **The Tourism Promotion Fund** operates under the supervision of the Board of Directors of National Tourism Policy. It has several purposes:
  - Tourism development.
  - Building competitive capacity within the tourism industry.
  - Developing skills in marketing management.
  - Conservation of tourism resources in the community.
  - Maintaining the quality of tourism attractions.
  - Promotion of new local tourism products.
- **Standards for tourism** have been set by the Department of Tourism. There are 26 standards divided into 4 groups for: 1) accommodation 2) tourism services 3) tourism activities 4) tourism attractions standards, which also cover eco-tourism.
- **Research on eco-tourism** is another tool used to enhance planning and decision making in developing tourism attractions or activities in eco-tourism. Government organizations have sometimes used research findings on eco-tourism in their development planning for Mae Hong Son tourism. For example, the Biodiversity Research and Training Program (BRT), The Thailand Research Fund, supporting research both in Area-Based Collaborative Research (ABC) and in local research such as the research on biodiversity for ecotourism in Mae Hong Son B.C. 2539-2542.

The government plays a role in defining policy, supporting, supervising, and promoting the tourism industry. However, the development of the tourism industry requires drive at all levels across private and public sectors, and from educational institutions. The private sector can make policy aspirations concrete, while educational institutions play an important role in the development of human resources for the industry and guiding the direction of development.

### 5.1.5 Ideas that play a role in promoting and encouraging eco-tourism

In 1992, as the international community discussed "Sustainable Development," there was also a major change in Thai democracy, namely "Black May" (1992), known as "Phruetsapha Thamin" in Thai. This led to increased awareness of human rights and community rights, and to the creation of more public hearing forums and multi-sector participatory partnership processes. During the preparation of the 8<sup>th</sup> NESDP (1997-2001), Thailand witnessed the beginning of a process of deeper cooperation among sectors and the participation of society as a whole in determining the direction of economic and social development. Since then, Thai society has opened up much more space for the people to express their ideas.

Influential trends and issues playing a role in Thai society and related to ecotourism are:

- I) Decentralization and participation of local communities;
- II) Corporate Social Responsibility;
- III) Climate Change, which has caused organizations, projects, and activities related to tourism to become more concerned with environmental and social issues.

Examples of specific related initiatives with relevance to ecotourism and this study include

#### I) Decentralization and participation of local communities

- i) **Designated Areas For Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA)** is a representative of local community organizations under the Constitution of 1997. The Constitution of B.C. 2007 gave DASTA the authority to play a role in community development and in promoting decision making in local affairs by communities themselves. The 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> NESDP's delegated to DASTA the authority to respond with a public services plan to meet the needs of local people and promote social and economic growth in local communities through tourism. These plans also sought to strengthen DASTA's capacity and knowledge in managing natural resources and the environment in cooperation with the community and other parties concerned with the use of natural resources and the fair distribution of benefits.
- ii) **Community Based Tourism (CBT)** is a form of tourism that promotes the role and capacity of local communities to manage tourism by themselves, as well as utilize tourism as a tool for community development, focusing on human resource development (new knowledge and skills), the conservation of local natural and cultural resources, and providing a new, supplementary income. It also aims to facilitate host-guest respect, exchange and learning.

#### II) Corporate Social Responsibility

- i) The concept of CSR is also becoming more mainstream and influential in Thailand. As related to tourism, important initiatives include:
- ii) **The Green Leaf Foundation** has worked for over 10 years to help hotels towards sustainability. The organization certifies hotels which practice energy saving and environmentally friendly development, in participation with staff, guests and the community. Greenleaf have a well developed body of knowledge, including Thai language materials and trainer in water/waste/energy/and managing chemicals for hotels and restaurants.
- iii) **CSR-MAP** (Corporate Social Responsibility and Market Access Partnerships) is a pilot project lead by the Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association (TEATA), alongside CBT-I, Greenleaf and the European Center for Eco and Agro Tourism (ECEAT), which assisted 5 SME groups: tour operators, tour guides, hotels, restaurants and community based tourism to develop sustainable tourism standards and integrated 'green' package tour programs.



### III) Climate change

- i) **The Tourism Authority of Thailand's Seven Greens Concept** campaigns for greater responsibility by the tourism industry for the environment and community through 7 Greens: Green Heart, Green Logistics, Green Attractions, Green Communities, Green Activities, Green Services and Green Plus (CSR). The 'Greens' are based on sustainable tourism standards, including the Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria.
- ii) **Low Carbon Tourism** is an attempt to create public awareness and find ways to minimize climate change. A "Visualized Climate Tool" has been developed for the design of tourism activities that are more climate friendly. As well as creating more awareness among tourists of the use of resources in tourism attractions and activities, it encourages offsetting CO2 emissions. This project is implemented and coordinated by DASTA, the Green Leaf Foundation, GTZ (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit) and Trat Tourism Association.

The initiatives above have made concepts socially and environmentally meaningful. Although "ecotourism" is not mentioned in many cases, these initiatives are compatible with the goals of ecotourism and open new spaces for the tourism industry to work together towards sustainability. Moreover, project developers can show their potential to create programs on the ideas of environmental conservation and the participation of local people.

#### 5.1.6 Ecotourism markets

Tourism is critical to social and economic development. The World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) predicts that in 2020 there will be 1 600 million international travelers. Tourism in developing countries is forecast to increase by around 4 percent a year and long distance travel will increase by 24 percent. Despite economic stress, people will not sacrifice travel.

Travelers are increasingly demanding pristine natural environments, and encounters with friendly and satisfied local people. Markets including Europe (especially, Dutch, French, German, UK and Scandinavia), the US and Canada, Australia and New Zealand, as well as Japan and South Korea, have increasing demand for eco-tourism, cultural tourism, authentic local experiences compatible with community based tourism, health and wellness including traditional treatments, short term volunteering and hands-on educational tours. There is also increasing demand for mass tourism and luxury travel which can prove its green credentials.

Moreover, travelers will increasingly focus and be interested in environmental and social issues, as relevant to the destination which they are visiting. They are also increasingly interested in activities, rather than destinations (ECEAT 2010), which means that more than ever before, tourism developers must pay attention to tourists' specific tourism activity needs.

Future Brand (The Department for Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries – CBI, Netherlands) 8 presents 10 important trends. Trends directly supporting ecotourism include:

- **BACK TO BASICS:** More people want simplicity, transparency, and authentic cultural products which are not over-engineered. The friendliness of locals is valued by tourists.
- **ENOUGHISM:** Increasing warnings about consumerism and the current world situation is encouraging people to look for a simple and happy life. Eco-tourism, volunteer tourism, weekends with family and experiential travel will all become more popular.
- **ECO-WARS:** global warming creates numerous issues. Services such as effective carbon offset projects and accommodation which is built and managed sustainably will need to be available to help conscientious travelers find suitable options. This will create opportunities for eco-tourism to increasingly fulfill tourists' needs in the future.

### 5.1.7 The Tourism Authority of Thailand's marketing strategies

From 2008 -2011 TAT has set 3 main goals: 1) To maintain the market share in the Asia-Pacific region, 2) To increase sustainable income, and 3) To promote the image of Thailand in major markets, including Australia, China, England, Germany, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, Taiwan, Thailand and the United States. Thailand's market positioning for foreign tourism is based on the familiar mix for value for money, targeting repeat travelers (50% on average and 75% for EU tourists!) and attracting new markets. These strategies in themselves are not particularly related to sustainable tourism. However, they need to be considered alongside TAT's green initiatives and TAT's analysis of the changing market environment which indicates that Thailand should adjust to conform with changes that are occurring in three key areas:

- **The dynamics of online communication technology.** Social networking has become a new on-line society where tourists find information for decision making or to select travel destinations. (*which is particularly true for independent travelers*). The obvious impact of these changes with its wide and immediate distribution of information without restriction is significant. The experience and opinions of a variety of people and events is readily circulated and can have a considerable impact on tourism.
- **A positive emotional experience** is often valued more highly than its price. Although value for money is still one of Thailand's competitive advantages, now tourists want to have an emotional experience such as the opportunity to be a leader in fashion and feel 'trendy' which they perceive as luxurious and high class and therefore, of value.
- **The environmental paradigm:** Global warming, for which so many people have begun to have concrete experiences, has become real and more readily understood by people around the globe. This raises its profile in the minds of travelers who will take this factor into account as they choose their tourist services.



#### TAT SEVEN GREENS CONCEPT



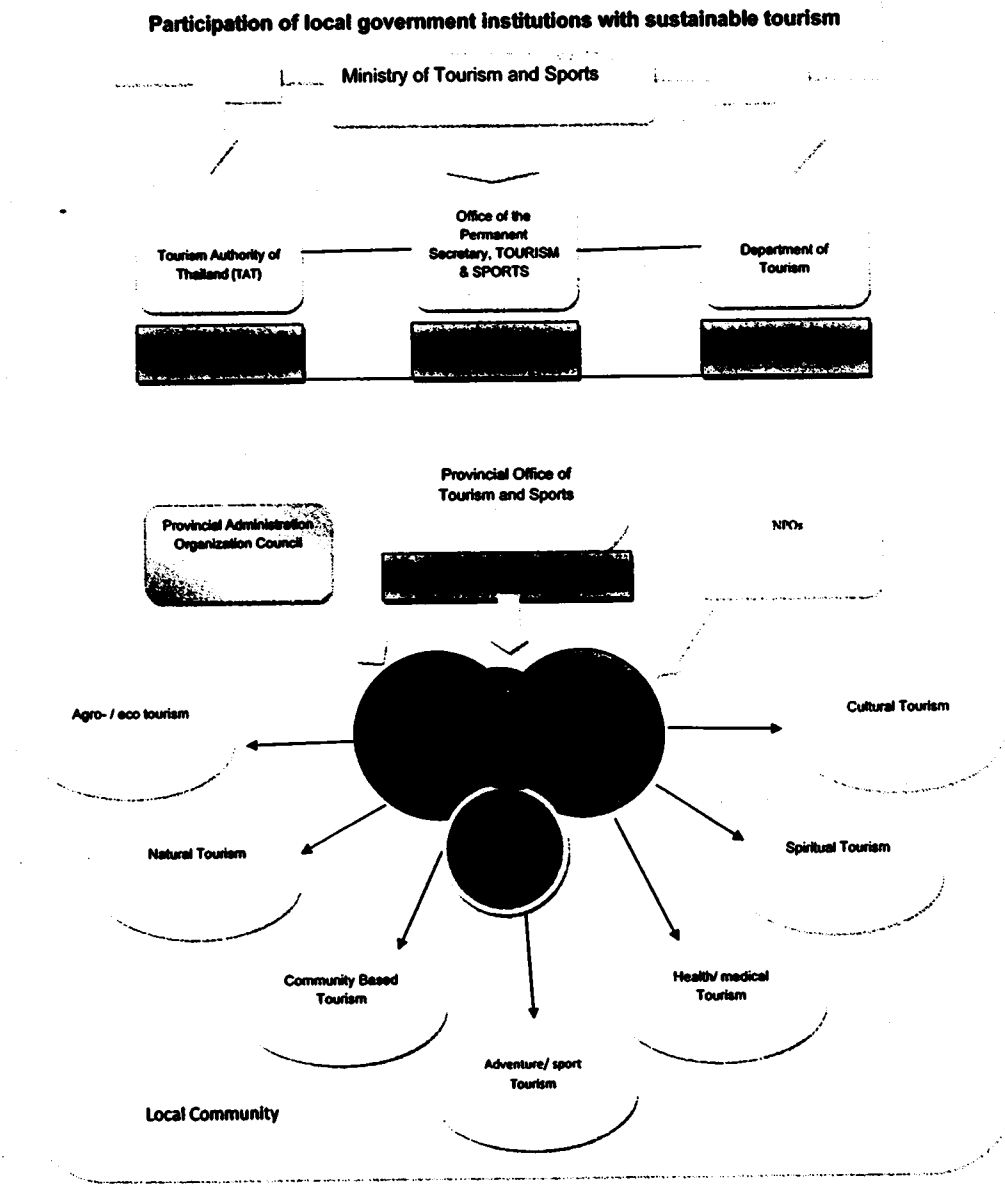
Photo box 3: The Tourism Authority of Thailand Promotes the 7 Greens Concept

TAT's own analysis of the importance of sustainable tourism means that significant resources are being allocated to sustainable and ecotourism. Between 2008-2010, the TAT supported several activities implemented under the CSR-MAP project, lead by the Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association (TEATA). Greenleaf and CBT-I. Noting the difficulty of finding good quality information about ecotourism, the TAT have also invested in several beautifully produced, informative publications, specifically focusing on Community Based Tourism, 'Green,' 'Responsible' and ecotourism. These actions have been explicitly linked to the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the TAT, and the organisation's renewed commitment for sustainability.

Some references include:

- **Local Insight Thailand CBT**, published by Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute and produced by the TAT, highlighting the top 20 CBT communities around Thailand
- **Go Responsible Ecotourism and Enjoy Thailand (GREET)**
- **50 Great Green Escapes**
- **Thailand Green Hotels and Resorts**

In addition to international travelers, the TAT are targeting Thai people to encourage them to travel in Thailand. Three out of 5 target domestic groups have potential for ecotourism and include 1) Adult Explorers looking for new experiences or deep and factual knowledge and interested in special types of travel 2) Family travel to strengthen family relationships, to change the atmosphere and create new experiences together and 3) Young Explorers – mostly students who often want to take a break from school and experience something new.



**Figure 5: Participation of Local government institutions with sustainable tourism**

## 5.2 Policy and Action at Provincial Level

During the local policy study, the team studied provincial cluster level policy, and Mae Hong Son's provincial policies, directly and indirectly related to tourism development. We focused on the roles of organizations directly and indirectly supporting tourism development; budgets and resource allocation; knowledge and skills which these organizations are able to harness to support ecotourism development. The study was divided into 3 areas: 1) Desk review, 2) interviews with organizations and individuals and 3) field visits for first-hand experience.

## **5.2.1 Overview of Provincial Cluster Level**

Mae Hong Son is in the **Upper Northern Cluster** alongside Chiang Mai, Lampun and Lampang. This cluster is promoted as an area of "geysers, ecotourism and adventure, and Lanna civilization." The group's vision for the cluster is "to be a centre of tourism, trade and international investment. Unique with Lanna culture, every society is a pleasant place to be."

### **Main objective of the Upper North Provincial Cluster Development Plan**

"Focus on socio-economic development to increase the provincial cluster's competitive capacity, leading to private sector investment and income to the provincial cluster."

### **Framework to Integrate Provincial and Provincial Cluster Action Planning 2011<sup>1</sup>**

The framework for action planning at provincial cluster and provincial levels requires reference to and integration with national government policy; the National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP); Regional Development Strategy; Issue-based Policies (culture, NR, agriculture, etc.) and the results of research by responsible government offices.

Plans are supposed to be prepared based on the principles of: cross-sector networks, the integration of workplans and projects with provincial strategies, listening to the opinions of local populations in the province through community processes and considering local plans in the planning process, and giving importance to the provincial cluster development plan.

An observation on the specific objectives of the provincial cluster plan is that they are less holistic and more economic focused than the national level plans (such as the NESDP). However, Mae Hong Son was assigned to be a leader in the area of Natural Resources and Environment Management on behalf of the cluster.

## **5.2.2 Overview of Provincial Level**

**The main objective of Mae Hong Son provincial development plan is:**

- "Holistic development covering all areas of economy, society, natural resources, environment, and security in order to improve quality of life, create opportunities and work which meets the needs of citizens of the province."

An observation on the specific objectives of the provincial plan is that it is much more holistic and less economic focused than the provincial cluster plan.

Tourism is consistently listed as one of the top priorities in Mae Hong Son provincial policy, proven by the provincial vision: "A tourism town – preserved in a sustainable manner – uplifting quality of life – developing based on the self-sufficient economy concept."

Provincial tourism strategies give significant weight to strengthening and supporting local communities. The strategies are: to support, promote and organize tourism activities; to develop tourism destinations and basic tourism infrastructure; to improve service models and to develop more personnel for the tourism industry. In addition, to support development of the Royal Project by promoting royal project areas as centers for learning and tourism.

### **Strategic focus on Stimulating visitors to southern Mae Hong Son and Tak Provinces**

Mae Hong Son is the only province in the cluster with transport connections to Myanmar and Tak province. Currently, Mae Hong Son tourism relies on Chiang Mai for arriving tourists. This means that the province is tied to and possibly over reliant upon Chiang Mai tourism.

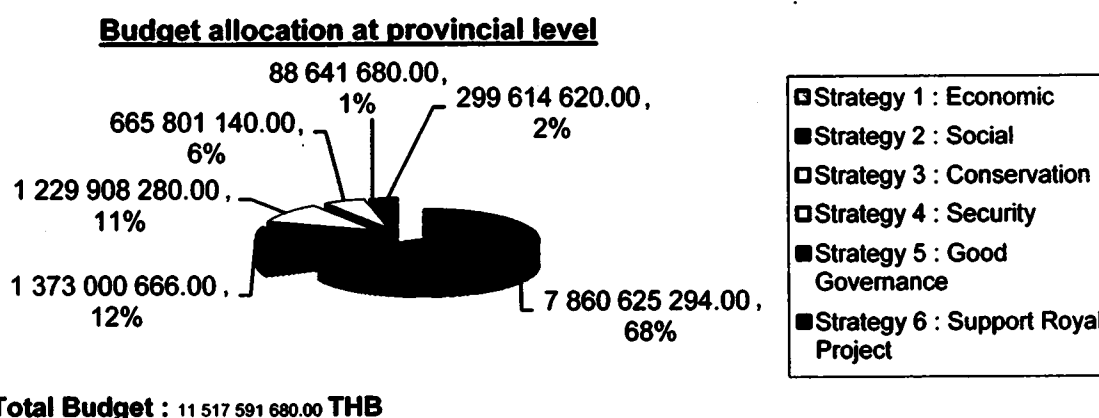
<sup>1</sup> Result of provincial cluster integration policy committee 19 November 2009

To create new opportunities for Mae Hong Son, the province is focusing on strengthening links between Tak and Mae Hong Son, hoping this will open an additional route to visit Mae Hong Son, and also Tak en route. This would also provide more opportunities for southern Mae Hong Son, as travelers would pass Sop Moei, Mae Sariang, Mae La Noi and Khun Yuam.

A clever example of this strategy is the TAT's "3 Mae (mother) Campaign" linking Mae Suad, Mae Sariang and Mae Hong Son. The TAT is already producing attractive maps and information to promote this. The Mae Hong Son Community College team are also preparing communities in southern Mae Hong Son for the expected increase in arrivals. Tak Community College are implementing a similar process, especially in Mae Suad and Ta Song Yang district.

### 5.2.3 Implementation: from policy to action and budget allocation at provincial level

During the desk review the team learned that between 2010 and 2013, the total budget allocated to tourism from the provincial development budget was 1.04 million THB.



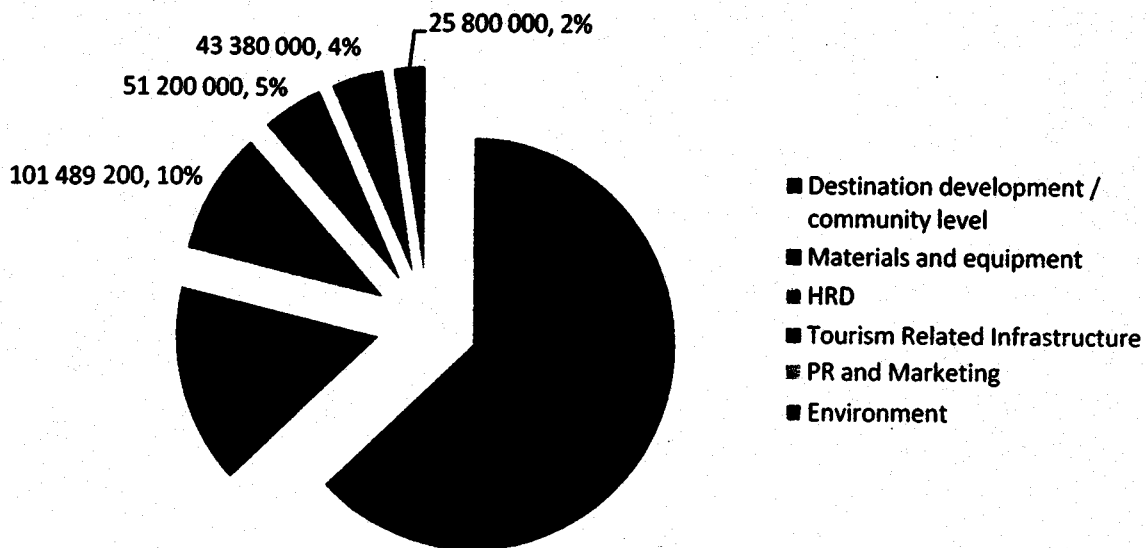
**Figure 6: Budget Allocation for provincial development, Mae Hong Son, 2010-2013**

From this budget, funds were allocated for tourism development by organisations directly responsible for tourism (such as the POTS and the TAT), indirectly responsible for tourism (such as the National Parks Office) and not responsible for tourism, but nevertheless allocating funds which were directly related to tourism development – such as funding infrastructure developments in tourism (or planned tourism) destinations. According to the assessment of this study, the total budget allocated to tourism-related spending, was 1 042 290 340 THB.

**Table 3: Breakdown of budget which was allocated directly for tourism development in Mae Hong Son province, 2010-2013**

	Budget Line	Budget
1	Destination development/community level	656 021 140
2	Materials and equipment	164 400 000
3	HRD	101 489 200
4	Tourism Related Infrastructure	51 200 000
5	PR and Marketing	43 380 000
6	Environment	25 800 000
	<b>Total budget allocated</b>	<b>1 042 290 340</b>

*Note:* The Tourism of Authority of Thailand are directly responsible for marketing tourism. However, their budget for promoting Mae Hong Son is not included in the table above. The TAT are a Government Enterprise. Their budget lies outside the provincial development budget. As an indication, the TAT have a budget of 5 MTB to support marketing MHS in 2011.



**Figure 7: Breakdown of budget allocated for tourism-related expenditure in Mae Hong Son Province, 2010-2013**

The study revealed that very significant budgets have been allocated to tourism development in Mae Hong Son. Most funds were allocated for destination development, especially for construction and materials and equipment. In some cases, budget allocations seem unnecessarily large relative to the project, destination and overall likely long-term value to the province. For example, 80 million Baht was allocated to construct the road to Susa waterfall; 50 million Baht to develop Mueang Baeng hot springs; 24 million Baht to construct a tourist train in Mae Hee, Pai district; 15 million Baht to develop the Kiew Lom viewpoint and 12 million Baht to construct the hot-spring complex in Nong Haeng village. A massive 140 million Baht has also been included in the budget to pay for the proposed cable car project.

An important lesson from the budget analysis is the urgent need for more and deeper public and expert consultations in the allocation of provincial tourism budgets. In particular, while the spirit of localisation and participation in tourism development by district and TAO mechanisms is commendable, tourism planning at local levels must be supported by careful, knowledge-based decisions, including assessments of real local tourism potentials against the scale of proposed investments. It should also be considered that tourism, especially at village and TAO levels, can be developed relatively cheaply if existing local charm is utilized.

An ideal balance would seem to be some destination development, complemented by more investment in building the capacity of local and provincial stakeholders so that they are better able to cooperate to develop tourism which is feasible, value for money, and appropriate to local needs and contexts, the environment and the needs of target tourists.

The table above shows that most budget allocated for tourism remains in the purse of provincial and district government (26%/15% respectively). TAOs received 27% of provincial budget and the Forestry Department 13%. The Provincial Tourism Office received 10% while other government offices implementing tourism-related actions received smaller allocations.

Our observation is that allocation of very large budgets to non-specialist provincial and district governance reflects the importance of government mechanisms in the allocation of tourism budgets, and the lack of a truly integrated and balanced approach in practice to tourism development. Budgets are tiny for highly important organisations, in the context of Mae Hong Son tourism, such as the cultural provincial office and Community Development Provincial office. This could be addressed if the province fully commits itself to an integrated, approach which aims to utilise the full range skills and experience of relevant organisations.

**Table 4: Breakdown of budget related to tourism by responsible organisation**

No.	Name of Organisation	Budget	%
1	Provincial Office	286 613 000	27
2	District Office	176 680 000	17
3	Tourism and Sport Office	95 400 000	10
4	Cultural Provincial Office	4 400 000	Less than 1%
5	Community Development Provincial Office	41 600 000	4
6	Provincial Agriculture Office	3 800 000	Less than 1%
7	Forestry Office/Env. Office	103 944 000	10
8	Office of Commercial Affair/Industry Office	8 000 000	1
9	Public Health	4 000 000	Less than 1%
10	TAO, PAO, MAO	267 123 540	26
11	Community College	12 613 600	2
12	Royal Project	22 640 000	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>1 042 290 340</b>	<b>100</b>

#### **5.2.4 Responsible Tourism organizations at the Provincial Level**

##### *5.2.4.1 Mae Hong Son Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports*

The Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports is the host organization responsible for planning provincial tourism strategy and overseeing the implementation of provincial tourism development. It is conceptualized as a mechanism to coordinate between public and private sector stakeholders. The POTS's work is based on provincial and national agendas.

At the provincial level, Mae Hong Son establishes a tourism development mission in support of the provincial vision. This mission is defined through consultation between all provincial government offices (tourism, culture, agriculture, etc.) during provincial planning workshops. The current mission 2010-2013, is to 1) develop tourism with focus on community participation 2) continually build the potential of entrepreneurs and 3) develop existing destinations and plan new destinations. The POTS is the organization responsible for translating this mission into a provincial level action plan, which they are also responsible for facilitating and overseeing. The current development goal is to "Develop and support eco-tourism in Mae Hong Son, leading to Community Based Tourism Management." The mission/goal will be achieved by:

- Developing homestay tourism to become a learning center for natural resources conservation, arts and handcraft, culture, tradition, lifestyle, and health;
- Participatory Tourism Resource Management. Distribute income fairly and sustainably;
- Restoration of tourism destinations based on the diversity of ecosystems;
- Human Resources Development. Local people will have a sense of belonging and will be proud of their culture which is a community's identity.

In practice, the most important planning tool is the POTS strategic plan, which follows the National Economic and Social Development Plan, and Provincial Development Plan. This plan includes SWOT analysis and is based more firmly on the actual strengths and opportunities of the organization (as opposed to the provincial mission which is much bigger, and beyond the capacity of the POTS with its current resources). The current Action Plan covers Tourism Development Projects for 4 years (2010-2013). The plan has 5 strategies:

- 1) Tourism Resources Development Strategy
- 2) Tourism Management and Development Strategy
- 3) Community Based Tourism Network Development Strategy
- 4) Tourism in Royal Project Area Development Strategy
- 5) Tourism and Marketing Promotion Strategy

#### 5.2.4.2 Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT)

The Tourism Authority of Thailand, Mae Hong Son Office promotes and markets the province according to the policy of TAT's head office. The TAT's positioning of tourism marketing in Thailand is "variety of quality tourism destinations with valuable and impressive experiences".

The TAT's positioning for marketing Northern Thailand is "Classy Lanna Culture," presenting outstanding elements of Lanna Culture merged with unique products and services. The TAT aims to: make tourism a part of daily life, promote networking travel, create perceptions of uniqueness in each area, campaign for responsible tourism, preserve tourism destinations, and promote experiential tourism. TAT's target markets in Northern Thailand are "relaxation plus learning." Target markets to be promoted in the future are "niche groups" and "high income groups." Concrete projects include the Amazing Mae Hong Son in the Green Festival to promote off-peak tourism, the Regional Linkages Road Show, promotions in tourism marts, promoting travel by private car, producing media, and inviting journalists to visit destinations.

#### 5.2.5 Related Organizations (indirect linkages with tourism)

Eco-tourism and Sustainable tourism are also directly related to organizations responsible for 1) Environment and energy, 2) Society and culture, 3) Economy and 4) education and human development. From studying documents and interviewing involved organizations, the research team found that some organizations do not have a mandate linked to tourism but their missions, duties and expertise do in fact contribute or link to eco-tourism development:

##### 5.2.5.1 Community Development Office, Mae Hong Son province

Mae Hong Son province has been supporting the One Tambon One Product (OTOP) program by encouraging groups to register under OTOP. In 2006, 30 of 234 groups earned 1-3 OTOP stars. From such, 3 groups were selected as exemplary groups in the categories of 1) Food: Sesame snack coated with chocolate 2) Textiles/Clothing: Karen woven fabric 3) Utensils/Souvenirs: artificial flowers, and Auang Sae flowers. Moreover, Baan Mae Ping, Pai district, was recognized as 1 of 8 outstanding models of OTOP villages at the national level.

Strengths of the Mae Hong Son Community Development Provincial Office are their area-bases as well as tested capacity strengthening community based organisations. Their tourism strategy is to further develop communities' OTOP products and assist OTOP communities to develop into tourism destinations where visitors can learn about and buy local products.<sup>2</sup>

##### 5.2.5.2 Office of Commercial Affairs, Mae Hong Son

The Department of Intellectual Property, Ministry of Commerce launched a Creative City project to stimulate municipal, provincial and regional economies. Mae Hong Son province submitted an entry under "Mae Hong Son; Living Museum, Sufficiency Economy Lifestyle of the King, and Happy City". The Office of Commercial Affairs is coordinator for the project and has established a committee of new generation staff to coordinate and oversee it. The project builds on concrete work achieved by Mae Hong Son Municipality which worked with the Thailand Research Fund to develop a 'Living Museum,' as a learning center about Mae Hong Son lifestyles, culture and history. The Royal Project centers at

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Community Development Organization Provincial Officer, 9 February 2011



"Ta Pong Daeng" and "Pang Tong" are also learning centers about successful sufficient-economy management.<sup>3</sup>

#### *5.2.5.3 The Provincial Cultural Office*

The strategy of the provincial cultural office is to create immunity among local children and youth by harnessing cultural dimensions in activities and training. The office aims to support local cultural knowledge management, creating economic value from cultural and local assets, while simultaneously preserving, promoting, disseminating and maintaining local traditions and cultures through community-networking of cultural projects in every district.

Knowledge shared by local cultural networks and individual resource people has been collected and published in documents, CDs and on a website. These are valuable cultural resources to support and guide the direction of tourism development, strengthen cultural networks and use tourism as a vibrant tool to preserve, restore and share local culture.

#### *5.2.5.4 National Parks, Parks, and Wildlife Sanctuaries*

Mae Hong Son has 5 National Parks, 12 Sub-Parks, 6 Wildlife Sanctuaries, and 4 Arboretums. The National Park Office's duty is to protect natural resources and the equilibrium of ecosystems. Rules and regulations control tourism destinations in National Parks, under the carrying capacity limits of ecosystems, aims at creating quality tourism, not mass tourism.<sup>4</sup>

The National Park organization specializes in ecosystems and nature interpretation. However, many local communities live in National Park areas. In particular, destinations in these areas are used and managed by hill tribe peoples. Other areas are managed by the National Park Office, which nevertheless requires labour from local people to be porters, tour guides, etc.

The tourism-related challenge is for National Parks to develop as ecosystem learning centers, which support community participation in natural and tourism resource management. If successful, these National Parks could be model areas for participatory co-management.

#### *5.2.5.5 Mae Hong Son Community College (MHS-CC)*

Mae Hong Son Community College provides education for local citizens. It provides short courses, certificate courses, and diploma courses. Every course focuses on developing local occupational skills. From 2011 – 2013, the Community College will use budget received from the Office of the Higher Education Commission to develop a Community Based Tourism (CBT) course in 5 target areas; Mueang district, Khun Yuam, Mae La Noi, Mae Sariang, and Sop Moei. MHS-CC focuses on linking areas in the south of Mae Hong Son to CBT areas in Mae Sod, Tak Province, responding to government policy which wishes to create a transportation network to build up new alternative destinations with less reliance upon Chiang Mai.

The Community College is working with Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I) to develop tailor-made CBT courses appropriate for Mae Hong Son. CBT-I are running a Training of Trainers (ToT) program for 10 Community College staff members, which will teach them how to implement the CBT preparation process in 5 pilot areas. The knowledge and experience gained during the training will help provincial tourism to develop local human resources. In the process, the staff will become good community facilitators and leaders.

#### *5.2.5.6 Department of Energy, provincial office*

The Ministry of Energy has a policy to manage energy sustainably so that the country and Thai people will have sufficient energy. The provincial energy office has launched many energy related projects and

<sup>3</sup> Interview with Creative City Committee of Mae Hong Son, 24 March 2011

<sup>4</sup> [http://www.dnp.go.th/Info\\_office/Info\\_section2.asp](http://www.dnp.go.th/Info_office/Info_section2.asp)

activities such as generating energy from alternative resources (water, wind, solar) projects, how to produce bio-gas from animal wastes project, Biomass Stove project (husk, leaves, sawdust, super clay firepot), one-stop waste management project, how to grow jatropha curcas on neglected lands project and the training courses for professional energy knowledge project. Data from the Mae Hong Son Provincial Energy Office could help support eco-tourism management at all levels to use energy sustainably.

#### *5.2.5.7 Mae Hong Son Skills Development Centre*

Mae Hong Son Skills Development Centre, Department of Skills Development, Ministry of Labour is an organization that develops labourers' skills through training. People who have received training from the centre are in demand from employers and the labour market. Alternatively, they can choose to be entrepreneurs. The training courses are free of charge.

Mae Hong Son Skills Development Centre is also a training centre for the hospitality and tourism industry. Training courses for local people include 1) English for Receptionists 2) English for Food and Beverages Service 3) Cooking Course and 4) a Product Design Course.

#### *5.2.5.8 Mae Hong Son Provincial Social Development Human Security Office*

The Provincial Social Development Human Security Office is an organization mandated to provide financial support to Government Organizations, NGO's, or Community Welfare Organizations. Their budget is for social expenditure, spent through the fund on Social Welfare. Grants are from 50 000-300 000 Baht. It supports work across many issues (children, youth, poverty, etc.) and in many areas (local administration areas, municipality areas).

#### *5.2.5.9 Mae Hong Son Provincial Agricultural Extension Office*

The Provincial Agricultural Extension Office is registrar for groups/organizations who want to establish Small and Micro Community Enterprises under the "SMCE Act." The act aims to support local knowledge and wisdom, create income and community solidarity, develop local management capacity and develop models of SMCE to strengthen community self-sufficiency and community economies which are prepared for future competition. The organization trains SMCE's members to think and study systematically, through independent study and exchange of experiences outside the community, with other SMCEs and private sectors. Mae Hong Son has 383 registered SMCEs. Support for SMCEs is another channel to support small businesses or community groups to access funds and develop their capacity.

#### *5.2.5.10 Mae Hong Son ICT Skills and Learning Development Centre*

Mae Hong Son ICT Skill and Learning Development Centre was established with the objective to be a languages and information technology learning centre, and for communication with the community. Youth and the general public can use internet search tools. The center provides services such as local languages and foreign languages training, Basic Computer Program and Application Training for beginners, Information Technology for entrepreneurs, Language and Computer for community's need, etc. Moreover, the ICT Centre can be a source for tourism information and languages training for tourism staff in Mae Hong Son.

### **5.2.6 Local Governmental Organizations**

There are 50 Local Administration departments: 1 Provincial Administrative Organization, 1 Municipality, 5 Sub-district Municipalities, and 43 Sub-district Administrative Organizations.

Local Governmental Organizations have different roles in tourism management, depending on their level and mandate. In the past, the duty of tourism support and management wasn't defined clearly by law. The constitution of 1997 and a subsequent Act passed in 1999 changed the legal status and

increased the authority of local organizations, giving them a clearer role in tourism. The current constitution of 2007 gives authority to local governmental organizations to be more self-reliant and to direct local development, including decisions related to tourism, as well as to participate in the implementation of national policy, develop the local economy and public services, based on the principle of meeting people's needs.

Duties for tourism support were passed from national to local governmental organizations, for tourism planning, destination development, and to produce promotional materials (articles 16(8), 16(13), 17(14), 23(19), 24(12)). The National Tourism Act of 2008 required committee level representation of local governmental organizations at all levels. The National Tourism Policy of 2008 required representatives of local governmental organizations to be included in the National Tourism Policy Committee. These steps made local governmental organizations important coordination hubs for local tourism development, working with other provincial organisations to support the development and management of local tourism resources.

#### *5.2.6.1 Mae Hong Son Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO)*

Mae Hong Son PAO has a 3 year development plan (2011-2013). Tourism Development is one of the PAO's Strategic Plans. The PAO's direction for tourism development is defined as:

- 1) **Tourism Destinations and Infrastructures Development (electricity, water supply, telephone, transportation);** development of natural and man-made destinations.
- 2) **Promote Arts and Cultural Tourism which is an identity of the community;** provide services for Arts and Cultural Tourism which focus on local identity.
- 3) **Promote Eco-tourism and Home Stay Tourism;** focus on promoting nature-based tourism and local participation.
- 4) **Tourism Management System Development** management of tourism in every aspect, public relations, and tourism factors development which consist of:
  - Personal and material security
  - Public Health; drinking water and food for tourists
  - Human Resources Development; Education and Training
  - Financial support for the tourism industry

#### *5.2.6.2 Mae Hong Son Municipality*

The Municipality is involved in tourism through the Mae Hong Son Living Museum and Walking Street projects. The Municipality works in cooperation with public and private sectors, tour agencies, and communities to develop tourism that is appropriate for local lifestyles so that the community can gain benefit directly. MHS Municipality received a "Sustainable Municipality Award" from the Department of Environmental Quality Promotion (DEQP), The National Municipal League of Thailand (NMT), and Thailand Environment Institute (TEI) in 2009. The awards are based on a criteria that includes 1) being a peaceful city 2) having happy people 3) having a sustainable environment 4) being a learning and development organization and 5) being managed under good governance.

#### *5.2.6.3 Sub-district (Tambon) Administrative Organization (SAO/TAO)*

Sub-district Administrative Organizations (SAO's) are the cornerstone of localization. As the government organizations closest to communities and tourism destinations, SAO's play a key role in defining the direction of Tourism Development. They know their areas very well. The SAO's mandate to develop tourism is; 1) Study, analyze and develop Tourism Promotion Action Plans, 2) develop tourism destinations, 3) develop tourism activities, 4) develop tourism services and 5) raise funds or request financial support from the government.

The challenge with respect to SAO's and sustainable tourism development is that although these organizations do know their own areas, resources and cultures well, their staff rarely have direct experience or specialized knowledge about tourism product development, managing tourism impacts, or markets. Their frame of analysis is therefore limited and tends to be internally focused, without necessarily considering key risks, opportunities, or lack of opportunities created by lack of market potential or competitive advantage. This situation is compounded by little reference to research or expert opinion in local tourism development.

Nevertheless, the potential for SAO's to play a valuable role in researching, planning, and overseeing sustainable tourism development at the community level is unrivaled. A key task for the future should be to encourage SAOs to balance the current focus on destination development, based on local assessments of potential, with serious capacity building, building the necessary vision and skills to enable sustainable tourism at the local level.

### **5.2.7 Border Trade**

Mae Hong Son has borders with Myanmar in every district. People living near the border have frequent contact with one another and trade across the border. The local economy depends on border trade and tourism. There are currently 5 border trade points, established at 1) Baan Huai Pueng, Tambon Huai Pong, Amphoe Mueang, 2) Huai Ton Noon, Amphoe Khun Yuam, 3) Baan Nam Phiang Din, Amphoe Mueang, 4) Baan Sao Hin, Tambon Sao Hin, Amphoe Mae Sariang and 5) Baan Mae Sam Lab, Tambon Mae Sam Laep, Amphoe Sop Moei.<sup>5</sup>

On 21<sup>st</sup> February 2011, Maj. Ji Woon (Marshal of Baan Mai of Loi Kor Province in Kaya State, Myanmar) and Mr Prasert Ostapan (Marshal of Amphoe Mueang, MHS) signed an MOU on trade and tourism, related to cooperation between Thailand and Myanmar in Tourism Development and Human Resources in Tourism Development for sustainable Eco-tourism.

Moreover, there will be cooperation among tourism businesses to attract tourists to buy souvenirs and promote local trade in order to create profit for both sides. On 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011, the travel route at Baan Nam Phiang Din was officially opened and now allows Thai visitors to enter and travel within Myanmar, staying within 50 kilometres from the border.

### **5.2.8 Interviews with representatives of key organizations**

In addition to studying policy documents, the team also interviewed representatives of 10 priority government departments. The results of these interviews confirmed that many government departments have goals and operational plans that might be beneficial in supporting ecotourism in Mae Hong Son province, as summarised below in Table 5.

Four organisations provide capacity building services for tourism:

- ✓ The Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports (POTS)
- ✓ The Community Development Organisation
- ✓ Provincial and District Offices of Culture
- ✓ Mae Hong Son Community College

However, interviewing these organisations about the level of training skills inside their own organisations, revealed that only the Community Development Organisation actually use their own staff to train/build capacity. Other organisations employ outside resource people. This highlights the special importance of this organisation and its potential to contribute towards ecotourism and sustainable tourism development which benefits MHS communities.

<sup>5</sup> PAO Development Plan for Mae Hong Son, 2011

Table 5: Summary of findings from 10 prioritised government departments in Mae Hong Son

Issue	Department of Tourism, POTS	TAT	Commerce – Community Development?	Culture Office	Industry Office	Royal Projects	Community College	Department of Non-Formal Education	Rajabhat University
<b>Strategic role</b>	Direct	Direct	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>Definition of Ecotourism</b>	Educating, Not disturbing nature, Balanced development	Preserving the environment	Natural tourism, To exchange and learn	Preserved by communities participation and informing tourists	Maintaining existing assets, Well managed	Nature preservation	Creating consciousness of local pride, and local participation	Preserving environment and culture	Sustainable management of natural resources
<b>Tourism related projects</b>	Developing resources/ people, standards	Marketing	OTOP, Village	Tour Guide training, promoting culture	Not directly	Sustainable Livelihoods Learning centre/agro/ ecotourism	CBT courses	Not directly	Major: Tourism according to self-sufficiency principles.
<b>Target Groups</b>	Communities, TAO, Tour Operators, Restaurants – hotels?	Domestic and Foreign market		Youth in cultural network – local resource people?	Registered Enterprise groups, 50-60 groups	General public, students, pupils	Target at people who either have M.3 or M.6 qualifications and couldn't study further	Basic level: from illiterate to high school	Bachelor degree
<b>Working area</b>	Every district focusing in Mueang/Pai	Domestic and Foreign	1 district 1 village	7 districts 15 villages	Enterprises registering with Provincial Agricultural Office	Pai basin – Paong Daeng waterside, Pang Tong, Huay Hom, Handicrafts centre	5 communities in 5 districts, southern line	Every sub-district has DNFE centre	No
<b>Key related stakeholders</b>	Royal Projects, Agriculture on highland, Transport office, Police Station	Private Sectors, Media, Public Sectors relating to each event	Public Sectors, Colleges, Communities	Academics, Students, Pupils, Event Organisers, Business Sectors, Tourists	Commerce, Agriculture, Commerce, Chamber of Commerce, Royal Projects	Forestry, Dep. of Agriculture, Department of Agricultural Extension, 22 <sup>nd</sup> Infantry, POTS	TRF, CBT-I, Public Health, Bank, Holders of indigenous knowledge (local wise people)	Mae Fah Luang Thai-hilltribe Learning Centre, Hilltribe Support and Dev. Center	Department of Skill Dev., Tourist Police, MHS Community College, PTOS, Provincial Administrative

Table 5: (continued)

Issue	Department of Tourism, POTS	TAT	Commerce – Community Development?	Culture Office	Industry Office	Royal Projects	Community College	Department of Non-Formal Education	Rajabhat University
Planning	Annual	Annual and updating every 3 months	Annual	Annual	Annual	5-year plan Update yearly	3-year plan Update yearly	Annual	Annual
Budget	Central 1.2 m Bt, provincial budget: 15 m in 2012, none in 2011, 3.8 m Bt in 2010	Bureau of Budget 5 m Bt	Provincial budget in 2011 3.9 m Bt	Central 1.4 m and 300 k Bt from department	100 k Bt for each project	Personal royal budget/ provincial budget	Education Management Budget in 2011 8 m Bt, Special budget from Off. of Higher Education Commission for CBT 1 m Bt	50 m Bt including personnel wages	Received budget from DNFE 7.5-8.5 k Bt per person per semester
Officers/ employees	2 Public servants 2 employees	2 officers 2 employees	No staff directly responsible	Speakers. No staff directly responsible	No staff directly responsible	No staff directly responsible	4 tourism related officers (and others)	No staff directly responsible	12 officers and special instructor
Materials/media	None	Public relations media	None	CD	None	Auditorium/ Tram	Auditorium/ training medium	Satellite	Stadium, Auditorium
Case Study	Pang Ung Mae Kam Pong	Not mention	Lod Cave	Human trade, Film Production	Not mention	Pu Forest	Santichon	Ampawa	Pai
Tourism related content	Directly	Directly	Communities products/ OTOP	Supporting activities, festivals, traditions	Product Standard	Learning Centre/ Following royal path	CBT course, CBT pilot village	Depend on learners' needs	Students in Bachelor degree in Tourism, Public Health, Lanna Spa
Group/Network	North, South, Provincial Group, To Myanmar via Nam Phiang Din checkpoint, By air to Yangon/ Mandalay	Northern/ linked to Tak/ Chiang Mai	Nationwide Mae Hong Son Is one of the 8 'exemplary' villages at Baan Mae Ping, Pai	Local wisdom network	Industrial Centre, Chiang Mai office	Royal Projects, Department of Agriculture, Department of Agriculture Extension, Art and Craft centre	Education office of each district	Transferring education: transferring student on highland to Welfare school	Cooperation between academic rajabhat and Mae Hong Son Community College

Table 5: (continued)

Issue	Department of Tourism, POTS	TAT	Commerce – Community Development?	Culture Office	Industry Office	Royal Projects	Community College	Department of Non-Formal Education	Rajabhat University
Information Services	Website, Printed media with tourism information	Website, map, brochure, CD	Speaker, Academic, coordinate with local resource people	Website	Knowledge about product standard	Speaker, Learning centre	Language centre, ICT in each district	Via DNFE centre in each sub-district	Website, participating in communities activities
Training	Communities such as management on how to be a good host, youth tour guide	Inviting media to visit the area	Training on group management, product design	Youth tour guide, Local wisdom network	Product standard, product development	Self-sufficient concept, mobile speaker	Training courses to fit individual's interest, tour guide, Tourism curriculum	Based on learner's interest	None
What are the most important benefits/opportunities that this organisation can bring to ecotourism development in Mae Hong Son?	Budget, Tourism Experiences, Training support, Linkage with cluster/tourism networks	Budget, Tourism Experiences, PR and Marketing support such as website, brochure, poster, road show, event	Create Associated Product or product design, Training support such as group administrative management, community participation	Database and information of local wisdom, tradition, access to resource person.	Standards, linkages	Links with royal project route, PR, knowledge transfer, linkage, loyalty from Thai people	Training, ICT	Training, Satellite	Training, Education

Note: The study of the roles of different organisations, by reviewing documents and interviews with their staff only enabled the research team to know the duties and resources which these organisations have to support ecotourism. It was not possible to assess the results or efficiency of their work. However, it is possible to conclude that of the 9 organisations interviewed, 7 had plans directly related to tourism. These organisations do sometimes exchange plans, activities, ideas and experiences at district and provincial committees and forums. However, they rarely work in the same areas, and rarely co-implement projects in the field. Therefore, opportunities to integrate their specialist skills and experience in practice are limited.

## **5.2.9 Private Sector**

### **5.2.9.1 Mae Hong Son Chamber of Commerce**

This is a commercial trade association which gives a voice to the private sector, and coordinates between public and private sectors. The chamber is used as a mechanism to negotiate with government, and facilitate maximum private sector benefit from trade, rules and regulations. Their role in tourism is generally limited to one-off activities, such as issuing statements on behalf of the industry, for example to re-introduce flights to Mae Hong Son.

### **5.2.9.2 Mae Hong Son Tourism Association**

Members of this organisation are tour operators, tour guides, hotels, resorts, restaurants and hire vehicles. The association was established in 1995, but has lacked consistency of work, support for its leadership and participation of its membership. Currently, the association's main functioning role is to maintain relations with the Association of Northern Tourism Federations in order to coordinate PR and marketing opportunities for Mae Hong Son.

### **5.2.9.3 Credit Union Cooperative – Guides, Guesthouse and Friends**

The Credit Union Cooperative developed from the Guides and Guesthouse Club, which was originally established to create cooperation between guests houses and guides to support a successful tourism industry. This organisations coordinated government support to get MHS guides legally licenced. The members knew about tourism law, tax, etc. Because MHS tourism is highly seasonal, the club had to consider the issue of how to help members during the low season, for example by enabling loans in the off season. Now, the group is registered as a cooperative. Membership has been extended to include a much broader membership. Results of the cooperative in terms of provincial tourism development – represent members by selling tax free products at the border. It opened the Nam Phiang Din border for tourism.

### **5.2.9.4 Pai Tourism Association**

This association was founded in May 2010, to facilitate participation and develop the potential of Pai to be a sustainable tourism destination as well as to create a forum for the private sector to exchange ideas and support each other, and cooperate with local people and communities in Pai. This organisation has been initiated by new generation of tourism operators who have witnessed a decline in popularity, and wish to ensure that Pai remains a popular destination, and that the industry can be environmentally and community friendly.

### **5.2.9.5 Community based research node, Mae Hong Son**

This organisation was established to support and develop the quality of community based research in MHS, to ensure that it is appropriate to and linked to the reality of local problems/issues in the provincial context, and to encourage exploitation of research results at all levels from community to provincial policy. In the past, the TRF node has supported CBT research projects at village and provincial network levels, and built community capacity through using research outputs as a resource and frame for local tourism planning. E.g. Ja Bor, Mae La Na, Santichon, Yunan Chinese Network (Santichon, Roon Arun, Rak Thai).

### **5.2.9.6 Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I)**

The CBT-I team work to harness community based tourism as a tool to develop people and communities. This includes coordinating cooperation with tourism operators – in particular tour operators and guides – to work cooperatively with community members to develop and market CBT. CBT-I also lobby for support of CBT at policy level. The founding members of the CBT-I team have worked in Mae Hong Son since the 1990s. They have played roles in development of the Department of



Tourism's Homestay standard. They are also working in partnership with MHS Community College to develop a CBT Curriculum to strengthen the capacity of local people and communities in MHS to manage tourism sustainably.



**Photo box 4: CBT-I facilitating linkages between communities and tour operators**

### **5.3 Study of Related Research**

The CBT-I team identified 22 research papers/reports related to Eco-tourism which the team considered relevant to Mae Hong Son. The study found that significant, high quality research had been conducted. However, research results have rarely been used in tourism planning and development. Even high-quality research results are not being used to optimum benefit.

Lack of application of research outcomes may also indicate that research topics are being defined according to researchers' academic interests but not necessarily being tailored to the priority needs of organizations with a mandate to support and promote tourism.

Research literature in the last 10 years, can be grouped into a set of approaches and topics which could benefit provincial tourism planning, as below:

#### **Approaches**

1. Systematic Research
2. Issue Base Research
3. Area Base Research

#### **Main Topics**

1. Area-based Collaborative Research to develop Mae Hong Son area
2. Biodiversity, history, ethnicity in Mae Hong Son
3. Case Studies of Tourism: Best Practice and Tourism Impacts
4. Tourist Behavior and Mae Hong Son people's opinions towards tourism
5. E-tourism

Important and useful research documents identified during the study are listed in the table below, with their key contents, results and recommendations summarized.

**Table 6: Summary of relevant literature on ecotourism in Mae Hong Son Identified during the Baseline Study**

No.	Research Title/Author/Org.	Key content
1	TRF. 2007. <i>Area-based Collaborative Research to develop Mae Hong Son area – ABC</i> , Mae Hong Son.	To support research and area-based knowledge management with cooperation from government bodies, the public, private and academic sectors. The research aimed at local development, emphasising improving quality of life and reducing social differences in target areas by prioritising and uplifting local people's well-being. Research concentrated on <b>basic needs 4 + 2</b> : consisting of food, clothing, medication, accommodation, energy and sanitation. The main results were: <b>The development of spatial databases with the participation of the community to define solutions to land rights problems, community development and the management of forest resources in Mae Hong Son province.</b> The research objectives emphasised applying and integrating spatial information systems with local communities' participation. The results were 1) directions and processes in management and protection of local forestry resources in Mae Hong Son, 2) a database of locations of accommodation, spatial land boundaries and basic information on farmers from participatory areas which are utilised by local communities and 3) database programmes on community resources and eco-social information. <b>Remark:</b> the above databases would be highly useful assets in setting sustainable development plans.
2.1	Project to develop bodies of knowledge and studies on policies on biological resources management in Thailand (BRT), Mae Hong Son, 2000	11 research projects since 1997 consisting of flora (orchids/fern), living creatures (fish, bird, dwarf snail) and wild animals including salinized soil, land and cave study as well as study on ways of life, culture and history of local people. Basic body of knowledge created on preservation and development. It has been publicised via media such as the discovery of dwarf snails as the newest species of fish in the world. The discovery that Mae Hong Son is a potential destination for fresh water diving, as well as information covering the diversity of orchids, ferns and birds, has confirmed strongly that Mae Hong Son is rich with biological resources and ancient cultures, deserving to be developed into a city of eco-tourism.
2.2	TRF. 2001. <i>Eco-tourism: Diversity in culture and resource management</i> , by Suntasombat, Y. Bangkok	The research concludes that, considered an 'underdeveloped' and ethnological borderland, local people in Mae Hong Son are frequently the objects of travel and tourism. The basic challenge of eco-tourism is therefore to strengthen communities by providing support to local organisations in managing resources, recovering environmental consciousness and cultural, and racial self confidence, as well as create mutual learning process between tourists and local people, and develop efficient tourism management, thorough and fair income and benefit distribution. Eco-tourism can then be a highly useful tool to motivate local communities to preserve and develop their natural and cultural resources sustainably.
3.1	Archaeology on highland, Pang Ma Pa district, Mae Hong Son province from. Research period: 2 years between 2001 to 2003 (Available at <a href="http://www.rasmishoocongdej.com">http://www.rasmishoocongdej.com</a> )	The results of this research can be summarised as followed: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Contributed to a much improved understanding of the history of societies and cultures of highland peoples. The research showed that highland peoples were not isolated (as was previously believed), as there were evidences of continuous interconnection among groups, since the late Pleistocene period (about 22 190 years ago) until present days.</li> <li>2. To create new important body of knowledge regarding archaeological period, Pleistocene and Holocene, in Thailand and South East Asia.</li> <li>3. The discovery of 3 Homo sapiens skeletons, aged as the oldest, in Mae Hong Son. The information from this discovery is essential towards the contemporary understanding and further study of human evolution in Thailand.</li> <li>4. New knowledge relating to ancient environments in micro scale. This information will be beneficial to understand ancient climates in macro scale, either in Thailand, South East Asia or elsewhere in the world.</li> </ol>

**Table 6: (continued)**

No.	Research Title/Author/Org.	Key content
3.2	<p><b>TRF. &amp; Silpakorn University. 2009.</b>  <i>Searching and managing cultural heritage sustainably in Pai, Pang Ma Pa and Khun Yuam Districts, by Chusomdej, R. Mae Hong Son.</i></p>	<p>An important discovery in the first step of this research project was to create an improved archaeological – historical – anthropological knowledge base concerning the core connections between people from different sub-districts:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To better understand the history of social and cultural development during the prehistoric period;</li> <li>2) To uncover new knowledge about the Lanna period in Mae Hong Son. Archaeological evidence shows that Pai and Yuan were the fortress towns during the Lanna kingdom;</li> <li>3) Accumulated history from these two districts helps us understand the way of life, economy and society from the period of King Rama V until the present day. This is local history which had never been studied before;</li> <li>4) To see a possibility that present communities in Pai and Khun Yuam might be related to history of settlement in each period of time. Ethnic native peoples are Mueang, Tai Yai and Lua. While the first migration in Khun Yuam and Pang Mapha was discovered in 18<sup>th</sup> century, which was in accord with verbal history. The first groups who migrated in were Tai Yai and Mueang as well as Pkakeyor, Lahu, Lisu, Mong and Chin Haw.</li> </ol>
4	<p><b>King Phrajadhipok's Institute and Mae Hong Son Community College. 2010.</b> <i>The network reinforcement between parliament and civil society in tourism, Mae Hong Son.</i> Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University.</p>	<p>The research evaluated people's opinions towards tourism development in different dimensions: nature, culture, communication , management and how to promote Mae Hong Son to be a special area for tourism as well as connections to Myanmar. From a representative sample of 1 096 people, (the majority were male (68.89%) and living in Mae Hong Son (84.12%)), the majority of people thought that tourism will encourage economical growth (27.19%) while the second biggest group thought that tourism will encourage cultural exchange and increase income for local people (27.19% and 12.68% subsequently) and only 1% thought of other benefits. The main problems that impact tourism in Mae Hong Son were considered to be poor road surfaces (40.94%), long journeys (30.03%) and smoke &amp; fog (14.29%). Respondents thought that tourism would cause more waste (31.93%), higher cost of living (19.43%) and teenagers would learn bad behaviour from tourists (13.69%). Local souvenirs most popular among tourists were homespun fabric (24.45%), basketwork (16.79%) and dolls (16.06%). The tourist attractions that should be recommended to tourists as a priority are temples (21.82%), trekking (21.57%) and cave (19.57%). Furthermore, it's suggested that whenever tourism-related projects are designed and operated, local communities should be involved prior to their operation so that local people will be able to truly participate in managing tourism. Besides, it also prevents other impacts from tourism in other aspects.</p>
5	<p><b>Chuaybamrung, T. 2009.</b> <i>The role of local administrative office towards sustainable tourism development based on sufficient economy concept,</i> Bangkok, King Prajadhipok's Institute.</p>	<p>The Local administrative office plays a vital role in strengthening sustainable tourism development because it's the organisation which is closest to communities and tourism destinations. The office understands and knows the area the best, therefore, it can adapt directions and trends in developing local tourism to fit in with the local context. Recommended processes for promoting sustainable development by local administration are 1) creating participatory roles at every level of partnership 2) promoting via learning processes 3) developing standardised and well-accepted indication tools and 4) supporting networks.</p> <p>The project developed an excellent manual for TAO, PAO and the Municipality, which is categorised into 6 chapters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Tourism context</li> <li>2) Development concept and development of tourism for sustainability</li> <li>3) Thailand and path towards sustainable tourism development</li> <li>4) Directions of development for local administrative office in order to create potential of sustainable tourism development</li> </ol>

Table 6: (continued)

No.	Research Title/Author/Org.	Key content
		<p>5) Techniques for supporting local development on sustainable tourism</p> <p>6) Processes on tourism development in each community: lessons from community</p>
6	<p><b>Chuchart, C. 2009.</b> <i>Tourism in sufficient economy concept. Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai Rajabhat University.</i></p>	<p>Presenting the concept of development for sustainable tourism, based on the sufficiency economy concept in order to support local communities to be able to manage tourism in ways appropriate to their way of life and local cultures.</p> <p>Definition of tourism in sufficiency economy concept: It's tourism that is suitable to an agricultural social context, consisting of integrating farming, tourism programmes and accommodation built with local materials and culture, integrated with modern technology, restaurants and healthy herbal drinks, souvenirs, health services, tour excursion and services. These are in accord with local wisdom, supported by technology in order to create an innovation that will provide satisfactory service to consumers and relating to sustainable tourism. Interesting recommendations from the research are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tourism is an area requiring knowledge. Stakeholders should operate tourism development based on knowledge</li> <li>• Tourism according to the sufficiency economy dimension can be operated along side agriculture. It is similar to one aspect of an integrated farming system that can generate income to local people throughout the year</li> <li>• Business enterprises in Mae Hong Son should be run on small or medium scales but with international standards and will be more resilient if they operate other sideline business apart from tourism.</li> </ul>
7	<p><b>Anomasiri, W. 2004.</b> <i>Study of oriental philosophy, a model for eco-tourism in Mae Hong Son</i></p>	<p>This research sought an Eastern model of ecotourism, but integrating key Eastern concepts into the ecotourism model. According to the study, the key elements of oriental philosophy that can be used to integrate with eco-tourism management are peace, simplicity, harmony, balance and moral actions. These can be used as a core to create indicators and main elements of eco-tourism development in the future. An improvement in public utilities and services should present the Orient such as utensils made of bamboo, funding that supporting activities including market research.</p>
8	<p><b>UNESCO. 1995.</b> <i>Case Study on The Effects of Tourism on Culture and The Environment</i>, by Kesmanee, C. &amp; Charoensri, K., Bangkok.</p>	<p>From this study, it was found that the impacts of trekking tourism varies from locale to locale. Tourism is invariably an encounter between two very different cultures. But this does not invariably provide an opportunity for the hosts and the visitors to learn from each other. Instead, contact between the tourist and the villager is often largely mediated by the tour guides who play the role of a cultural broker. In addition to opportunities for cultural exchange, the distribution of income earned from trekking in a local community is not always be widely distributed. The recommendations in the study are made in order to contribute to the development of sustainable trekking tourism. Cooperation among all parties involved is important. Community organizations must be involved in planning and servicing visitors. Thus, it is important that tour operators should work hand-in-hand with local community organizations. This will lead to a situation wherein tourists can gain an understanding of the interrelationship between the environment and the local people and their culture.</p>
9.1	<p><b>ESCAP. 2001.</b> <i>Tourism Review No. 22: Managing Sustainable Tourism Development</i>, by Thullen, S. &amp; Rattanasorn, T.</p>	<p>This research summarized best practices and lessons learned from community based tourism in Huay Hee Karen village, Huay Puling sub-district. According to the paper, the people of Huay Hee learned that tourism should be considered a supplementary income, since it was a seasonal activity. With training and support from the Project for Recovery of Life and Culture (PRLC) and Responsible, Ecological, Social Tours Project (REST), local people were empowered to use their knowledge of traditional agricultural methods of subsistence farming to be self-reliant in food and to show tourists the role of agriculture in their everyday way of life. The</p>

Table 6: (continued)

No.	Research Title/Author/Org.	Key content
		<p>community-based sustainable tourism project implemented by Karen villagers at Baan Huay Hee in Mae Hong Son Province can serve as a model for other communities. They can be empowered to control the impacts of tourism, avoid degrading the environment and create a stronger, empowered community. NGOs can help spread the concept and provide training, but then they must step back as villagers work together to find ways to make the CBT project succeed. The most sustainable form of tourism will be achieved when local people take control of their lives and determine to live according to their own traditions on their own terms.</p>
9.2	<p><b>Chinakam P. 2004.</b>  <i>Community participation on eco-tourism management: case study at Baan Huay Hee, Mueang district, Mae Hong Son province.</i>                      Chiang Mai University.                      (MA thesis)</p>	<p>Main recommendations made by the study include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training about eco-tourism in order to create clear common understanding;</li> <li>• Gather useful tourism information to be used as database for development;</li> <li>• Increase the number of distribution channels to reach more potential customers;</li> <li>• Provide training in how to use Thai and foreign languages correctly;</li> <li>• Develop more tourism programs with more variety, such as local cooking classes;</li> <li>• Government should provide more support for eco-tourism managed by local communities in order to strengthen communities and preserve nature and the environment sustainably;</li> <li>• Conduct further spatial case studies and develop models of community-based tourism.</li> </ul>
10.1	<p><b>Manit, T. 2007.</b> <i>Impact of tourism development on local communities: case study at Wieng Tai sub-districts, Pai district, Mae Hong Son province.</i>                      Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai University.</p>	<p>Changes in Pai had begun since 1997 with mostly physical impacts: land use, building and construction causing overcrowding, disorder and impacts on the environment. A sharp increase in population overloaded the basic infrastructure capacity. Income from tourism was not widely distributed, while local communities had to face higher costs of living, alongside decreased use of traditional costumes, language(s), as well as effects on local beliefs, values and traditions. It also caused social problems such as those relating to drug use, robbery and reduced cooperation and cohesion inside communities. The research proposed that to reduce such negative impacts, creating consciousness in the community is not likely to be sufficient. Communities need to be strengthened/and community capacity be developed in order for local people to be able to find a balance between tourism development, and nature/culture conservation. Tour operators were considered to be key stakeholders, who have to operate programs responsibly to achieve success.</p>
10.2	<p><b>Swangkong, K. 2010.</b>  <i>Community Tourism Development: A Case Study in Pai.</i> Phitsanuloke, Naresuan University.</p>	<p>Pai is a small community with many limits in terms of both natural resources and management capacity. People who are concerned about tourism in Pai hope to see Pai developed in appropriate ways so that it can continue to be a sustainable tourism destination. However, the community does not have good, effective tourism management. Both local people and outside businessmen need to learn and apply effective tourism management concepts, combined with developing genuine sustainable tourism. Coordination and cooperation among all sectors is essential in order to create the correct direction and balance between tourism development and sustainable tourism in Pai and nearby communities. The research recommended that planning for tourism management and tourism development in Pai should include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An explicit policy or plan by the provincial and/or district governments to fulfill the needs of all stakeholders;</li> <li>• Local government needs to publicize all tourism development plans to members of Pai community;</li> </ul>

**Table 6: (continued)**

No.	Research Title/Author/Org.	Key content
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Co-operation among people in the community and improved relationships between local people and provincial and district governments.</li> </ul>
11	<p><b>Panduangneth, T. 2010.</b>  <i>Research on local learning centre for supporting tourism and career development managed by community, Santichon.</i>                      Chiang Mai, Chiang Mai University.</p>	<p>The learning centre consists of 2 sections: 1) An inside exhibition hall used to exhibit different aspects of local culture, as well as another hall dedicated to local wisdom with presentations using banners, a computer with a DVD player that introduces the community (5 minutes in duration), and 2) an outside area that is used for participatory activities. This location allows tourists and interested customers hands on participation in local community activities, such as local games: archery with a crossbow, Yunnan wooden swings and mule riding to explore the communities. Visitors are guided by youth tour guides who provide information on their community. A management team, consisting of 10-15 local people under the title "Yunnan China Cultural Group Baan Santichon" administers the center. The admission fee is 10 baht per person with costumes available for rent, with photographs charged at 40 baht per costume.</p>
12	<p><b>TRF. 2010. Initial design and feasibility study for Mae Hong Son Living Museum.</b> by Tiengburanatham, P.</p>	<p>The Living Museum is a new social space to learn about the ways of life and lifestyles of real, living people in MHS. The process followed to create the living museum in Mae Hong Son is different from general museums, in aspects concerning levels of local participation, and a focus on the preservation and maintenance of community members' normal ways of life, through understanding, communicating and putting the goal of cohabitation at the heart of the process. The living museum is overseen by the Nam Mieng Council, whose members are mainly elders of the communities participating in the project, and who act as advisers for local government. The "Living Museum Project" has 3 important roles, which include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) To act as a network centre in communicating the meaning and value of local identities in order for local MHS people and local communities in Mae Hong Son to value, appreciate and to be proud of their local identities;</li> <li>2) To act as a network centre to preserve valuable cultural objects in each community and to create connections linking the area to facilitate the preservation of cultural objects in other communities;</li> <li>3) To act as a hub to create people-to-people connections between different communities in Mae Hong Son and to encourage cooperative networks of people and communities with positive consciousness of their homeland.</li> </ol>
13	<p><b>TRF. 2010. The network development on cooperation on natural resources preservation and alternative energy to promote stability along border, Mae Sariang district, Mae Hong Son province.,</b> by Sermsuk B. Chiang Mai, Lanna Rajamangala University of Technology.</p>	<p>The report presents results from a case study on the development and evaluation of local technology undertaken at Baan Nhong Kao Klang, Huay Pu Long sub-district, Mueang district, Mae Hong Son. The study found that local technologies such as smokeless stoves, rubbish incinerators; power generators and small electric generators are able to efficiently combine alternative energy use with participatory usage of natural resources. Moreover, use of local technologies can even help to resolve problems and to increase self-reliance inside communities. The majority of recommendations in the case study related to processes for facilitating exchange in communities, including facilitating participation, participatory learning and team work. The project also provided a model of how to make the subject of energy less academic and more accessible for local community members. Thai society has a lot of local wisdom. Local people, local organizations, private development organizations and academic institutes now have many successful experiences operating and participating in developing different forms of alternative energy, which are sufficient to provide energy solutions for their communities.</p>

**Table 6: (continued)**

No.	Research Title/Author/Org.	Key content
14	<p><b>Malagrong, B.</b> 2009. <i>Developing a System of Agricultural Management to Strengthen Communities Surrounding Pai District, Mae Hong Son.</i> Chiang Mai, Lampang Agricultural Research and Training Institute under Lanna Rajamangala Institute of Technology.</p>	<p>This study involved use of a spatial survey and enquiry about agricultural production which was used to create a database to inform more sustainable land management among communities surrounding Pai. The aim was to support communities around Pai to utilize land for food production, rather than selling land for resort development. The research sought ways to add value to agricultural production and local products by generating income from the tourism industry, and also to promote Pai as a sustainable agro-tourism destination. The research found that the majority of communities around Pai do value their land and want to be self-reliant. However, they lack competent/relevant and, continuous support from local Government. Many communities have skilled leaders who tend to rely on themselves first when solving problems or considering how best to develop their communities. They want their communities and ways of life to survive amidst the huge changes being created by tourism and urban culture. Some communities are successfully preserving local cultures and traditional ways of life. They wish to manage land and develop agricultural products successfully, so that they can protect their land and generate income by adding value to agricultural products sold to tourists. The study also reported that local communities in the research area wished to develop ecotourism and agricultural tourism in their communities, under local management. These included a Karen weaving group at Baan Mae Ping, a Lahu community at Baan Huay Yhai, a Chin Haw community at Baan Santichon, an alternative farming network at Baan Mae Na Teung, a matron group at Baan Wieng Tai and a farmers group that grows wheat at Baan Wieng Nua. According to the research, such a development approach is supported by resort enterprise groups that targets tourists for leisure and health.</p>
15	<p><b>Pongsakornrungsilp S &amp; Pongsakornrungsilp P.</b> 2004. <i>E-Tourism: New Marketing Channel for Tourism Businesses.</i> Surathani, Walailak University.</p>	<p>E-commerce is a modern distribution channel which uses the internet for trading and exchanging tourism products, and which facilitates 2-way communication with/between tourists world-wide. It enables information that is needed by tourists for planning their travels by searching for information about destinations and for estimating budget costs prior to their making travel decisions and plans. While tourists are in the process of travel preparation, they often book a flight, reserve accommodation or decide to use services of travel agents before making bookings. Communicating via internet can facilitate and make everything more convenient and quicker. Besides, it can also reduce the operating costs and expenses from a tourist operator/provider's perspective. Moreover, the internet provides more control of reservation systems, and offers the opportunity to advertise products and to launch new ones. E-commerce can be categorized into:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Business-to-Business (B2B)</li> <li>2. Business-to-Customer (B2C)</li> <li>3. Customer-to-Customer (C2C)</li> <li>4. Customer-to-Business (C2B)</li> <li>5. Business-to-Government (B2G)</li> </ol>
16	<p><b>Tourism Authority of Thailand.</b> 2005. <i>Research study project on behaviours of high-income tourists for Thai tourists.</i> Bangkok.</p>	<p>The study's major findings were as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Behaviours and factors that have impacts on decisions when making a journey;</li> <li>2. Market group of high-income tourists include: 1) Social Self-Indulgence: these are mostly entrepreneurs who lack time and need to relax, prefer comfort, and relax in privacy, 2) Easy-Going: these enjoy hanging out with friends, and going to different places mainly to have a good time with friends, 3) Adult Explorers: they search for new experiences, focus on feelings and 'genuine' or 'authentic' knowledge, and are interested in specific tourism aspects, 4) Family Planners: they travel to strengthen family relationships, seek a change of</li> </ol>

**Table 6: (continued)**

No.	Research Title/Author/Org.	Key content
		atmosphere and explore new experiences together, 5) Young Explorers: are mostly students who like to search for new experiences in life, want a break from education and to experience something new; 3. Marketing strategies and packages demonstrating programs for high-income tourists.
	<b>Tourism Authority of Thailand.</b> 2010. Trend of tourism analysed by Future Brand, <i>E-TAT T.</i> , 1.	FutureBrand conducted a study on trends related to travelling and tourism in Thailand and found that there were 3 main factors affecting future tourism trends, which include 1) value, 2) planning and 3) authenticity. Moreover, there are 10 possible trends that are significant for tourism and for creating branding in a country. These include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1) Fear &amp; Loathing</li> <li>2) De-leveraging</li> <li>3) Back to Basics</li> <li>4) Digital Diets</li> <li>5) Enoughism</li> <li>6) Imby's</li> <li>7) Seriousness</li> <li>8) The Human Brain</li> <li>9) Eco-Wars</li> <li>10) Fear of the Unknown</li> </ol>

#### **5.4 Summary of the impacts of tourism identified from the literature review**

Learning lessons and concluding from the past impacts of tourism is useful for future ecotourism planning. Based on the literature review, tourism impacts were communicated across three areas of economy, socio-cultural impacts and impacts on the environment.

##### **Socio-economic Impacts**

- 1) Research conducted in Pai by Swangkong (2010) revealed that the high cost of living in Pai has created many problems, such as theft, prostitution and drug selling. In addition, the study revealed that relationships inside Pai had changed considerably. Young people working in the tourism industry were highly individualized, less interested in volunteering time to the community, and expected money in exchange for all work performed. This has led to a decrease in participation in community activities compared to the past.
- 2) Research conducted by Malakrong (2010) on sustainable agriculture in Pai has shown that land use in Pai has changed from agriculture to tourism. Labour had also moved away from agriculture, towards tourism. Community members are now much more reliant upon the outside world. The cost of living has become more expensive. Socio-cultural deterioration has occurred, as a result of tourism which has developed too quickly, without direction, and this has impacted agricultural communities who were already in a difficult situation. Local people have begun to sell their land. After this, they go to find work in hotels and the tourism industry. Gradually, this has led to a more consumerist society. According to Malakrong there is now more debt among local people. As a result of this, farmers are gradually selling more of their land to pay off their debts. When there is no more land to sell, they are moving further into the forest, encroaching on protected areas and creating impacts on the environment.
- 3) Research conducted in Pai by Swangkong (2010) showed that because local people had limited funds to invest, they were unable to compete with outside investors. The local government tried to assist by organising promotional fairs which allowed local people to sell local products.



However, according to the research, outside investors still benefited more than local business owners and communities. Local people felt the situation was unfair. Also, they suffered due to the higher cost of living, compared to the past or to areas located further outside of Pai town.

### **Environmental Impacts**

- 1) Research conducted in Pai by Swangkong (2010) showed that protected areas had been encroached on by hotels and restaurants. Tourism growth has contributed to the destruction of natural resources. Increased population due to tourism has also made public services difficult to manage. Before, there were enough resources for local people – e.g. water, electricity, now there are often power cuts and water shortages.
- 2) Piles of unmanaged waste have created health problems for local people. Dirty water and large piles of garbage have been dumped outside the town areas and there is a lack of planning to deal with such.
- 3) More serious problems were being experienced during the rainy season, due to reduced forest cover to hold water. More frequent droughts are evidenced during the summer months.
- 4) Outside operators tend to focus more on short term gains. Many sellers arrive in the high season for a short time only. They camp in tents and do not pay tax. When they leave, they do not clear up, leaving litter for local people to manage.

## **5.5 Key Observers and Influencers' Survey**

Aside from reviewing academic articles, it is important to listen to people's opinions about tourism development, in particular committed citizens who wish to work for creative change. An important part of the study was interviewing "key observers and influencers" and listening to their perspective on the situation of tourism in the present and directions for the future. Because the 'product-market survey' section of the study focused on the private sector, the team tried to open a space for alternative thinkers in Mae Hong Son to input into the study, including academic and NGO perspectives. The core of the interviews were perspectives on the current state of ecotourism in Mae Hong Son, and interviewees opinions of key factors for success or failure. There were 5 interviews. The results of the interviews are summarized below:

### **5.5.1 Respondent 1**

Tourists can now plan travel themselves via the internet. However, Mae Hong Son still lacks knowledge of English and computers. So if MHS stakeholders have knowledge of foreign languages and IT, it will assist tourists to communicate directly with local people. Capacity also needs to be developed urgently in the areas of efficient management, in particular by educating local people and providing ongoing training, encouraging community networks, tourism service networks and allowing the Mae Hong Son Community College to participate.

#### **Factors for success**

- 1) Community Organisation Council needs to help strengthen civil society by providing support/encouraging people to unite and work together/recognition by law
- 2) Development should be based on local resources/tradition/wisdom
- 3) Supporting and developing communities to be equipped with knowledge and skills

#### **Factors for failure**

- 1) Lack of knowledge/creativity. If people are equipped with knowledge, development can be enhanced with vision and direction

- 2) Lack of unity undermines creativity and the capacity to compete
- 3) Law and Rule to prevent outsiders coming in to utilise resources uncontrollably
- 4) Lack to academic information to lead a society
- 5) Lack of awareness of safety

### **5.5.2 Respondent 2**

Although Mae Hong Son is recognized for its preservation of culture, what people do is only to carry on traditional cultures. But, they cannot recover old culture for the next generations. People haven't yet had a voice in setting the direction of tourism on the provincial stage. Even with pure nature and charming culture, tourism is still not a really effective tool to change tourists' behaviours to preserve nature, environment and respect for local people. Nevertheless, if tourism development is to go forward, it's vital to plan and persuade civil society/local community/local administrative to participate. It's important to let the local community have a voice in limiting tourist numbers, collecting a fee to enter the province (because it can be accessed by 2-3 roads only). Local people should be encouraged to start tourism businesses. Outsiders should be taxed at a reasonable rate if they want to run business locally (if it's impossible to prevent the outsiders coming in, they should at least be taxed. And, money can be used to develop the local community). As tourism is organised by using public resources, it's necessary to manage resources sustainably. And, communities need authority to manage and establish policy on how to use resources for tourism purposes.

In the past, factors of failure in tourism industry were that staff didn't have correct information to inform their work and there was not enough continuity in working processes. The working system was designed as one-size-fit-all, which caused problems in finding the right solutions. It obstructed the ability to solve even a small problem because the system wasn't facilitating appropriate management and was also unable to provide any budget for it. This led to a decision for bigger projects and results to show that money had been spent inefficiently.

### **5.5.3 Respondent 3**

For ecotourism to be successful, it has to be operated seriously according to a real body of knowledge, continuity, and with participation. The government has to pay serious attention and provide support continuously. Local communities have to be recognized and realize the potential role of tourism in developing the community. Local people need positive attitudes towards self-sufficient, development based on existing social assets and local cultures.

Ecotourism shouldn't be marketed as a fashion or a trend. But, tourists and people involved should be introduced and awareness should be created. Tourism should be developed from identity. The market will follow because, for example, visitors are increasingly interested in authentic local experiences. In order to give this issue more authority, it's essential to make it a provincial agenda, not just an announcement. Every sector should participate and have a role. However, Mae Hong Son should be developed with agriculture as its main goal and tourism as additional income. Priority on peoples' development, instead of tourist attractions.

Lessons have already been learned from Baan Huay Hee, Huay Tong Ko and Mae La Na communities about the limitation communities with regard to tourism development. These communities prove that tourism can be operated on the community scale. However, communities were not able to create change or adapt well to changing situations. Because they lacked sufficient information and their leaders lacked correct understanding. However, Santichon is an exception. Its leader was able to adapt and turn the situation around to benefit the community and create employment and income for local people. They are strong enough to negotiate with government department and business sectors at Pai.

#### 5.5.4 Respondent 4

Economic growth doesn't necessarily help local people to have better lives. Difficult questions need to be asked about exactly how tourism has benefited local people and what damage has been done. Cultural management done by outsiders is usually a failure and lifeless, especially without local participation. Mae Hong Son's unique selling points are that it's a small town, rich with nature and still preserving living, local cultures. Information should be based on facts, which is the main reason why tourists choose to visit. They shouldn't expect comfort from Mae Hong Son as it's generally known as a mountainous town. A clear image created by tour operators will be used to filter types of tourists. If to further the development, lessons from Pai's over-development should be learned and used as an immunity. Every sector needs to agree on benefit/impact and participate in the process.

#### 5.5.5 Respondent 5

Disasters and unrest are currently effect the mass tourism industry, but do not have a big impact on the majority of people in Mae Hong Son because they do not depend for their livelihoods on tourism, except for tour operators. Considered in a different light, crisis might be an opportunity for ecotourism because people may begin to realise the importance of the environment and, then, they would agree more with responsible tourism. Crises might be an opportunity for people to question and search for more meaningful ways of tourism.

A challenge in developing Mae Hong Son in the future is how to use research for local benefit in order to provide answers on challenges like food security, natural resources management, tourism and education. Pai district has a challenge on conducting a research that will unite local people to participate in order to truly respond to community's needs.

#### 5.5.6 Overall outputs of the Key Influencers and Observers Survey

- ✓ Many talented, experienced people live in Mae Hong Son, who love the province and are committed to making a contribution to sustainable tourism. Mae Hong Son already has many high-quality ecotourism products. Lessons learned and these local resource people need to be more involved in tourism planning and development.
- ✓ In general, interviewees see tourism in a positive light. However, they do not want Mae Hong Son to over-rely on tourism. They believe 'quality' tourists like MHS because it is peaceful and natural. They prefer to maintain the current 'natural' atmosphere rather than strive to increase tourism income at any cost to culture and environment.
- ✓ Several interviewees stated that success requires long-term planning and consistency. However, responsible government officers move often, which is an obstacle. As local people are less likely to move, they are well placed to work long-term. Opportunities should be created for them to influence, participate in and benefit from tourism.
- ✓ Interviewees consider educating local people to prepare them to manage tourism sustainably is crucial, so they understand tourism development and have capacity to participate and benefit. More budget should be allocated to building local capacity.
- ✓ Government commitment/vision/agenda/process are also essential for success.

## 5.6 Ecotourism Training

The final part of the Policy and Stakeholders Study was a review of training support provided by provincial organisations with a mandate to support tourism. Data came from a desk review plus interviews with provincial government and NGOs that are involved in supporting ecotourism<sup>6</sup>. The Table 6 below summarises current training opportunities, which are being made available in Mae Hong Son for tourism operators and suppliers, as communicated in the plans of 7 organisations which were identified as providing training related to ecotourism:

**Table 7: Summary of current training opportunities**

Name of org.	Human Resource Dev./Management	Product Dev./ Standard Dev.	Marketing/PR	Environment/ Sustainable Energy
<b>MOTS and TAT<sup>7</sup></b>	1) CBT Management 2) Good Hospitality 3) Tourism managed by Sufficiency Economy Principles 4) Homestay 5) CBT Network 6) Support Royal Project: volunteer tourist assistant; guide; CBT management	Homestay standard	Media, radio spot, TV spot, posters, roadshows (TTM/TTF), big event <sup>8</sup>	How to produce organic fertilizers from organic wastes and other rubbish
<b>Community Development Org.</b>	Group management	OTOP product development		
<b>Provincial Industry Office</b>		Product dev. Study tour		
<b>MHS Community College</b>	In Plan: Professional Guide for CBT	<i>Extra Training can be provided upon request from Civil Groups – MHS-CC will organise and coordinate to identify appropriate facilitators</i>		
<b>Provincial Energy Office</b>				1) Biodiesel 2) Natural gas from animal waste 3) Chiva Muan Stoves 4) Waste management
<b>Department for Env. promotion</b>		Green Acc standard		
<b>CBT-I</b>	SMS guide training CBT Management CBT Standards CBT Networks	CBT product dev. to meet the needs of target groups	1) Cooperation w/tour operators 2) Appropriate marketing	

<sup>6</sup> It is important to note there will be additional training/marketing support opportunities provided from the national level, to which Mae Hong Son people may be invited – such as issue-based trainings organised in Chiang Mai, Bangkok, etc. It was not possible within the time allocated for this study to review these opportunities.

<sup>7</sup> Budget plan 2011, Mae Hong Son POTS

<sup>8</sup> Provincial Tourism Marketing Strategy, by TAT

It can be noted from the table above there is virtually no training planned for many of the most important actors involved in delivering ecotourism: tour operators, tour guides, hotels and restaurants, despite the fact that the industry is experiencing serious challenges and needs to adapt to a rapidly changing environment (e.g. sustainable tourism, competition, IT, recession). There needs to be more balance between support for communities (essential) and for the other crucial actors which need to work together for ecotourism to succeed.

### **5.6.1 Human Resource Development and Management Capacity**

Supporting Community Based Tourism is an important goal of the **Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports (POTS)** and is also central to their Action Plan 2011, where-in several planned training courses are mentioned. Strengths of the POTS are that it provides training free of charge, and trainees consider government training to be credible. Weaknesses are that training programs are often too short in duration, compared to the importance and depth of the issues. Moreover, the POTS outsources training to external experts, so there can be a lack of consistency. Quality ultimately depends on who is available to conduct such training.

**The Mae Hong Son Community College (MHS-CC)** is implementing a 3 year action plan (2010 to 2012) in cooperation with **Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I)** to train their teaching staff and to develop a Community Based Tourism curriculum for the college. The curriculum aims to support 5 communities in 5 districts of Mae Hong Son to develop CBT from preparation through to market linkages, as well as to build MHS-CC staffs' overall capacity to support CBT development in Mae Hong Son. CBT-I will have the role of Trainer of Trainers and coach to the MHS-CC staff, who will then facilitate the CBT process. MHS-CCs strength is that training does not have to be included in their annual plan. If a common need is expressed by local citizens, MHS-CC can provide the requested training. As an academic institution, they also provide an academic certificate. MHS-CC are also prepared to deliver training in the field.

The CBT-I team has played a lead role developing communities' capacity and facilitating cooperation between tourism stakeholders to plan, manage, market, operate and monitor CBT in Mae Hong Son since 1997. CBT-I are able to organise their own training programs, based on lessons learned by CBT-I in Thailand, as well as from regional networks (e.g. in Cambodia, Indonesia, Laos, Sri Lanka, Vietnam) related to all areas of CBT development, management, operations and marketing. CBT-I are often asked to organise and provide resource people for other organisations. Training is provided on request. The strengths of CBT-I are their deep, hands-on knowledge of community based tourism across the country and across sectors. The weaknesses of CBT-I are that they lack sufficient staff to follow up needs quickly across their target communities, as well as their reliance on external funding.

The specialist training team of the **Community Development Organization (CDO)** offers a one-stop-service, including best practices and field bases for the conduct of training in subjects covering local participation and group management, and local product development (OTOP). Its strengths includes having professional and experienced facilitators as well as access to many target communities. Their tourism strategy, which begins by developing a product (OTOP) and then works to use the product to attract tourists, has some product development and marketing weaknesses as it is not certain that communities with the potential to develop crafts will be suitable for community based tourism. OTOP communities in Mae Hong Son are still generally not able to attract consistent visitors. It is also a limitation (from a tourism perspective) that the organisation focuses on marketing channels for OTOP products i.e. dealing in trade, rather than engaging with tourism industry mechanisms (e.g. TAT). Nevertheless, this expertise is very useful in terms of adding value by expanding market channels for communities' local products.

Youth-related capacity is also developed through hands-on opportunities to learn and maintain local culture, facilitated by the **Provincial Culture Office**. The organisation has collected a great deal of valuable knowledge, recorded in documents and CD formats. They can offer knowledge, resource people and interesting communication and learning processes. However, these resources have still not been fully utilised in training for tourism.

## **5.6.2 Product and Standard Development**

Standards create confidence and credibility among consumers. The process of standards development includes capacity building. Four organisations in MHS are responsible for supporting various product standards from Thailand Central Government including:

- 1) Homestay Standards by the Department of Tourism working with the POTS;
- 2) OTOP standards coordinated at provincial level by the CDO;
- 3) Community product standards coordinated by the Industry Standards Office;
- 4) Thai Green Hotel Standards by the Department for Environmental Quality Promotion.

Organisations responsible for standards implement surveying and training processes for interested groups and suppliers to orientate, inform, apply for certification, and be audited. Usually, there is also some training provided. These Central Government initiated programs tend to focus on provincial clusters<sup>9</sup> with Chiang Mai as a training hub, rather than organising training in Mae Hong Son. More capacity building in Mae Hong Son would, however, certainly be useful, since many tourism providers live in remote areas of Mae Hong Son.

TAT's **Thailand Tourism Award** also recognises quality tourism. Tourism suppliers can apply for an award themselves, and then a team of experts assesses the quality of their application. Mae Hong Son has received several awards. The study identified additional opportunities to use national level tools more vigorously to lift standards and build capacity in Mae Hong Son.

## **5.6.3 Marketing and Market Development**

Marketing for tourism in MHS support still focuses on facilitating reduced cost and promotional opportunities for tourism suppliers, rather than proactively building suppliers' skills and knowledge to access markets. Suppliers are availed opportunities to attend trade fairs and roadshows, (e.g. TTM Plus, OTOP). However, while such opportunities are potentially rich for hands-on capacity building (coaching suppliers how to market effectively at such events), this element of 'on the job' training has not yet been exploited in a systematic way.

CBT-I have piloted a hands-on training curriculum to support CBT marketing, focusing on building CBT group members' capacities to work effectively with tour operators, by linking their CBT projects through 10 action steps with members of the Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association (TEATA), as well as international responsible tourism partners. The Mae Hong Son CBT specialist tour operator, Tour Mueang Tai, for instance, is enrolled on a Dutch government funded program to attend EU trade fairs and to receive expert advice.

## **5.6.4 Environment and renewable energy**

Mae Hong Son has a solid foundation in managing destinations to be learning centers for environmental and tourism management, including Sustainable Natural Resource Management (NRM) and alternative energy. The Royal Project, National Parks, and NGO's have been doing this for over a decade. National Parks have nature trails to educate visitors. As well, National Park authorities conduct training for their rangers in nature interpretation.

CBT-I training for local community tour guides focuses on building their capacity to interpret the relationships between local communities and their cultural and natural resources. The Provincial Energy Office also provides training to communities on how to produce biodiesel, create natural gas from animal waste, and organise community waste management.

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<sup>9</sup> Clusters are groups of neighbouring provinces. MHS is part of the upper northern cluster, with Chiang Mai, Lampang and Lampun. See section 5.2,1 of this report for information on provincial cluster tourism policy.

In practice, local villagers often use small quantities of free, naturally available energy, e.g. hot springs, so they do not tend to place much importance on alternative energies. This is an issue that is considered more important in MHS city where more power is consumed, and it is an expense for tourism operators. Destination-level management, including environmental management and programs to "green hotels" are beginning to receive support. However, they are still not widely practiced. This is partly because there are still not very many tourists currently visiting MHS. Organizations consider that there is insufficient volume to necessitate large investments in waste management. In relation to this point, it must be noted that this study has revealed that in and around MHS's main towns there is definitely insufficient implementation of zoning, planning of water and land use for hotels. This is an urgent need.

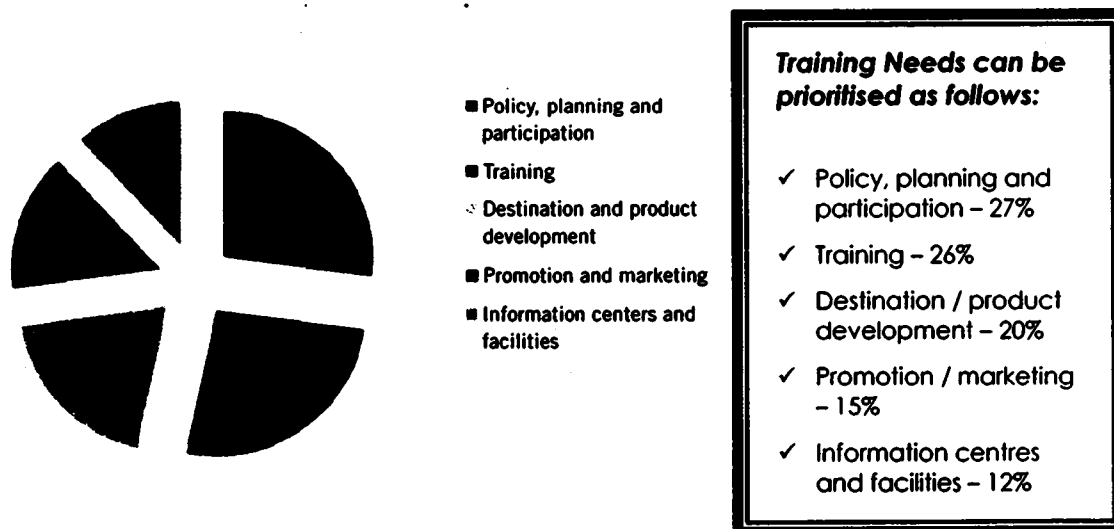
## 5.7 Stakeholder's actual training needs and other priority needs for government support

A training and non-training needs assessment was conducted by in depth interviews with 30 professionals from 6 groups which included<sup>10</sup>:

- 1) Tour Operators in Mae Hong Son and Chiang Mai
- 2) Professional Tour Guides in Mae Hong Son, Pai, Mae Sariang and Chiang Mai
- 3) Small, medium sized and large hotels in Mae Hong Son and Mae Sariang
- 4) Restaurants in Mae Hong Son, Pai and Mae Sariang
- 5) Community leaders in the target areas
- 6) Representatives of community organisations in the target areas.

The following issues were used to stimulate discussion during the interviews:

- 1) **Tourism product:** facilities, infrastructure, planning, HRD, management, hospitality and service mindedness, operations and monitoring/follow up;
- 2) **Tourism Marketing:** promotion, information, stakeholders' marketing knowledge, skills and attitude, stakeholders and partnership, funds, tourists and tourists' needs;
- 3) **Government support:** expectations for government support, areas where they are already receiving good support, areas where they require additional support.



**Figure 8: Training and support needs and profile of tourism stakeholders in Mae Hong Son**

<sup>10</sup> See attached annex 2, name list for policy study interviews

Most respondents had between 5-9 years experience (12 people), 9 had under 5 years experience and with 7 over 20 years experience.

Specific issues raised by respondents related to each issue are as detailed below:

#### 5.7.1 Policy, planning and participation

- ✓ Initiatives to support local communities/local areas legally enshrined rights to introduce and enforce rules and regulations to better control tourism development;
- ✓ Establishing and effectively controlling carrying capacity (e.g. at Pang Ung, where the local government have used authority to establish a local management system);
- ✓ Protect and proactively support local culture, including support for cultural leaders;
- ✓ Limiting/preventing the sale of land to outsiders;
- ✓ Development should not overly rely on tourism/tourism income. Agriculture should be seen as fundamentally more important, for example ensuring there is sufficient land and water, adding value to agriculture, placing importance on quality of life;<sup>11</sup>
- ✓ Assisting tourism suppliers, in particular SMEs to compete, when more outside investors are coming into the province, with more resources. This is increasing the cost of living and operating costs for local suppliers who are also suffering from the competition. Local suppliers want training and support through a revolving fund for local SMEs;
- ✓ Government staff need to be more consistent, with more tourism expertise, and with clearer roles and responsibilities. Government organisations need to cooperate and share expertise from product to market and hold training in the field, rather than centrally;
- ✓ Tourism development to improve the quality of destinations. E.g. standard pricing and zoning (such as the Walking Streets mainly selling real/authentic local products).

#### 5.7.2 Training

Priority needs for training varies according to the different requirements of different groups such as the following:

##### 1. Tour operators:

- Language skills for professional tour guides, especially German and French;
- More in depth knowledge of tourism destinations (esp. nature/CBT destinations);
- Increasing the quality of tour guides and finding ways to keep guides employed during the low season, when many guides leave. When trained guides do leave in the low season, it is considered to be a waste of tour operators' training resources.

##### 2. Professional tour guides:

- Skills to work in target areas, including training in flora, fauna (birds), ethnic cultures;
- Language skills, in particular English, French German and Spanish;
- More profound knowledge of all aspects of the tourism industry, including training in communication skills for local tour guides.

3. Accommodation: Energy and water saving training, recycling, waste management, and improving hygiene practices for staff of hotel restaurants.

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<sup>11</sup> TAO President of Mok Champae and Khun Chan, ecotour guide, in interviews – this needed



#### 4. Restaurants:

- Provide training in communication, waste management and hygiene. To increase local peoples' understanding of tourism and how to be a good host;
- More short excursions to be developed, for tourists having busy schedules.

#### 5. Community leaders:

- Local tour guide training, CBT management and marketing for community groups.

#### 6. Villagers in the UNJP target areas:

- Communication and language training, CBT management, motivation and how to stimulate the people's participation process, and in marketing to reach appropriate types of tourists, who are really interested in an experience of local Thai life.

#### 5.7.3 Destination and product development

- Interviewees questioned the processes for prioritising areas for tourism development. There is a need for feasibility studies to investigate local potentials before developing destinations;
- Many stakeholders criticized the allocation of tourism development resources, such as for building roads, 'beautifying' caves, developing viewpoints, etc. They observed that construction is often not appropriate for the natural surroundings. Respondents also communicated that unnecessarily large budgets have been used to develop minor attractions, which could be developed with more charm for less expense.
- Increase income through tourism, such as through helping to market local souvenirs;
- Private sector want to see the development of environmentally friendly products, or to design products which (better) reflects the identify of the local communities;
- Artistic design of local products, rather than focusing only on sales and volume.

#### 5.7.4 Promotion and marketing

- Marketing based on reality which creates a clear image of ecotourism and CBT;
- Marketing should target specific niches, such as nature enthusiasts/EU markets, and linkages with supply chain partners in order to stimulate demand for local products.
- Such assistance is required for tourism products (i.e. to link CBT projects in the itineraries of tour operators) and also to expand market channels and linkages for souvenirs. For example, through helping local producers to increase their market potential by increasing market channels through links with convenience stores, hotel chains, restaurants, etc.

#### 5.8 GAPS between training planning and tourism stakeholders' actual needs

From studying government plans and budget, alongside feedback and responses from community members and tourism stakeholders in Mae Hong Son, it is possible to see gaps and opportunities to strengthen all sectors to improve ecotourism quality in Mae Hong Son.

##### 5.8.1 Policy, planning and participation

- 1) *Capacity building for to use legal instruments to protect local resources:* SAOs have legal authority to manage local resources and establish rules to control the impacts of tourism. However, more capacity building is needed to put these legal instruments into practice by developing local rules and regulations to protect local resources;

- 2) *Gaps related to agriculture:* 1) the agricultural sector needs to be better protected from having essential resources such as water and land monopolized by the tourism industry; and 2) more initiatives to add value to agricultural products, and stimulate market linkages (e.g. production of organic foods for "green hotels"). This could be a way to encourage local people not to sell their land, and maintain livelihoods and cultures.



**Photo box 5: Challenges of how to manage resource distribution between tourism and agriculture**

- 3) *More integration in the field between organizations:* The gaps here are that it is perceived as too difficult for organizations to cooperate in practice because it makes work very dynamic and it is more difficult to control results. Organizations prefer to implement with their own teams to optimize achievement of results. The challenge is how to make cooperation attractive and manageable for organizations.
- 4) *Reducing price competition and increasing quality competition.* Seen from the perspective of local businesses, there are systemic challenges because of the ease with which outside investors can establish new operations in the province. Links between Pai and budget traveler distribution channels in Bangkok (from Khao San Road) and from Chiang Mai are also undermining prices by setting low benchmarks. Combined with promoting Pai as 'trendy,' this is impacting the provinces brand and positioning.

The TAT's current positioning of Mae Hong Son as a high value 'Green' destination should already help the province attract quality markets, such as educated, affluent independent travelers. Sustainable tourism standards need to be further harnessed to assist tourism suppliers to improve quality and improve competitiveness. A tailored support package for local businesses and SME's would help them to position their Unique Selling Propositions (USP) and compete. Beyond this, respondents shared that weak tourism associations in Mae Hong Son are adding to the challenges of local businesses, which must work out more creative and practical ways to cooperate.

- 5) *Low interest credit facility for SMEs.* The Ministry of Social Development and Human Security Provincial Industry Office of the Thai Tourism Fund have loans available for development purposes. However, suppliers often lack information, or are unable to access such, so they did not borrow.
- 6) *More resources for culture, more participation by the provincial cultural office in tourism planning and development and more use made of resources and resource people:* The province has many resources which can be used. They also need more resources to support cultural leaders and stimulate cultural events in Mae Hong Son.

## 5.8.2 Training

- ▶ If capacity building for sustainable tourism is to succeed, it must begin from a single, common understanding of the meaning and goals of sustainable tourism and be led by a consensus on the role of tourism in provincial development, including how far and to what scale tourism should and needs to be developed. Planning needs to consider and take into account that many stakeholders in Mae Hong Son, across sectors, do not want to develop tourism too much! They prefer a cautious approach!

Moreover, 'sustainable tourism' is a range of interrelated and interdependent services. Target groups cannot be considered in isolation. Training needs to be rolled out systematically across sectors, from feasibility studies, through planning and development, operation, marketing and monitoring the impacts of the key sectors: tour operators and tour guides, hotels, restaurants, transport and CBT.

- ▶ Foreign languages – there is already government training available in English, Italian and Spanish but there is need for further training in English, Spanish, French and German languages given the mix of tourists now visiting Mae Hong Son.

- ▶ Training for different categories of service operators:

### 1. Tour operators:

- ▶ *Increase specialist knowledge in natural and cultural tourism destinations.* There is not such a gap in resources. The gap is collecting and disseminating resources, updating resources and increasing access to resources by tourism stakeholders. More use should be made of existing knowledge already developed by various organizations.

### 2. Professional tour guides:

- ▶ *Skills in interpretive guiding to create interest and inspiration.* There are guide training programs, but most focus on the fundamentals of being a tour guide. However, there is a need for specialist training to develop professional guides in specific areas such as flora and fauna, and traditions of local ethnic groups. There is also need for more specific training to help professional guides work with and backstop CBT groups. This is essential to reinforce the USP of Mae Hong Son as an outstanding ecotourism destination. A further need is in prioritizing field training needed to be undertaken.

### 3. Accommodation and restaurants:

- ▶ The Department for Environmental Quality Promotion (DEQP) is rolling out a green hotel standard in Mae Hong Son. Further training is needed in areas such as energy and water saving, waste management as well as improved hygiene. At least, DEQP's training processes, resources, etc. could potentially be used by other organizations. Alternatively, the MOTS and POTS, or Greenleaf Foundation could be invited to work with Mae Hong Son province to implement green hotels certifying processes.

### 4. Community leaders and villagers in the UNJP target areas:

- ▶ *Strengthening group management.* Training in this area is available. However, strengthening community capacity needs to be considered as a long-term process covering all essential steps from product to market. Training must be of longer duration and be more frequent, tailored to cultural and natural contexts and adapted to the needs of key participant groups. (e.g. be adapted to community leaders, homestay hosts, local guides, etc.).

- More training for communities to participate in marketing. This should be practical, such as empowering community members to check how they are being marketed, to which groups, and also to participate in travel fairs and roadshows.

### 5.8.3 Destination and product development

- *Preparation and feasibility studies:* Some preparation is conducted for local communities which want to develop tourism. However, a more systematic approach is needed for selection, budget allocation and capacity building in destinations. Detailed feasibility studies, informed by research and from expertise guidance;
- *Appropriate development of destinations:* There are gaps preventing, for example, appropriate landscaping which blends in with already beautiful natural surroundings; zoning and appropriate development of view points/nature and culture trails/natural and shopping areas. As well, budgets allocated to development of some attractions are considered disproportionate to their potential as tourist attractions;

The MHS Government has appropriated sufficiently large budgets to build and develop destinations. The gap is in designing destination developments which enhances the charm of the destinations and does not destroy existing natural and cultural advantages. Also, building the capacity of local people to manage tourism destinations (e.g. in Nong Haeng, Mueang Pon, 20 million THB has been spent to build green coloured bathing room. There is still no plan to manage/prepare community members to provide needed services or for managing the site: health and wellness trainings – massage – food – marketing planning – or guidelines to prevent land changing hands from community members to outsiders is very much needed;<sup>12</sup>



**Photo box 6: Hotsprings development at Nong Haeng Community, Mueang Pon, Khun Yuam**

- *Designing products to support local identity.* Responsible agencies acknowledge the importance of this issue. There exists a lack of sufficient inclusion of experts and youth as well as local artists in the process. There is a need for a process to consistently support this work and utilize creative energy in such events and initiatives. The province has the raw materials but it's not being facilitated;
- *Environmentally friendly products* – in addition to local identity, environmentally friendly products are an important trend among consumers. Operators are aware of the importance of this trend. Responsible organisations need to develop clear plans for addressing such;
- *Create themed routes/destinations:* to include shops, authentic and charming walking streets to improve the quality of tourists' experience. There is not sufficient management of local markets. Areas like the walking street need to be better managed in order to add value to genuine local products.

<sup>12</sup> Interview with the vice-president of Mueang Pon TAO, during field survey March 2011

#### **5.8.4 Promotion and Marketing**

- *Strengthen the image and positioning of MHS as an ecotourism destination in order to reach target markets with high interest in ecotourism.* Quality tourists with spending power – such as tourists from EU countries – if promoted actively – could support TAT's strategy to link MHS and Tak province;
- *Distribution of community products in addition to selling souvenirs to tourists:* Plans are needed to increase market channels in convenience stores/hotel chains, etc. while also promoting community destinations so that they become well known. The private sector requires assistance from MHS Government to guarantee quality and to assist with promotion.

#### **5.8.5 Environmental sustainability**

- *Training about sustainable energy and waste management:* Government organizations are focusing on supporting local communities in this area. This is very low volume. Hotels, restaurants, etc. actually use a lot more resources and thus represent a more appropriate target group for training in environmental issues. Many stakeholders are ready and wish to engage and wish to reduce costs and help with NRM.

## 6. Mae Hong Son Ecotourism Product-Market Inventory

### 6.1 Desk Review: Existing and Potential Ecotourism Destinations in Mae Hong Son

#### 6.1.1 Desk Review Process

A survey was conducted to identify different ecotourism destinations and "destination specific ecotourism activities"<sup>13</sup> in Mae Hong Son, through use of the following methods:

- ✓ Web searches in Thai and English (tour operator websites, online chat rooms, etc.)
- ✓ Media searches in Thai and English (magazines, articles, guidebooks, brochures)
- ✓ "Mae Hong Son Ecotourism Product-Market" interviews
- ✓ Detailed checks with tour operators from Mae Hong Son, Mae Sariang, and Pai
- ✓ A follow up check was conducted to ascertain whether an identified destination was already an "established" tourism attraction or only a "potential" attraction.

A broad frame for identifying "ecotourism" activities was used<sup>14</sup>, including nature-based and cultural attractions, village visits, development projects offering knowledge to the public and local products centres, set up as projects to help local communities sell their products.

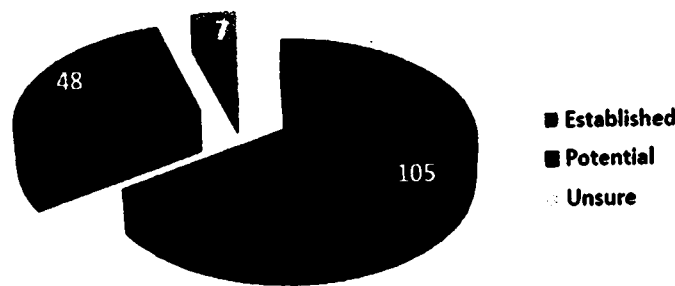
Destinations and destination-specific activities were divided into the following categories:

- ▷ National Parks
- ▷ Mountains and canyons
- ▷ Waterfalls and rivers
- ▷ Hotsprings
- ▷ Caves
- ▷ Nature based activities (e.g. elephant riding, rafting in certain specific places)
- ▷ Temples/Monuments/museums
- ▷ Village visits/CBT/Homestays
- ▷ Culture based activities
- ▷ Development projects open to the public
- ▷ Local product centres (set up as a project, not just as a general handicrafts shop).

<sup>13</sup> This refers to specific activities being offered in a specific place, such as "rafting along the Pai river."

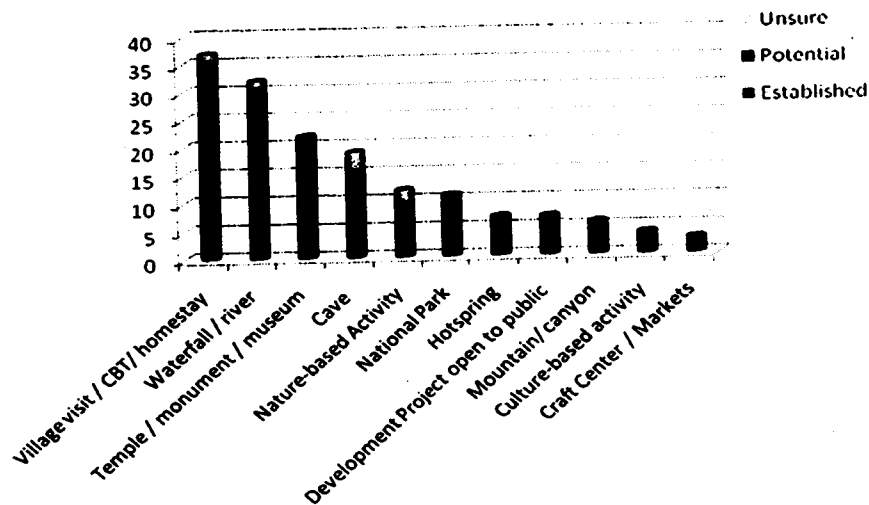
<sup>14</sup> Originally, the team intended to present more information about each destination, including positive and negative impacts on the environment, levels community participation and benefits, etc. In many cases, however, such information was not available. There was usually no research mentioning the destinations and even tour operators were often unable to give us any details into these issues. In sections 6.2.2.5/6.2.2.6, we report on destinations which stakeholders considered to be "best practice" and "at risk of negative impacts." Beyond this, the full inventory of 160 destinations/activities (see annex 6) needs to be regarded as "approximately ecotourism." The inventory is a useful indicator of the overall situation in terms of nature and culture based tourism activities which are being promoted and visited in each district. Site surveys are necessary in order to ascertain how far each destination strictly adheres to the principles of ecotourism.

### 6.1.2 Overall outcomes



**Figure 9: Showing the breakdown between established and potential tourism destinations and destination-specific activities which were identified during the product-market inventory**

The CBT-I team identified a total of 160 destinations or “destination-specific activities” which tour operators were promoting and/or the media had covered, or tourists were discussing on online forums, or were being suggested by printed or online guides, or were otherwise discovered during the survey. Through further searches and follow-up discussions with local tour operators, the team were able to assess that 105 of these were already established destinations for tourists (albeit sometimes for small volumes of visitors). Some 48 destinations were not yet well established. The fact that these attractions had been mentioned by tourists, the media, etc., lead to classifying them as having “potential.” It was not possible within the time available to visit all of these attractions. Visits to each destination would be necessary to ascertain exactly what level of potential each site has for tourism development, as well as to what extent each site could be considered a genuine ecotourism destination.



**Figure 10: The numbers of established and potential tourism destinations and destination-specific activities which were identified during the product-market inventory**

The survey clarified that Mae Hong Son is a classic nature and culture destination with superb ecotourism resources. The largest numbers of destinations/activities identified were in the categories of “village visits/CBT/homestay” (37) and “waterfalls and rivers” (32). If these attractions are well managed, including ensuring tangible benefits for the environment and local communities, Mae Hong Son could become a world-class ecotourism destination.

**Table 8: The number of established Vs potential destinations identified in each district**

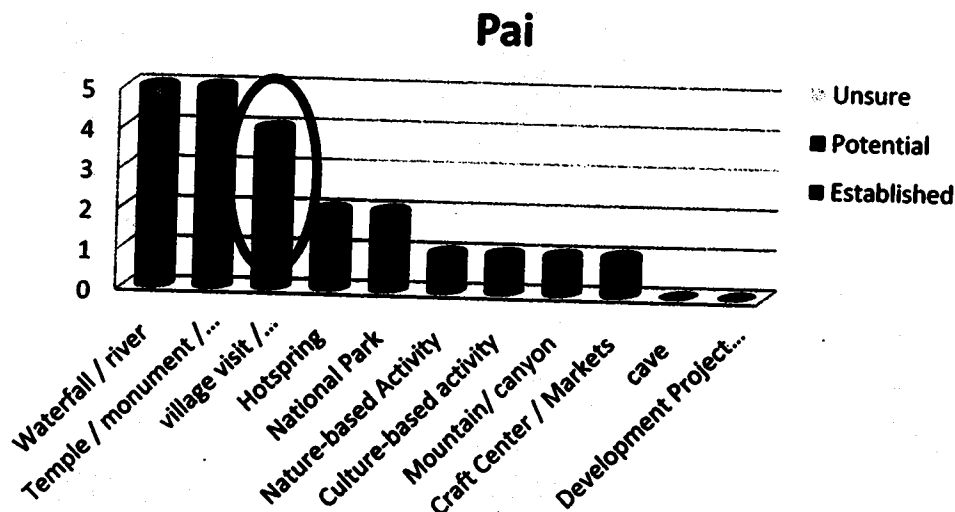
District	Actual number of tourism destinations identified during the survey				Breakdown by percent		
	Established	Potential	Unsure	Total	Established	Potential	Unsure
Pai	14	7	1	22	64	32	5
Pang Mapha	16	3	0	19	84	16	0
Mueang	40	8	4	52	77	15	8
Khun Yuam	10	2	0	12	83	17	0
Mae La Noi	2	11	1	14	14	79	7
Mae Sariang	12	4	1	17	71	24	6
Sop Moei	11	13	0	24	46	54	0
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>160</b>			

The survey confirms that there is a significant 'north-south divide' in terms of tourism development in the province. Northern Mae Hong Son has many established destinations and activities. Southern Mae Hong Son, on the other hand, especially Mae La Noi and Sop Moei districts, clearly have potential. However, many attractions have not been developed.

Table 8 above shows that Mueang district has the largest number of established destinations and destination-specific activities (40). The trekking center of Pang Mapha has the highest percentage of established destinations (84%). Sop Moei and Mae La Noi have the largest numbers of potential destinations. Khun Yuam district has the fewest identified attractions.

Below are the main findings per district, from the product-market survey. For specific information about the attractions in each district, please see Annex 6 of this report.

### 6.1.3 Pai district



**Figure 11: Destinations and activities identified in Pai District, Mae Hong Son**

The survey revealed that a large number of natural and cultural attractions in Pai district are being promoted by tour operators, as well as being visited and discussed by tourists. Most natural attractions are well established, such as waterfalls, hotspots and the Pai Canyon.

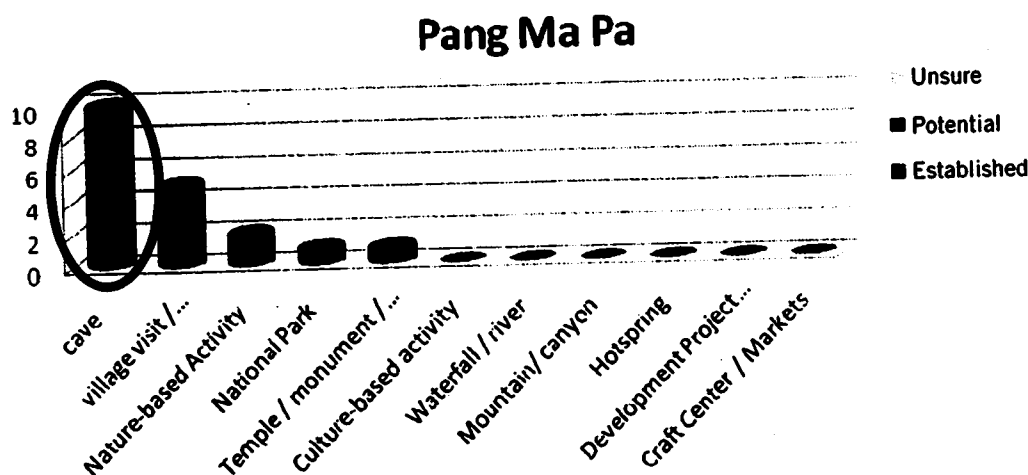


A highly interesting lesson learned in Pai is that many villages being promoted and discussed by tourists are "potential" rather than "established" attractions. According to tour guides and businesses interviewed during the study, freelance guides are organising programs to many villages close to Pai. This includes many seasonal guides from outside Mae Hong Son. Tourists are also hiring motorbikes and heading off into the hills to explore on their own without guides. The team also witnessed both of these trends during our survey trip to Pai.

In the context of the rapid changes which are taking place in Pai, discussed in previous sections of this report, including land speculation, poorly managed construction, natural resource deterioration, etc., the figure above shows that **there is a vital need to work with local communities in the Pai area to help them to prepare for and to manage tourism.**

If such preparation is not prioritised, then there is a very high chance that villagers around Pai will experience some of the negative impacts which are frequently seen in mass-ecotourism destinations such as Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai, including hard selling of souvenirs, begging by children, and even community members selling drugs and sexual services to tourists.

#### 6.1.4 Pang Mapha district



**Figure 12: Destinations and activities identified in Pang Mapha District, Mae Hong Son**

The survey in Pang Mapha proved clearly that even though the district has a great variety of natural attractions, the vast majority of tourists, tour operators, media, etc. know Pang Mapha district as a caving destination. The district has no fewer than 10 caves which are regarded as established attractions! The sub-district is also extremely fortunate to be either home to, or the regular research base for some of Thailand's expert speleologists, and archaeologists, including archaeologist, Dr Rasamee Chusorndej and Mr John Spies, owner of Cave Lodge and cave adventurer. **If properly protected, the sub-district could become a world-class learning center for cave exploration, with participation and benefit for local communities.**

Pang Ma Pa's caves include highly important archaeological sites, dating back to the Hoabinhian period, and including evidence of habitation up to 20 000 BP (before present). Many caves in Pang Mapha contain ancient wooden coffins and other artefacts which were buried together with the deceased, and have been dated at over 1 700 years old.

According to John Spies, a speleologist who has lived in Tham Lot for over 20 years:

*"The earliest known sites (dated with Carbon 14) were investigated by American archaeologist Chester Gorman over 30 years ago. At Spirit Cave, 19 kms west of Cave Lodge, Gorman found evidence of human habitation from about 11 500 BP until 7 500 BP. He found carbonised plant remains that he thought may have been cultivated. Gorman later excavated Banyan Valley and*

Steep Cliff caves ... and found similar evidence of prehistoric occupation. Gorman, along with other prehistorians, used the term 'Hoabinhian' to describe some of the cultural and material aspects of the people who inhabited these sites... [who] had a cultural inclination towards the use of caves and rock shelters."

Several of Pang Ma Pa's caves are also 'living' caves with growing, fragile ecosystems which need to be properly protected in order to avoid serious negative impacts from tourism. In these caves there are also rare species, such as the eyeless and colourless *cryptotora* fish.

From discussion with Spies and review of research by Dr Rasamee Chusorndej, an appropriate mantra for cave tourism is "**Participate, plan, protect, promote.**" This will ensure that local communities have a role managing their resources, and that caves are protected before being promoted, which will help to control potential negative impacts on the caves.

Tham Lot cave is already well known as a best practice site to study community participation in managing, operating and benefiting from cave tourism. Based on the diversity of caves in Pang Mpha, and the availability of local expertise, there is a real opportunity to develop Tham Lot sub-district into a learning center for participatory and sustainable cave tourism.

### 6.1.5 Mueang district

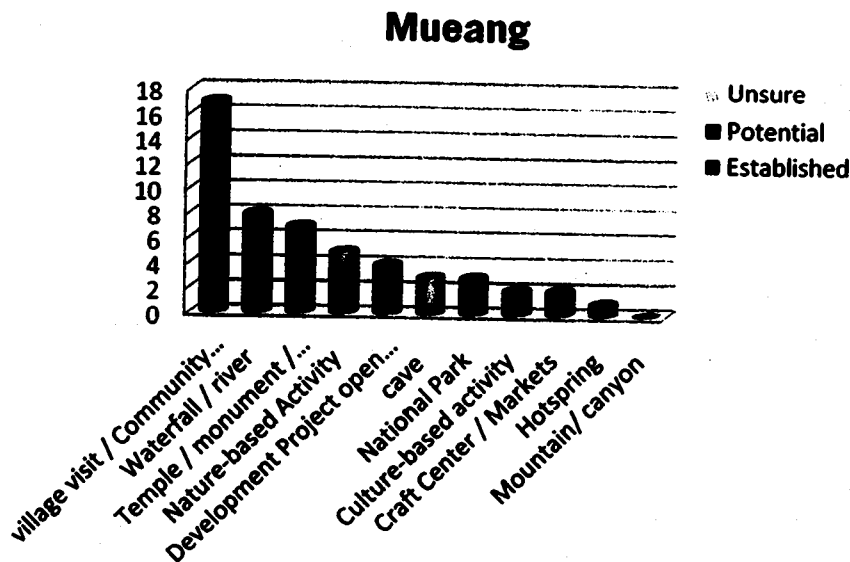


Figure 13: Destinations and activities identified in Mueang District, Mae Hong Son

Mueang district is well positioned to be a practical learning center for ecotourism and CBT for the rest of the province, and indeed the upper northern provincial cluster. The figure above shows that Mueang district has many, well established CBT and village visits (17). The district has developed several examples of recognised national and international best practice CBT, such as in Huay Hee Karen community, Huay Puling sub-district and Rak Thai Yunanese community, in Mok Champae sub-district. The Royal Project at Pang Ung (Mok Champae sub-district) is another really excellent example of nature based, educational tourism.

The study also showed that tourists are visiting and discussing caves and waterfalls, including undeveloped locations. Sometimes, even local tour operators do not know where these destinations are! The decision to develop these attractions depends on the sensitivity of surrounding ecosystems, etc. and would need to be considered on a case by case basis.

It is interesting that there seem to be a relatively small number of craft centers and markets, considering the province's reputation for handicrafts and support for OTOP. However, this needs to be balanced

against the fact that tourists can buy local souvenirs directly from the producers in CBT villages, as well as in shops, Royal Project<sup>15</sup> sites, National Park offices, etc.

Comparison with the situation in Pai shows that Mueang district could be a very positive role model for CBT development in Pai, and lessons learned could help control the negative impacts of tourism. The hydro power sites at Pa Bong and Mae Sa Nga are also being discussed and visited by tourists, and could perhaps be integrated into study programs.

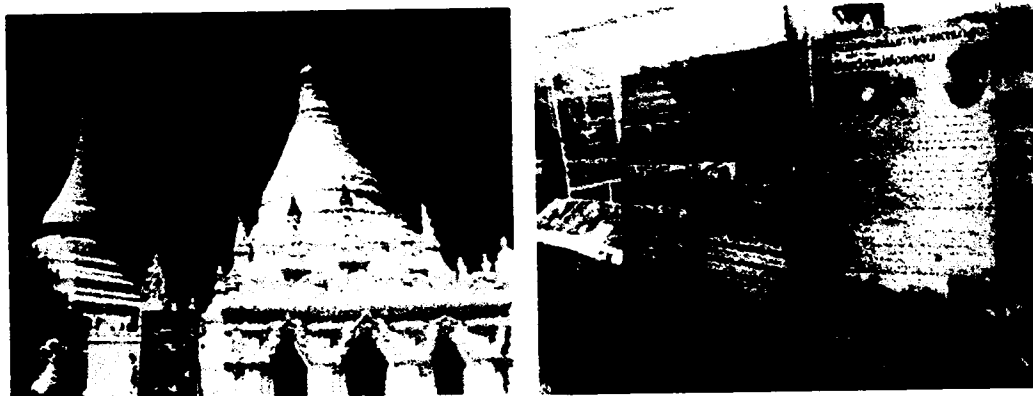


Photo box 7: Wat Doi Kong Mu and Pang Ung Royal Project, Mueang District, Mae Hong Son

#### 6.1.6 Khun Yuam district

The survey in Khun Yuam illustrated that the district is best known for nature based tourism and temple visits. The survey identified a small number of attractions, considering how close Khun Yuam is to Mae Hong Son (it's unusual that there are not more day trip destinations). Tourists seem to be taking more time to explore other districts rather than Khun Yuam. The district is beginning to develop CBT, such as in the UNJP target community of Mueang Pon.

#### 6.1.7 Mae La Noi district

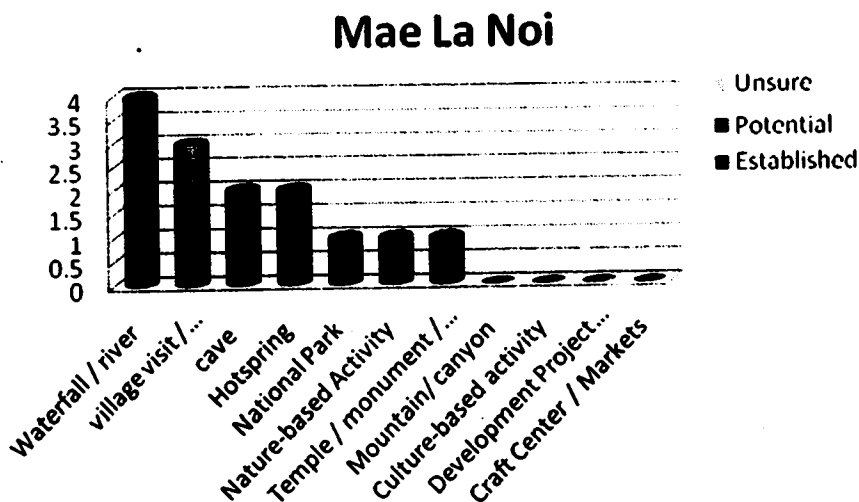


Figure 14: Destinations and activities identified in Mae La Noi District, Mae Hong Son

<sup>15</sup> The Royal Project was established by HM, The King Rama IX of Thailand. The project supports many worthwhile and successful rural development programs across Thailand, including learning centers where community members can learn about alternative occupations, sufficiency economy, organic agriculture, etc.

Mae La Noi district is rich with opportunities for ecotourism and CBT. The survey in Mae La Noi illustrated that tourists are already visiting several natural and cultural destinations. However, few of these destinations are 'established' yet. CBT programs are being developed in several scenic hilltribe villages such as Baan Lua La Up (Lua) and Baan Huay Hom (Karen), where the coffee company Starbucks are also working with the villagers to produce a Fairtrade line of coffee. Specialist tour operator, Thailand Hilltribe Holidays are actively promoting this district.



Photo box 8: Beautiful views in Mae La Noi district, on route to Lua La Up highland village

#### 6.1.8 Mae Sariang district

Mae Sariang is best known for city temples and village visits, in particular trips down the Salween River at Sam Laep village. Several local operators are selling quite challenging treks, which are sometimes impacted by the political situation and fighting in Myanmar.

Mae Sariang is considered to be an 'untouristic', peaceful destination, and the town often attracts foreign backpackers looking for peace and quiet for stays of 3 and 4 days. Most of these attractions identified during the survey are established destinations. Nevertheless, during stakeholder interviews conducted in Mae Sariang, respondents questioned the effectiveness of tourism management in Mae Sariang. Respondents stated that more training and support was needed for local public and private sector stakeholders, and communities.

#### 6.1.9 Sop Moei district

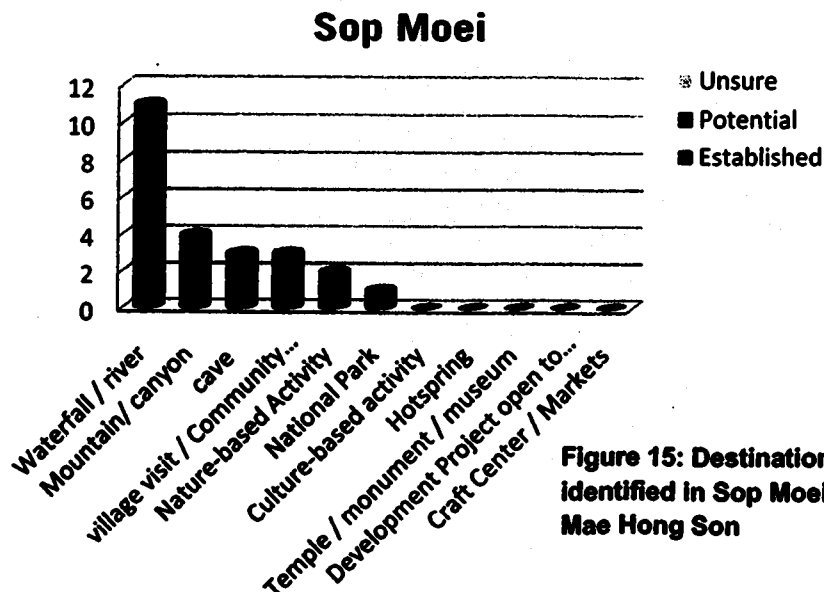


Figure 15: Destinations and activities identified in Sop Moei District, Mae Hong Son

Sop Moei remains a remote and little visited district, with strong ecotourism potential. However, widespread encroachment into the forest by agriculture, including in watershed areas, is a serious challenge to maintain the long-term attractiveness of the destination.

Overall, 24 destinations and destination-based activities were identified in the survey, around half of which are established, and half classified as potential sites. Sop Moei's best known attraction is Mae Ngao National Park, which is beautiful and especially popular during the cool season when Thai and foreign tourists enjoy nature trekking and rafting trips down the Mae Ngao river. Elephant riding is also possible. Tourists are also exploring waterfalls and rivers independently. More surveys are needed to assess the potential of individual attractions.

#### 6.1.10 Tour Operators and Hotels in Mae Hong Son

**Table 9: Number of hotels and rooms in Mae Hong Son by District**

	Pai	PMP	Mueang	K. Yuam	MLN	MSR	Sop Moei
No. Hotel	144	11	75	8	4	15	None
No. Rooms	1 572	70	1 377	82	13	396	None

Source: POTS

The table above shows that Pai district has the largest number of hotels and the highest maximum occupancy in the province. The number of hotels in Pai is almost double that of Mae Hong Son. However, because many of these accommodations are boutique hotels and guest houses, rather than big hotels, Pai only has approximately 200 more rooms than Mueang. At the time of the survey, lots of construction was taking place in both districts.

#### 6.1.11 Highly popular activities in Mae Hong Son

By checking over 50 different websites, forums, online chat rooms and printed media, the study team identified the following highly popular activities for foreign and Thai tourists:

##### *International (foreign) tourists*

Foreign travellers visit Mae Hong Son for nature, culture and adventure. They enjoy self-discovery, getting off the beaten track, and even away from the guidebook.

- ✓ Hilltribe trekking and cultural exchange
- ✓ Sightseeing, especially temples
- ✓ Hotsprings
- ✓ Elephant riding
- ✓ Rafting along the Pai river
- ✓ The 'Mae Hong Son Loop', route from Chiang Mai to Mae Hong Son via Mae Sariang is a popular self-drive adventure by rented 4WD or motorbike.
- ✓ Mountain biking

##### *Thai Tourists*

mainly travel to towns and day-trip to famous, established destinations. Few Thais travel via Mae Sariang. Pai Nai Maa and Trekking Thai.com are popular sites for Thai travellers.

- ✓ Travel to join local festivals (Bua Tong, Chong Phala, Ork Pansa, Poi Sang Long)
- ✓ Visiting Temples to make merit
- ✓ Visiting Pai and the Pang Ung Royal Project

- ✓ Activities close to Pai
- ✓ Waterfalls
- ✓ Photography

### **6.1.12 National Parks in Mae Hong Son**

Mae Hong Son is a province where over 90% of land is part of a protected area or national park. Some highlights include:

#### ***Salween National Park***

Covering a forested area of 721 square kilometers, the Salawin National Park is on the banks of the Salween or Salawin River on the Thai-Myanmar border, about 164 kilometres south of Mae Hong Son. The Salawin River originates from Tibet before winding through China, Thailand and Myanmar for a total distance of more than 3 000 kilometres. The river is regarded as the borderline between Myanmar and Thailand for a distance of 120 kilometres. Visitors wishing to take a boat along the Salawin river must contact park headquarters which also provide accommodation and other facilities. To get to the headquarters, take Route 1194 from Mae Sariang district for about 4 kilometres, then turn right and continue along a dirt road for 4 kilometres. The best time for boat trip is from March to April when the water level is low and sandy beaches appear. Sceneries along the riverbanks are captivating with forests and mountains and dotted with small hamlets.

#### ***Tham Pla – Pha Suea National Park***

Tham Pla, located 17 kilometres from Mae Hong Son town, is a popular attraction. The surrounding areas include brooks and cool hilly forests. A special feature is the hollow cave filled with numerous freshwater fish known as **Pla Mung** or **Pla Khang**, which is of the same family as the carp. The fish are safe from being caught as they are believed to belong to the gods. Pha Suea waterfall is in Mokchampae sub-district, about 26 kilometres from the capital. It is a large fall with its water source in Myanmar which runs full in the late rainy season.

#### ***Huai Nam Dang National Park***

It is located 65 km from the district town and has excellent views of the sunset, sunrise and misty mountains. Cherry trees blossom during January adds additional charms to the park.

#### ***Namtok Mae Surin National Park***

This park was given national park status in 1981. It straddles Mueang and Khun Yuam districts, and encompasses a wildlife and botanical reserve, a huge waterfall and terraced mountain.

#### ***Mae Ngao National Park***

It is located in the Mae Hong Son, Tak and Chiang Mai provinces of North-Western Thailand. The topography of the park consists of high mountain ranges, which are the source of many of the areas rivers. These all flow westwards feeding into the Salawin River. The Ngao River is the longest and most important of these waterways, running through the National Park for approximately 42 kilometres starting from Baan Sob-Khong flowing northwards to Baan Sob-Ngao and meeting the Mae-Yuam River. The National Park comprises various kinds of forests, including Mixed Deciduous, Evergreen and Timber forests, containing among others Teaks, Redwoods, Rokfa, Kor, Moss, Ferns, Orchids, Ginger, Rang, Pluang and Malacca. Historically, there has been a diverse and bountiful number of mammals, bird species, reptiles and amphibious animals found in these forests, including Wild Boars, Asiatic Black Bears, Monkeys, Flying Squirrels, Foxes, Asiatic Wild Dogs, Wild Rabbits, Small Bamboo Rats, Red Jungle Fowls, Singing Myna, Turtle Doves, Blue Magpie, Cobras and Baanded Krait, although these days visitors will be very lucky indeed to catch a glimpse of any of these other than in exhibits at the park headquarters.



**Photo box 9: The beautiful Mae Ngao river, inspiration for Thai love poetry**

#### **6.1.13 Mae Hong Son's most well known and unique festivals**

**Poi Sang Long Procession (งานประเพณีปอยส่างลอง)** This festival is the celebration of novice ordination which the Thai Yai tribe people hold to be a highly meritorious occasion. Traditionally, the candidate-novice, his head cleanly shaven and wrapped with head-cloth in the Burmese style, will don a prince-like garment and put on valuable jewels and gems, and ride a horse or be carried over the shoulders of a man to the city shrine. On the ordination eve, a procession of offerings and other necessary personal belongings will be paraded through the town streets and then placed at the monastery where the ordination will take place the next day. It is usually held during March-May before the Buddhist Rain Retreat period. This festival is regarded as the quintessential expression of Thai Yai culture.



**Photo box 10: Poi Sang Long festival, Mae Hong Son**

**Chong Phara Procession (งานประเพณีจองพารา)** The Chong Phara in the Thai Yai dialect means a castle made of wood, covered with colourful perforated papers and decorated with fruits, flags and lamps. It is placed in the courtyard of a house or a monastery as a gesture to welcome the Lord Buddha on his return from giving sermons to his mother in heaven, according to traditional belief. Other activities to celebrate the occasion include dances where performers are dressed in animal costumes.

The rite is held during the post rain retreat season from the full-moon day of the 11<sup>th</sup> Lunar month (around October) to the waxing moon night of the same month

**Bua Tong Blossom Festival (งานวันดอกบัวตองบาน)** Each year in November, the hillsides of Khun Yuam and Mae Sariang districts are filled with a host of golden Bua Tong Blooms. As gay as a daisy and almost as large as a sunflower, the Bua Tong only blossoms for a month. At Doi Mae U-Kho, the blossoms appear profusely. Finally, the golden blooms become part of the scene. Some specialists have classified these Bua Tong as weeds and because of this, they may be cleared to make way for cash crops. Fortunately a group of researchers have discovered the flower's insect-repellent properties.

**Tea Tasting Festival** This is annually held in February to promote tea products of the Rak Thai village. The activities include hot tea tasting, tea-making demonstrations combined with cultural shows. Visitors can also enjoy riding a horse around the village.



Photo box 11: Visit Rak Thai community to taste traditional Chinese tea

## 6.2 Interviews with tourism suppliers: tour operators, hotels and restaurants

### 6.2.1 Overview of process and target groups

Interviews were conducted with 32 carefully selected, experienced professionals from Mae Hong Son, Mae Sariang and Pai. Interviews were intended to provide information about specific ecotourism sites in Mae Hong Son, positive and negative aspects of tourism development, changes in markets, and the future of Mae Hong Son ecotourism.

Interviewees were selected based on their roles, reputation/recommendations, visibility online, availability for interview and ensuring a spread of age and sectors. Over 60% of interviewees had more than 10 years of experience. The average number of years of experience was 16 years in Mae Hong Son city and 14 years, across Mae Hong Son province.

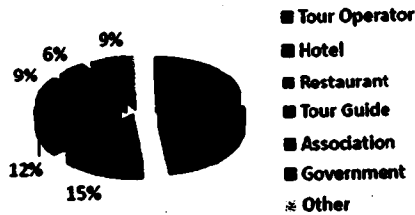
Weight was given to interviewing the private sector, to balance the focus on public sector, academics and NGOs interviewed for the Policy Study. This included tour operators, hoteliers, restaurant owners and tour guides. Interviews were conducted with relevant public sector and tourism association staff, such as from the Tourism Authority of Thailand and Mae Hong Son Chamber of Commerce. The team also interviewed the Abbot of Doi Kong Muu temple.

Each interview consisted of 15 questions. Each interviewee was asked to:

- i) Assess tourism development in the past 10 years, in terms of 1) their perception of positive and negative aspects of the development of Mae Hong Son's tourism industry, and 2) their specific opinions about the positive and negative impacts of tourism on the economy, environment, society and culture in Mae Hong Son;



### Interview sample by profession



### Number of years experience of sample



**Figure 16: Product-Market interview sample by profession and years of experience**

- ii) Forecast the likely directions of tourism and ecotourism development, and assess the overall importance of ecotourism to Mae Hong Son tourism in the next 10 years;
- iii) Assess changes in markets visiting Mae Hong Son, and important current markets;
- iv) Recommend good ecotourism sites, and identify destinations they considered to be 'at risk' from tourism development, along with their reasons for proposing these sites;
- v) Define the core elements of ecotourism according to their own understanding, and share their hopes and concerns for ecotourism development in Mae Hong Son;
- vi) Recommend priority actions to support successful ecotourism in Mae Hong Son.

### 6.2.2 Results of Tourism Industry Stakeholder Interviews

Results of the interviews were very interesting, allowing many insights into the strengths and challenges of ecotourism development, past, present and future in Mae Hong Son. The following section will summarise the most important results of each question.

#### 6.2.2.1 "How do you assess tourism development in MHS in the last 10 years?"

##### A) Tourism products/facilities/Infrastructure and access

In many cases, respondents identified the same changes, such as the boom in construction, or changes in markets. Interviewees often had similar perceptions of a change as being negative or positive. In some cases, they regarded the same change differently.

Changes identified can be divided into 3 categories. 1) changes which were perceived only negatively; 2) changes perceived both positively and negatively by different stakeholders and 3) changes which were perceived only positively. It is interesting that interviewees regarded more than 57% of the changes which had taken place in Mae Hong Son tourism in the past 10 years as negative. Only 23% of changes were regarded positively, with 20% regarded neutrally. Respondents 'preferred the old days.' They were also happy that in many respects, change so far has been quite slow. This shows that 'conservation' is as much of an important agenda as 'development' in Mae Hong Son. Important results were:

**Changes perceived exclusively as negative** (rated according to the number of persons holding the same perception, with '1' as most frequently proposed change):

- 1) More outside businesses and insufficient support for locally owned businesses;
- 2) Fewer good quality tour guides and tour operators;
- 3) The cancellation of international flights by Thai Air, replaced by domestic Nok Air;
- 4) MHS communities becoming less charming as a result of modernisation;
- 5) Less adventurous products available due to improved access/infrastructure;
- 6) Long Necked Karen no longer living only in MHS (i.e. losing a key Unique Selling Point);
- 7) Higher and more fees for public sites alongside increased operational costs;

- 8) The growth of Pai into a highly commercial town;
- 9) Less authentic/attractive souvenirs (e.g. local crafts in the walking street).

In addition, 2 issues were frequently proposed as a negative 'lack of change':

- 1) Lack of coordinated central planning of the tourism industry;
- 2) Insufficient government support for the private sector, from product to market.

The information above leads to 2 important observations:

- 1) Local people feel that they are losing control of tourism development, as well as losing opportunities to benefit from tourism business to new arrivals; and
- 2) Overall, there is a shared perception that the product quality of MHS tourism is seriously decreasing, in terms of products, services and Unique Selling Points.

**Changes perceived exclusively as positive** (rated according to the number of people holding the same perception, with '1' as most frequently proposed change):

- 1) The most commonly held view was that Mae Hong Son had not yet changed very much. The province's natural resources and cultures remain intact and attractive;
- 2) There are more opportunities for local people to participate in tourism development;
- 3) Local youth born in Mae Hong Son province are returning home to look for work;
- 4) More families and students are traveling to Mae Hong Son. These markets are considered high-value and high quality in terms of their motivation for travel.

The information above shows key opportunities which are opening for MHS tourism. It also shows that citizens are hoping to have roles in developing and operating ecotourism.

#### **Changes perceived as a mixture of positive and negative**

Changes which were perceived differently by different stakeholders include:

- 1) More competition and harder bargaining by tourists (overwhelmingly negative);
- 2) Fewer groups tours, but more FIT (independent) travellers (overwhelmingly negative);
- 3) Construction of hotels (overwhelmingly negative/with some responses neutral);
- 4) Better roads and access (overwhelmingly positive with some neutral and negative);
- 5) More day trips developed (overwhelmingly positive with some neutral and negative).

Negativity towards road construction was mainly by 'pure' ecotourism operators who felt that they were losing opportunities to upcoming destinations such as Laos and Cambodia because MHS as a whole is now perceived as a less 'charming' and 'adventurous' place.

Negativity towards day trips was mainly from respondents in Mae Hong Son provincial capital, because more travellers are now taking day trips from Pai. This has led to a reduced number of overnight stays in MHS city. Tourists are also more rushed than before, because it takes much longer to travel to popular destinations such as Pang Ung and Rak Thai from Pai. Respondents also claimed that because tourists have 'paid an all inclusive rate for a day trip,' they are less likely to support local vendors, e.g. in the walking street.

Overall, the information above shows that stakeholders are unsure how to manage the risks and harness the opportunities of change. For example, the growth in FIT travellers, through ICT could be considered a great opportunity, because FIT travellers are known to be high-value and interested in unique experiences. However, this is not seen as an opportunity yet.

## B) Impacts – economic, social, cultural, environmental

Next, the team asked the interviewees to assess the positive and negative impacts of tourism on Mae Hong Son's economy, society, cultures and environment. The results were as follows:

### **Economic impacts**

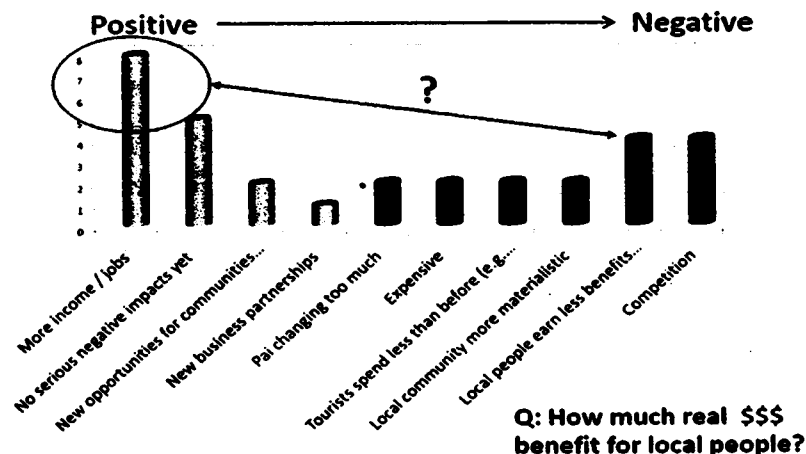
Positive impacts, from the most to least commonly proposed:

- 1) More income/jobs;
- 2) No serious negative impacts yet;
- 3) New economic opportunities for communities;
- 4) New business partnerships possible with new hotels, operators, etc.

Negative impacts, from the most to least commonly proposed:

- 1) Much more competition than in the past;
- 2) Local people earn less income than before (due to outside investors);
- 3) Local communities have become more materialistic, and therefore less charming;
- 4) Tourists spend less money than before and are more price sensitive;
- 5) Tourism development has made the cost of living much more expensive;
- 6) Pai has become too expensive for local people to do business.

### How do you assess tourism development in Mae Hong Son in the last 10 years? **ECONOMIC**



**Figure 17: Comparing respondents' perceptions of the positive and negative economic impacts of changes in tourism in Mae Hong Son during the past 10 years**

The figure above shows that tourism is perceived to have generated income and jobs in Mae Hong Son. Nevertheless, the cost of living is rising, local people are competing more, earning less, and losing opportunities to outside businesses. This begs three questions: "How much of the economic benefits generated by tourism are directly benefiting local businesses?" "Which new tourism jobs are going to local people, and how well paid are these jobs?"

### **Environmental impacts**

The picture for environmental impacts is much bleaker. There is serious concern about the environmental impacts which tourism is having Mae Hong Son, in particular encroachment into protected areas and destruction of forest by and for the tourism industry. An additional layer of

complexity is that, apparently, many local people have sold their land to investors in Pai and Mae Hong Son. They are mostly selling land with legal title. However, respondents stated that the previous owners often move on to buy new land illegally in protected areas, or just encroach into the forest. The most serious negative impacts on the environment are:

- 1) Destruction of the environment and resource scarcity due to hotel construction;
- 2) Government construction in natural areas perceived as 'inappropriate';
- 3) Badly managed waste;
- 4) Noisy tourists (sound pollution).

There are serious problems with water shortages in Pai and Sopong, where farmers rely on water for agriculture. During the summer, there is not enough water. Water must be transported into villages like Tham Lot. These problems are not only caused by the tourism industry. However, the expansion of the tourism industry and huge demand which tourists place on water makes zoning and fair resource allocation a priority issue for discussion, study and action. It is absolutely essential for all sectors to consider these issues as top priority.

In addition, several interviewees noted the environmental impacts being caused by growth of intensive agriculture in upland and protected areas. While this forest encroachment is not caused by tourism, it is seen as linked, as nature is a key pull for ecotourists. These pressures need to be seriously considered when selecting agricultural support strategies in the UNJP.

### ***Social impacts***

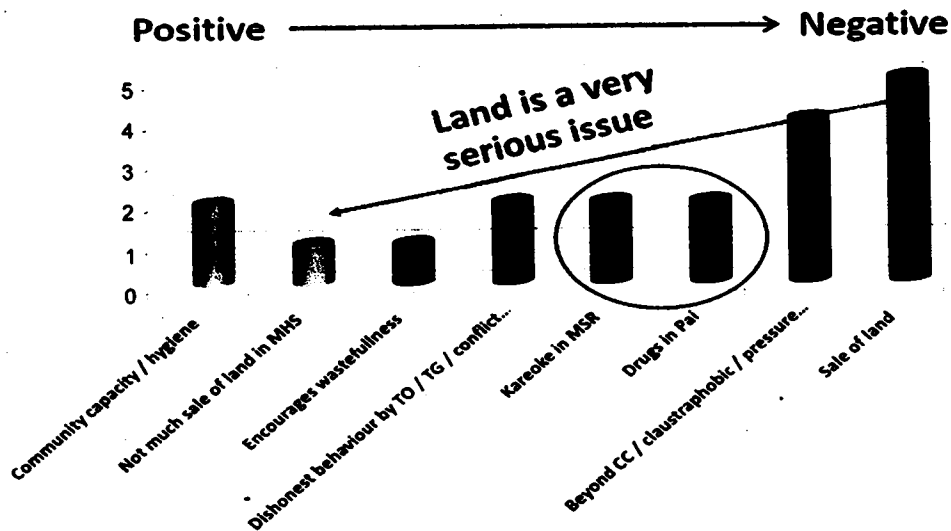
Positive impacts, from the most to least commonly proposed:

- 1) Tourism is helping to build community capacity, such as improving hygiene;
- 2) Not much land has changed hands yet in Mae Hong Son, outside of Pai district;

Negative impacts, from the most to least commonly proposed:

- 1) Sale of land, especially in Pai, but mentioned as a concern across the province;
- 2) Unmanageable pressure on social services, and claustrophobia caused by tourism;
- 3) Unwelcome behaviour: drugs in Pai and karaoke in Mae Sariang;
- 4) Dishonest behaviour by tour operators and tour guides, and subsequent conflict between tour operators and tourists. This is predominantly occurring in Pai city. Mae Hong Son tour operators blame 'outside' tour operators for this situation, and feel that it is tarnishing the reputation on Mae Hong Son, with visitors arriving in Pai, having a bad experience or hearing bad stories, and simply 'swinging back' to Chiang Mai, without ever setting foot in Mae Hong Son city or other districts of the province.

Comparing the spread of positive and negative impacts identified by respondents during the survey, shows that land ownership is considered a very serious issue in Mae Hong Son. Many people realise that land is part of the socio-cultural fabric and value their link to the land. However, they feel powerless to stop the gradual erosion of local land ownership, which is being catalyzed by the irresistibly large sums of money investors are prepared to pay.



**Figure 18: Comparing respondents' perceptions of the positive and negative social impacts of changes in tourism in Mae Hong Son during the past 10 years**

### **Cultural Impacts**

Negative impacts, from most to least commonly proposed:

- 1) Tourists having a bad influence on the local community (especially youth);
- 2) Impolite behaviour by tourists, often caused by poor information;
- 3) Communities becoming materialistic – over-focusing on income from tourism.

Interestingly, many interviewees also expressed the opinion that local communities are 'losing their cultures' or 'choosing not to conserve their cultures.' Government education policy and globalization were blamed for these changes. However, this was seen as a serious threat for ecotourism, due to tourists' desire to experience 'authentic' or 'living' cultures.

Confirming the results of the Policy Review Interviews, many respondents across sectors proposed that proactive support for local cultural leaders and cultural events is necessary in order to maintain living culture, which is what tourists hope to experience in Mae Hong Son.

If cultural diversity is supported, cultures are passed from generation to generation and celebrated in an authentic and spontaneous manner, Mae Hong Son will be able to position itself as a leading cultural destination.

#### **6.2.2.2 "How do you think that tourism will develop in the next 10 years?"**

Respondents had quite an optimistic view of the future. Most importantly:

- 1) Opportunities for cultural heritage and ecotourism development;
- 2) MHS developing as a hub to explore Myanmar;
- 3) Cooperation with neighbouring provinces (Tak, Chiang Mai, Lamphun, Lampang).

The most important negative concerns were:

- 1) More competition between more operators welcoming fewer tourists;
- 2) Many of the activities being developed in local communities are only considering internal assessment of strengths, and are not considering whether their tourism products are really interesting compared to competing destinations. Therefore, many community/TAO initiatives risk failure, unless they can develop clear USP's.

Interviewees also raised some specific issues concerning Pai and Mae Sariang.

In Mae Sariang, respondents were confident that the future would bring more development, including better communications and facilities. However, there was concern about the possible negative impacts of industrial scale agriculture in southern Mae Hong Son, which is literally shaving hilltops bare of trees in some tambon. There was also concern about tour operators and tour guides from outside Mae Sariang moving in and taking local jobs.

Perspectives on the future of Pai are sharply divided. Most observers outside Pai seem sure that the town is in decline and will fade from popularity as Thai tourists head to emerging destinations such as Nan and Chiang Khan. However, this view is strongly resisted inside Pai, both by local activists such as 'Pa Laeng' who leads a society of local suppliers and outside investors who say that following multi-million Baht investments, they will not allow Pai to die!



Photo box 12: Stakeholder Interview

6.2.2.3 *How have the types of tourists visiting Mae Hong Son changed in the past 10 years?  
"What are the most important markets which visit now?"*

**Table 10: Types of tourist**

	Before	Now
<b>Focus Destination</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the past, Mae Hong Son city was the main destination for travelers in the province.</li> <li>Mae Hong Son was also an important destination for trekking.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pai is popular for trendy Thai tourists</li> <li>MHS, MSR and Pai in off season for nature-culture-adventure travelers</li> <li>More travelers now choosing Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Laos &amp; Cambodia, especially for trekking</li> </ul>
<b>Nationality</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mainly foreign, western tourists</li> <li>EU tourists – Esp. Germany/UK.</li> <li>Asian: Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Singapore, HK</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Far more Thai tourists</li> <li>EU Tourists: <u>French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Belgium, Scan.</u> (Denmark)</li> <li>Malaysian tourists still considered to be an important Asian market</li> <li>Upcoming: Chinese, Russian, Czech</li> </ul>
<b>Number of tourists</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Over 10 years ago: backpackers. Not many, but 'quality' tourists. All income went to local people.</li> <li>TG flew to MHS: groups</li> <li>TG cancelled, back to FIT</li> <li>Few domestic tourists</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fewer tourists across the province</li> <li>Competition means that tourists are shared across more destinations/and businesses (e.g. more hotels).</li> <li>More Thai tourists</li> <li>More visitors to Pai but now already declining among the Trendy Thai traveler crowd, who are going to Chiang Khan and Nan provinces</li> </ul>
<b>Age of tourists/Profile</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Originally backpackers (20-30's)</li> <li>More working age professionals</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MHS and MSR: working age – 30-60</li> <li>Families, volunteers, students</li> <li>Pai – younger travelers/teenagers</li> </ul>
<b>Motivation to Travel</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Pure Ecotourism/Trekking</li> <li>Active and interested in cultural exchange and learning</li> <li>Long Necked Karen</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>EU tourists seeking eco/cultural exchange still visit, especially Mae Sariang/MHS. Pai off season. Less demand for trekking across MHS.</li> <li>Thai tourists not perceived to be interested in ecotourism across MHS. Interested in fashion, photos, fun.</li> <li>Mae Sariang is attracting tourists seeking peace and nature</li> <li>More volunteers in MHS and MSR</li> </ul>
<b>Price-sensitivity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not hard bargaining. Prepared to pay more for a program in MHS</li> <li>Prepared to buy souvenirs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>Price orientated, looking for cheap trips and more serious bartering.</u> Especially in N. MHS, but even in MSR. Conflict in Pai</li> </ul>
<b>Behaviour</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>MHS still inaccessible. Tourists booked travel in the province through tour operators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More confident to travel alone.</li> <li>Thai and Foreign tourists are choosing to drive to Mae Hong Son.</li> </ul>
<b>Channels</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Backpack (guidebook),</li> <li>Tour operators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><u>IT/Web sites are leading significant growth in FIT travelers across all markets and levels</u></li> <li>Lonely Planet is still important!</li> <li>One-Stop service now available from Khao San Road (Bkk) to Pai</li> </ul>
<b>When do they visit?</b>	<p>All year, with more visitors during the winter season</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thai travelers during winter season, and in MHS city to join in local cultural festivals</li> <li>Foreign tourists come all year. Dips in April and September. MSR – October to January.</li> <li>MHS and MSR attracting repeat customers</li> </ul>
<b>How long do they stay?</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the past, MHS was more inaccessible. Most tourists who made the journey stayed 3-4 days.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>More 1-Day trips, shorter "lunch-box"/rushed programs. Especially from Pai</li> <li>Overall, fewer tourists staying O/N in MHS</li> <li>Foreign tourists who stay usually spend 2-3 Nights in Mae Hong Son/Mae Sariang</li> <li>1-2 Nights in Pai. Off season, longer stays</li> </ul>

One very important outcome of this question is that interviewees in Mae Hong Son city described the gradual market shift from Mae Hong Son to Pai. They informed the team that tourists in Pai are being advised (even from Bangkok) to stay in Pai for 3 or 4 days, and that it is not necessary to stay overnight in Mae Hong Son to explore all local highlights.

As a result, tourists are waking up at 04:00 to travel 5 hours on 'day trips' to destinations which are only 1 hour drive from Mae Hong Son city. Tourists are often over-tired, and disappointed by these trips. Often, guides are from outside Mae Hong Son, and unable to give detailed or deep interpretation of sites. Moreover, because tourists buy a package trip, all food, water etc. are included in the price. Tourism suppliers in Mae Hong Son feel that they are the victims of a concerted effort by Pai operators to hoard tourism opportunities, to the detriment of the whole province when tourists exchange disappointed stories through word of mouth.

#### 6.2.2.4 "How is Mae Hong Son perceived? Is there a clear brand?"

Interviewees think that Mae Hong Son is perceived in the following ways by tourists:

- 1) **Diversity** of local cultures, life, nature and activities (13 interviewees)
- 2) **Adventure** destination (3 interviewees)
- 3) **Peaceful escape** from urban stress (2 interviewees)
- 4) **Pai:** Artistic, romantic, "happy", fashionable party town

Preliminary interviews with tourists in Mae Hong Son and Mae Sariang confirmed that travellers perceive Mae Hong Son as a diverse destination with beautiful nature and interesting temples and ethnic groups. However, to discover with authority how Mae Hong Son is broadly perceived across a spread of markets, serious market research is needed

Perhaps most importantly, the President of the Municipality, Mr Suthep Nuthsuwan proposed to the team that "there are all kinds of tourists, and they all perceive Mae Hong Son differently, depending on what they are looking for. Mae Hong Son's people need to define who we want to visit and how we want to be perceived, and build our brand together."

#### "What does ecotourism mean to you? What should it imply and include?"

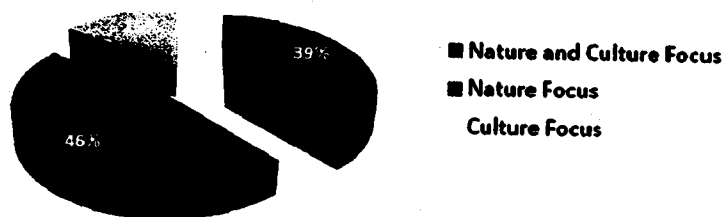


Figure 19: Ecotourism defined by respondents of the product-market interviews

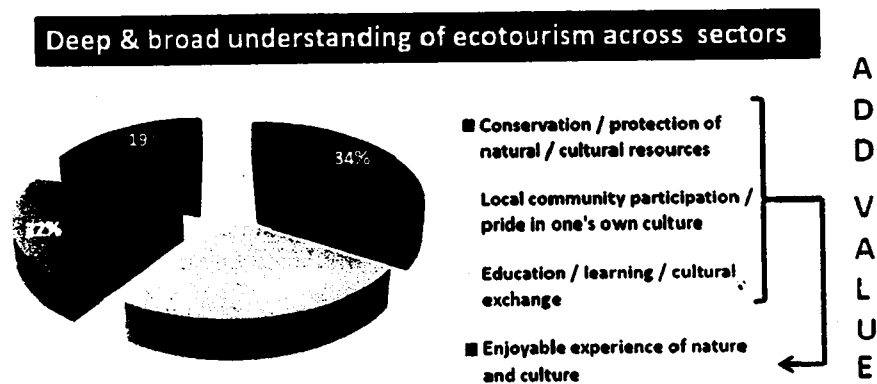
The outcomes of this question were extremely interesting, and showed a surprisingly deep and broad understanding of ecotourism across sectors. Firstly, over 50% of interviewees identified culture and people as a key component of ecotourism, with 15% of interviewees defining ecotourism based around cultural exchange, protecting and celebrating local culture. 46% of interviewees focused on the experience and conservation of nature.

Main issues which were identified in their definitions of ecotourism (see figure 20) were:

- ✓ **Conservation/protection of natural/cultural resources**
- ✓ **Local community participation/pride in one's own culture**
- ✓ **Education/learning/cultural exchange**
- ✓ **Enjoyable experience of nature and culture**



These responses indicate that stakeholders have a sophisticated understanding of the elements of ecotourism, including concepts such as local participation and education.



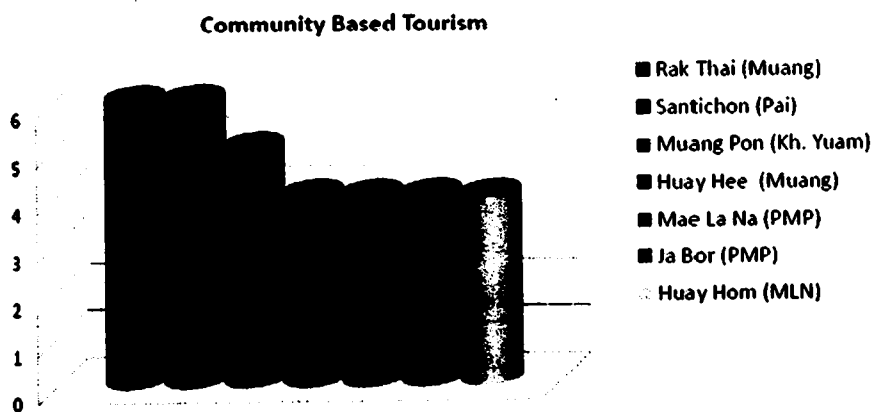
**Figure 20: Elements of ecotourism in the definitions proposed by Mae Hong Son stakeholders**

In a situation where products and Unique Selling Points are being undermined, this level of understanding can be harnessed as a competitive advantage. MHS tourism stakeholders need to pool their understanding and experience to add value to their ecotourism offers.

**6.2.2.5 What recommendations do you have for ecotourism sites/potential?**

Two types of tourism stood out in respondents' recommendations. Firstly, tourism organised by National Parks and the Royal Project. Tham Plah cave received the largest number of recommendations, based on good upkeep and sound waste management. Tham Lot was complemented for high levels of local community participation and local benefits. Pang Ung and Ruam Thai were complemented for effective visitor number-management on public holidays. Pang Dong Royal Project was complemented for excellent learning opportunities.

Perhaps even more interesting is that a stunning 57% of recommendations (across all sectors) were for community based tourism projects. Yunanese CBT projects gained the most number of recommendations. In Rak Thai and Santichon communities, interviewees were impressed with how community leaders had stimulated commerce without sacrificing their culture. However, less commercially focused CBT projects also received praise, including Thai Yai communities Mae La Na (Pang Mapha) and Mueang Pon (Khun Yuam); Ja Bor Lahu community in Pang Mapha, Huay Hee Karen community in Mueang district, and Huay Hom, in Mae La Noi district, where the community members are supplying Starbucks with their coffee, and selling the same cup of fragrant beans to homestay guests for around 60 cents a cup!



**Figure 21: Top recommended community base tourism sites in Mae Hong Son province**

The '**Living Musuem**' project in MHS city to restore traditional wooden shop houses along a heritage trail also received praise and was very highly regarded by the research team.

In CBT sites, the following aspects most impressed the respondents:

- ✓ Well managed, while remaining natural (not over-developed);
- ✓ Providing clear benefits to local people;
- ✓ Able to preserve traditional culture and architecture;
- ✓ Strong levels of local participation/cooperation;
- ✓ Attractively designed local products;
- ✓ Enjoyable/interesting program for guests;
- ✓ A beautiful landscape and accessibility;
- ✓ Strong leadership;
- ✓ Structured learning opportunities;
- ✓ Working with outside stakeholders;
- ✓ Use of research outputs in local tourism development;
- ✓ Good local guides.

#### 6.2.2.6 "Are there any sites at risk from tourism development? Why?"

Several sites were also proposed as 'at risk' from tourism development. The most notable of these was Pai city center, which can fairly be labled a provincial level cause for concern. Below are destinations proposed as 'at risk' with examples of criticisms raised by respondents:

- 1) Pai Town: "Fails to meet expectations; development is out of control; encroaching on protected areas; insufficient resources to serve the growing demands of new resorts."
- 2) Pang Ung: "The transport system is unnecessarily complicated in the low season."
- 3) Rak Thai: "Too busy in the high season, and becoming too commercial."
- 4) Tham Lot: "Poor hygiene and poor value for money by local guides, who rush through their job and do not provide adequate interpretation of the Tham Lot cave."
- 5) Mae Ngao National Park and Mae Lui community: "Inability of national park and communities to control agriculture, deforestation in the national park boundaries."
- 6) Santichon: "Questions over broad distribution of benefits."
- 7) Kong Lan (Pai Canyon): "Inappropriate levels of construction by the government."
- 8) Pai historic bridge: "Traffic jams when tourists stop to take photos."

The following issues were proposed as being the most serious risks:

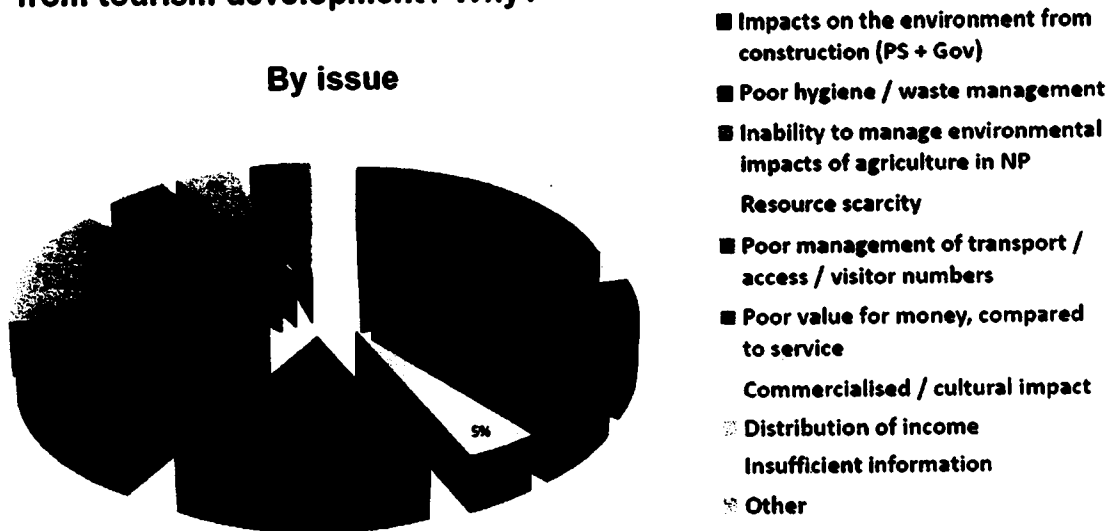
#### Environment:

- 1) Environmental impacts from construction by hotels and government initiatives;
- 2) Poor hygiene and waste management;
- 3) Inability to manage the environmental impacts of agriculture in protected areas;
- 4) Resource scarcity (especially water in Tham Lot/Pai);

#### Management and Service:

- 5) Poor management of transport, access, visitor numbers;
- 6) Over-commercialised/cultural impacts;
- 7) Poor value for money Vs service;
- 8) Insufficient distribution of income;
- 9) Insufficient information.

**Are there any sites which you think are at risk from tourism development? Why?**



**Key Issues: environmental management; tourism planning and management; high price needs better service... service mind**

**Figure 22: Top challenges in tourism destinations identified as being 'at risk' by respondents**

The figure about shows that the 2 most important groups of issues raised, requiring immediate attention are 1) environmental management, and 2) tourism planning and management, including the provision of services at a price which represents good value for money.

Comparison of destinations which had been proposed as both recommendations and 'at risk' 1) showed that these destinations had received more recommendations overall and 2) acted as a reminder that success brings its own challenges and needs to be managed.

Indeed, information about the challenges being faced by successful communities, and national park areas which receive regular visitors is highly valuable. These sites may offer the most insights into how to organize tourism which can accommodate volume of guests while maintaining the integrity of key environmental and cultural minimum achievements.

**6.2.2.7 "How important will ecotourism be in the next 10 years/why?"**

Interviewees stressed that Mae Hong Son has great cultural and natural resources, and the potential to be a world-class ecotourism destination. Indeed, because Mae Hong Son's core tourism resources are nature and culture, it must develop as a high-value ecotourism destination, or it's tourism industry will find it difficult to compete. Respondents stressed that success will depend on good management, targeted promotion to 'quality' tourists, and sustainable natural and cultural resource management. They also mentioned the need to make use of research outputs, develop tailored promotion and try to forge cross-border links.

**6.2.2.8 "What hopes/concerns do you have for ecotourism development?"**

The interviewees seemed more optimistic than pessimistic for the future.

Hopes which were shared by the highest number of interviewees are:

- 1) More support and proactive cooperation between government and the private sector, including a proactive support package for locally owned tourism SME's;

- 2) Continue to support the municipalities' Living Museum project to protect historic buildings and traditional culture in Mae Hong Son;
- 3) Develop Mae Hong Son into an 'Ecocity', and a learning center for successful and sustainable ecotourism, CBT and environmental management.

Common hopes for the future included:

- 1) Develop more nature trails;
- 2) Develop tourism which supports community development;
- 3) Develop tourism which does not impact or destroy the environment;
- 4) Work in partnership with Myanmar;
- 5) Establish Carrying Capacity in MHS, with an appropriate marketing plan;
- 6) Tour operators and professional tour guides are educated about Natural Resource Management and how to work together effectively with local communities.

Concerns which were shared by the highest number of interviewees are:

- 1) The ethics of the private sector;
- 2) Over reliance of communities on tourism;
- 3) Ensuring appropriate construction;
- 4) Land being sold to outside investors;
- 5) Too much competition.

#### 6.2.2.9 "What needs to happen for ecotourism development to succeed?"

Interviewees proposed many creative ideas. These ideas fell into 4 main areas, as below:

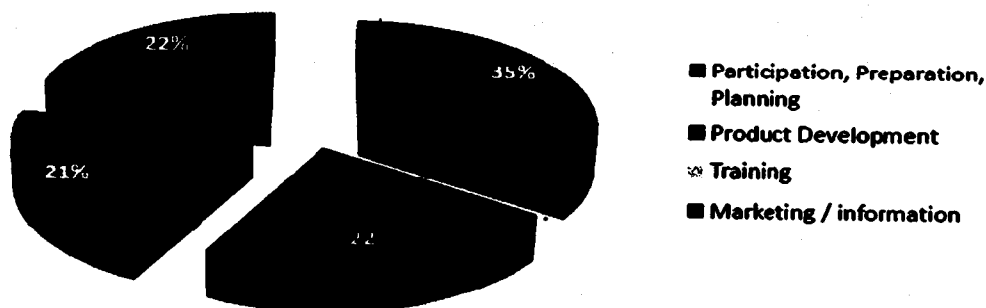
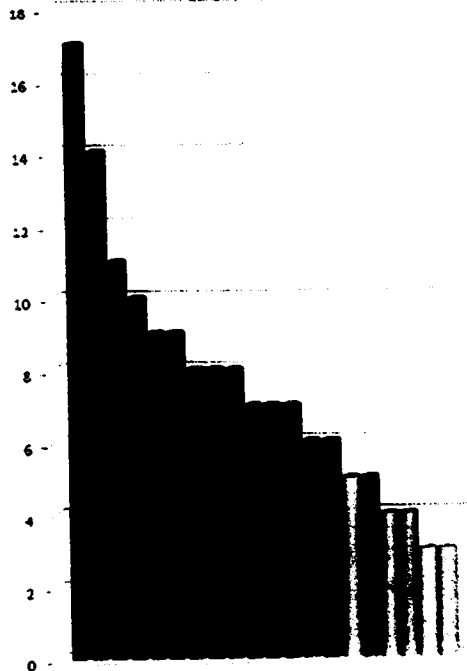


Figure 23: Overview of stakeholders' needs for successful ecotourism development

Most suggestions were related to increasing participation, preparation and planning (35%), followed by product development, marketing and training. Future support for ecotourism in Mae Hong Son will need to focus on this area in order to meet stakeholders' needs.

## TOP 20 suggestions...



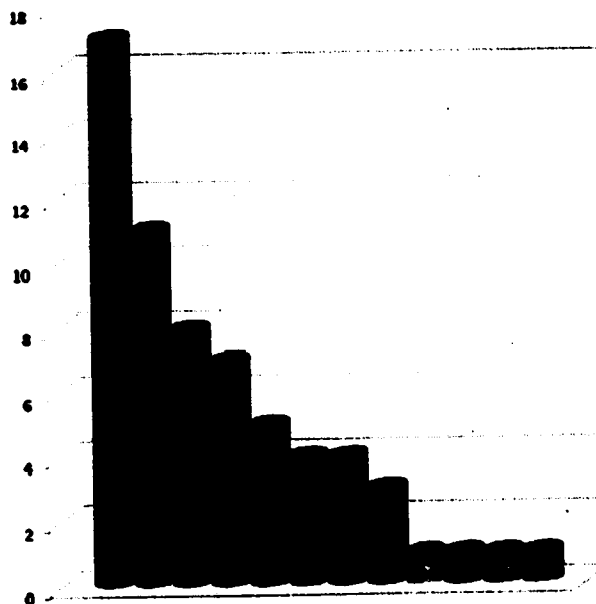
- Cooperative, proactive, sustainable Cult. & NRM
- Quality info (Th / Eng): info' boards, signs, maps
- Participatory, long term planning / management
- Practical guide training: local culture / nature inter.
- Train communities to manage tourism / impacts
- Design / production of local, env. friendly products
- Develop activities suitable for independent, FIT's
- More support for local culture, cultural leadership
- Self-guided heritage / nature trails w/ maps + signs
- Support heritage. Construction natural / charming
- Work w/ TAT to target quality / real ecotourists
- Green hotel training (energy + waste)
- Training for TO's - working w/ marketing CBT
- Do's and don'ts to protect nature / culture
- Bike Hire in MHS city
- CBT as a supplementary income
- Make more use of research and expertise
- Support local SME's across the province
- English training for tourism workers
- Work with neighbours - Lanna / Myanmar

Figure 24: Top 20 suggestions to realise successful ecotourism in Mae Hong Son

The top 5 suggestions made by respondents once again stressed the importance given to cultural and natural resource management, participatory long-term planning and training.

In each area, interviewees proposed actions to help ecotourism and CBT to succeed:

### Participation, preparation and planning



- Cooperative, proactive, sustainable management of cultural / natural resources
- Cross-sector participation in long term planning and management of tourism
- More resources to support local culture, pride in identify and cultural leadership
- Support existing heritage. Keep construction natural and charming
- CBT as a supplementary income
- Use research and expertise
- Support local SME's across the province
- Work with neighbours - Lanna / Myanmar
- Protect before promote
- Don't sell land
- Limit tourist numbers
- Manage competition

"Community members – in city and rural areas – need to protect their own cultures and environments for success." – living culture, planting trees, CSR, etc.

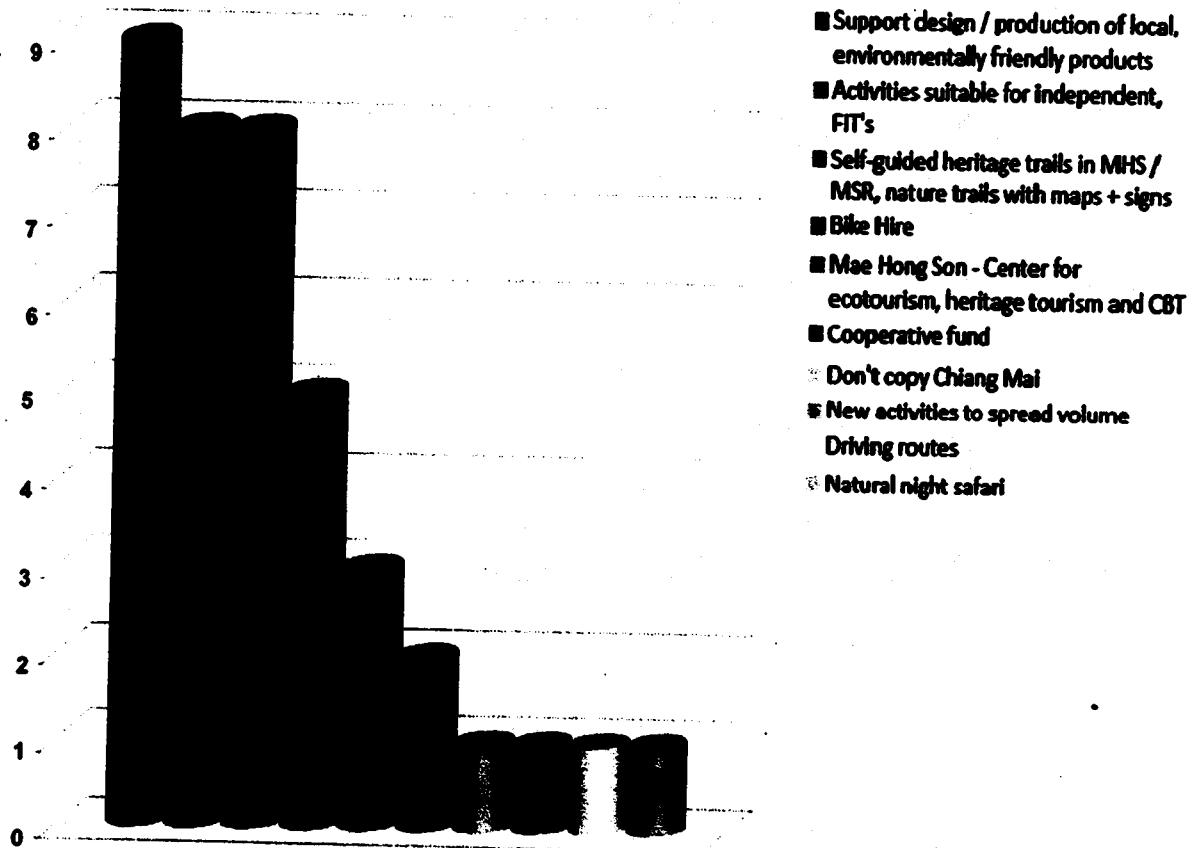
Figure 25: Respondents' suggestions to improve participation, preparation and planning

It is highly interesting, the top suggestion, made by 17 people, to enable ecotourism to succeed is for **all citizens of Mae Hong Son, and in particular tourism stakeholders to work together to preserve Mae Hong Son's cultural and natural heritage.**

Respondents proposed simple and practical ways to do this, such as tour operators working together to plant trees or improve nature trails, and local community members making a special effort to continue to practice their traditions and celebrate their festivals.

The message was clear that if nature and culture are healthy and vibrant, tourists will automatically want to visit Mae Hong Son province, so this must be the priority for action.

#### 6.2.2.10 Product Development



**Figure 26: Respondents' suggestions to improve product development**

The top suggestion in the product development category was more support for local businesses to develop environmentally friendly products and services (9 respondents). This included tour programs, training for communities to develop 'green' programs and training for hotels in environmental management, and how to use energy and water most efficiently.

Another top suggestion was to assist stakeholders to understand the needs of Mae Hong Son's FIT markets, and design activities to meet their needs. Good ideas proposed included self-guided walks, bike hire, cycling and driving routes with appropriate maps and signs.

#### **Training**

Training was considered absolutely essential for tour guides and for communities. Ten respondents mentioned that guides needed extra training in culture interpretation and how to work together with CBT projects. Nine respondents suggested training in management, and English. Training was also considered to be important for tour operators (how to work with communities and market CBT) and hotels (energy, water and waste management).

## What needs to happen for ecotourism development in Mae Hong Son to be successful?

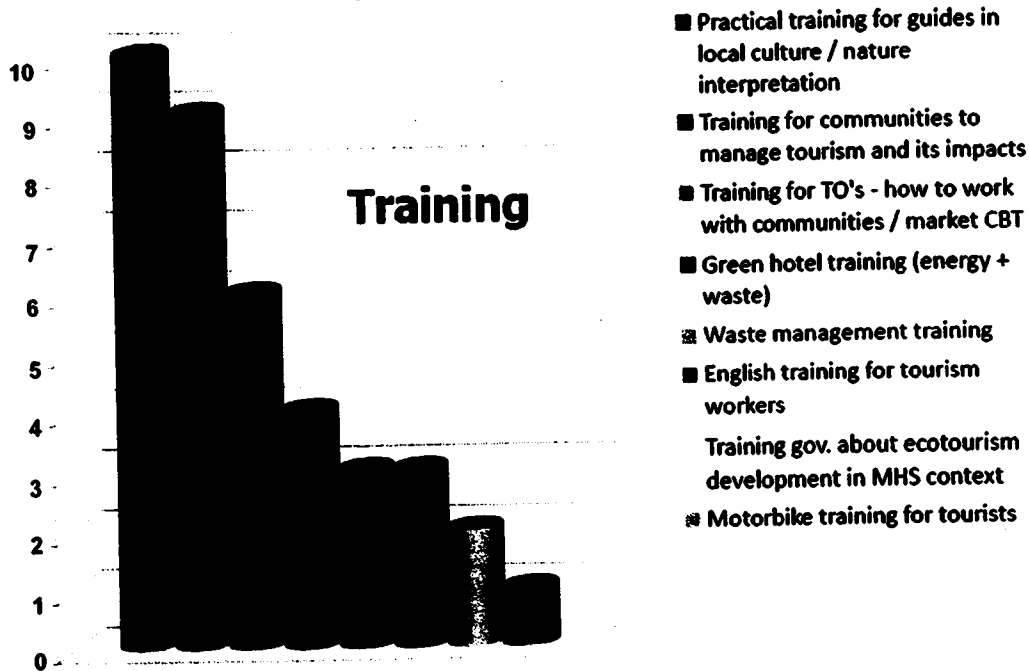


Figure 27: Respondents' suggestions to improve tourism training services in Mae Hong Son

### 6.2.2.11 Marketing and Information

Finally, many recommendations for action focused on marketing and information. By far the greatest number of suggestions concerned improving Thai and English language information, with special emphasis on information boards, signs and maps (14 respondents).

The second most frequent suggestion was that the province needs to target "quality" or "real" ecotourists, and prepare these visitors well, for example with do's and don'ts.

Other suggestions included developing an Ecotourism and CBT guide to Mae Hong Son, including a 'Cultural Calendar' showing when tourists could join the different festivals celebrated by Mae Hong Son's different ethnic groups throughout the year.

An excellent idea from John Spies, Manager of Cave Lodge was to provide information about Mae Hong Son's attractions to drivers in car-parks and stopovers. This could be 3 or 4 kilometres along the road, which would give drivers enough time to prepare to take a turn off to visit the attraction if they wished. Information should include the attraction, how long the excursion will take and the level of difficulty involved (difficult walk, steep, etc.).

### 6.2.3 Overview of interviews with tourists – Mae Hong Son City

The team also conducted some brief interviews with tourists in Mae Hong Son, focusing on their expectations and the highlights of their stay.

#### Overall results

- ✓ Travelers were all FIT, plus 3 volunteers. Credible as a representative sample of independent travelers in MHS provincial capital.
- ✓ Range of ages and nationalities. In depth interviews in a range of restaurants – mid range.
- ✓ Most were 1<sup>st</sup> time visitors. Half arrived by bus and half by plane.
- ✓ Beautiful nature is the clear overall top priority when deciding to visit Mae Hong Son.
- ✓ Culture/temples and visiting a quiet destination are strong 2<sup>nd</sup> priorities. Proximity to Myanmar has a pull, too.
- ✓ All visited hilltribe villages. Landscape, villages and temples were highlights: pulled by nature, impressed by culture.

**Table 11: Tourist interview**

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1	Name, country, age	Melanie Anagnostou, Germany, 42 years old. IT project manager. – FERN RESORT	Rudolf Driessen, Netherlands, 28 – HUEN YAI KAEW	Ellen Van Bavel, Netherlands, 26 - HUEN YAI KAEW	Muriel Ollier, French, 48 – SUNFLOWER	Eric Hannecart, France, 67 – SUNFLOWER	Japanese Man – Didn't Give Name - HUEN YAI KAEW, 45	Jonathan Borradaile, England, 18	Shauna Miller, 23, Scotland	Martha Jones. 19, England
2	How long in MHS/TH?	3 days	5 days	5 days	2 days MHS/ 1 mth TH	2 days MHS/ 1 mth TH	3 weeks	3 months	1 month	1 month
3	No. times to MHS/TH?	1 MHS 3 TH	1 <sup>st</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup> time	1 <sup>st</sup> time	1 <sup>st</sup> time	1 <sup>st</sup> time	1 <sup>st</sup> time	1 <sup>st</sup> time
4	Expectations of MHS	Jungle, nature, quiet, pretty temples	Near Burma, can see the mountains of Burma. Nature	Small city, smaller than Chiang Mai. Right inside nature	Quiet/beautiful landscape. Not touristy.	Quiet/beautiful landscape. Not touristy Authentic.	Birdwatching.	Remote. Volunteering, meeting other travelers	Conservation, meeting other travelers	Elephants, meeting other travelers
5	Activities?	1 Day tour. Bamboo rafting, Karen village, fish cave. Staying in Fern Resort.	Trekking. Went to Rak Thai. Important that income goes to the locals.	Trekiing. Went to Rak Thai. Important that income goes to the locals.	Visited Long Neck Karen. Visited city temples. Eating/ drinking.	Visited Long Kneck Karen. Visited city temples. Eating/ drinking.	Birdwatching	Volunteering project	Volunteering project	Volunteering project
6	Met expectations?	Temples, landscape, quiet, abundant nature. Not touristy. Well managed.	Very happy. Excellent local guide – good information. Good information from the TAT.	Yes – very happy. Excellent local guide. Gave good information.	Yes. Very happy.	Yes. Very happy.	"Shangrila!" Very happy with birding in MHS	Yes, except for food	Yes, except for food	Yes, except for food



Table 11: (continued)

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7	Highlights of stay?	Temples and landscape	Villages and jungle. Distribution of income.	Villages and jungle	Temples	Temples	Border area	Village, elephants	Village, elephants	Village, elephants
8	Disappointed? Needs Improvement?	Room.	Little expensive (1 000/day). Need better city map + signs. TAT need better English. Want local food.	Little expensive (1 000/day). Need better city map + signs. TAT need better English. Want local food.	Karen village too commercial	Karen village too commercial	Not disappointed	Bland food in Karen village	Bland food in Karen village	3
9	How did you arrive?	Fly	Bus	Bus	Fly	Fly	Fly	Bus	Bus	Bus
10	How did you find out?	Lonely Planet	Lonely Planet	Lonely Planet	Lonely Planet	Lonely Planet	Bird network/ guidebook	Internet	Internet	Internet
11	Ideal number of days in MHS?	3-4 days	4-5 days unless trekking	2-3 unless trekking	2-3 unless trekking	2-3 unless trekking	Long stay	3 in the city center	3 in the city center	3 in the city center
12	Would you return/ recommend?	Yes	Yes	Yes. Good value. Good rooms.	Yes. Not too busy	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

## **6.3 Field Surveys**

### **6.3.1 Selection of target communities for field surveys**

CBT-I selected 1 community per sub-district in 3 of the 4 target sub-districts to conduct in depth field surveys. For each sub-district, the project team arranged a meeting with the TAO staff to introduce the UNJP project and the objectives of the Ecotourism study, to discuss the potential for tourism among the communities in each target sub-district and to ask the TAO to recommend which community they considered had most potential for ecotourism, taking into consideration the goals of the project to benefit poor and vulnerable communities.

Next, the team conducted a rapid survey of the surrounding area as an initial assessment of issues such as access, potential program design linkages and partnerships. Following this, the team visited the selected community for 2 days and 1 or 2 nights to discuss in depth with the local community members, experience local hospitality and survey interesting attractions.

#### **Mueang Pon**

- ▶ The TAO requested specifically that the study team focus on Mueang Pon as priority;
- ▶ The community was also recommended by many MHS stakeholders during interviews;
- ▶ The team conducted quick surveys of other potential villages, and this confirmed the recommendation that Mueang Pon appears to have the highest potential for success;
- ▶ The community already has some management and experience attracting guests.

#### **Mueang Paem**

- ▶ The community offered a balance between needs for pro-poor assistance and relatively easy access. It is also known to be close to exceptional natural attractions;
- ▶ The community is actively engaged in sustainable natural resource management;
- ▶ The community has many years of experience of welcoming tourists. The number of tourists has fallen sharply in recent years. There is motivation to (re)engage in tourism;
- ▶ The community is already quite well known by tour operators in Chiang Mai and MHS.

#### **Mae Lui**

- ▶ The community is relatively accessible, located quite close to the National Park HQ;
- ▶ The community has experience welcoming tourists and organising ecotourism;
- ▶ Quality of forest in the area surrounding the community is relatively good, compared to other target communities located further up the mountain which are deforested.

#### **Mok Champae**

In Mok Champae, the team first conducted an overview survey. The team discovered that neighbouring highland communities such as Rak Thai and Pang Ung already offered a packed program to day visitors, and it was unlikely that the target lowland villages would add enough value to this established program to persuade tourists or tour operators to stop over. Next, the study team interviewed the president of the TAO. The team found that the priority of the TAO was to support agriculture and enthusiasm for tourism was not high. Thus, the team concluded that Mok Champae should not be targeted for tourism interventions.

### 6.3.2 Mueang Pon Thai Yai (Shan) community, Khun Yuam District

#### 6.3.2.1 Overview of target community: Mueang Pon

Mueang Pon community is located in Mueang Pon sub-district. The sub district has a total area of 405 km<sup>2</sup> (253 125 rai<sup>2</sup>). Mueang Pon borders Khun Yuam sub-district, Khun Yuam district to the north; Mae Toh sub-district, Mae La Noi district to the south; Mae Yuam Noi sub-district, Mae La Noi district to the east and Mae Ngao sub-district, Khun Yuam district to the west.

Mueang Pon sub-district is extremely green and beautiful, surrounded by mountains and highland forest. 70% of the area is mountainous. There are flat areas in the Pon and Laka river basins. This area, of around 89.7 km<sup>2</sup>, is the main area for agriculture and human habitation.

In Mueang Pon sub-district, there are 10 villages and 1 hamlet. Mueang Pon community is located 12 kilometres to the south of Khun Yuam district, and comprises of villages 1 and 2. More than 80% of Mueang Pon's inhabitants are ethnic Thai Yai (Shan). The total population of Mueang Pon is 1 489, (782 men and 707 women) spread over two villages and 577 households.

Most of the people in Mueang Pon are farmers. Rice, garlic and soy beans are the most important crops. There is some organic agriculture, and several community occupational groups, producing local Thai Yai clothes, preserved fruits and exquisite bamboo weaving.

#### 6.3.2.2 Mueang Pon and tourism

Elements of local life which can be regarded as ecotourism tourism resources include:

##### i) Culture, beliefs and architecture

Mueang Pon's people continue to lead a simple, Thai Yai way of life, celebrating traditional festivals, and maintaining their practice of Thai Yai ceremonies and performance arts. The vast majority of local people continue to practice Buddhism devoutly. They maintain a full 12 month calendar of important Buddhist ceremonies and festivals throughout the year.

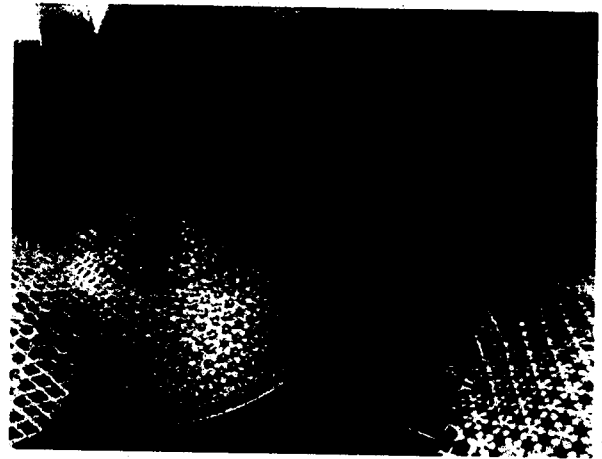
Mueang Pon is also recognised for having preserved Thai Yai architecture to an exceptional level. Visitors can admire many beautiful, wooden houses, thatched traditionally, using large, flat 'Tong Tung' leaves, collected from the forest (*Dipterocarpus tuberculatus Roxb*). People use the gardens around their homes to plant edible fruits and herbs and to raise animals.

A highlight is the local village school which has its own large Buddhist stupa. This is because the school site used to be the village temple. The current Mueang Pon temple is one of the most beautiful and best maintained Thai Yai temples in the province. Moreover, Throughout the village, in people's homes and along the village streets, there are Buddhist and animist-influenced, shrines and symbols. Local youth have been trained as 'youth guides', and can introduce visitors to the community, providing some basic interpretation in Thai language.

Mueang Pon community's status as a vibrant example of living Thai Yai culture has earned the community recognition by numerous Thai government organizations. In 2009, the Mae Hong Son Office of Public Works and Mae Hong Son Town Hall granted Mueang Pon special status as a "**Central Coordinating Cultural and Traditional Tourism Village.**" and helped to develop a master plan to direct sub-district planning.



**Meeting with TAO to identify target community**



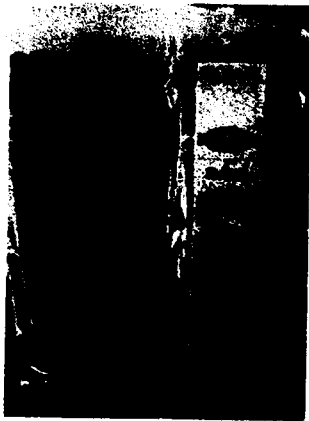
**Handmade by the local master craftsmen**



**Mueang Pon is famous for thatched roofs...**



**Made by layers of these 'tong tung' leaves**



**The community organic fruit processing group...**



**Handmade Tai Yai traditional dress group.**

**Photo box 13: Meeting the TAO. Other pictures show some of Mueang Pon's attractions**

**Table 12: Mueang Pon Calendar – for Cultural and Agro Tourism**

Month	Thai Yai	Activities, festivals and agriculture
Dec	Duen Gaeng/Duan Aye	First month of the Thai Yai year. The rice harvest has now finished and the people will prepare the fields for garlic and soy beans.
Jan	Duen Kum/Duan Yee	This month, local people produce various types of traditional sticky rice sweets to offer to the monks and share with their neighbours. The farmers care for their garlic and soy bean crops.
Feb	Duen Sam	In the middle of the lunar month, the grain stores are full, and local people make an offering of new rice for the Yah Ku festival. Yah Ku is sticky rice pan fried with sugar cane and coconut. The farmers continue to care for their garlic and soy bean crops.
Mar	Duen See	This month, Thai Yai people celebrate the famous Poi Sang Long festival, where young and teenage men become novice monks during the hot season. This time is also favoured for building new homes. Finally, farmers begin to harvest their garlic crops.
Apr	Duen Haa	This month, after harvesting garlic, the community will enjoy the Songkran new year festival. The community will pay respects to their elders. At the end of the month, soy beans are harvested.
May	Duen Hok	After harvesting the soy beans, the people celebrate the Boi Jah Ti festival. They will take sand to the temple to celebrate Visakha Bucha Day. In an agricultural ceremony, fireworks are lit as an offering to the rain which the villagers rely on in the next months.
June	Duan Jet	This month, farmers will begin to scatter the rice shoots and prepare the earth for planting rice. The village protecting spirit will be called back to the village at the community's spirit shrine.
July	Duen Bairt	After the rice shoots have reached 1 month old, the farmers begin to plant the shoots. In the middle of the lunar month, the Buddhist Lent begins. This is an occasion for major merit making. During this time, village elders will stay overnight in the temple on each Sacred Buddha day. Their children and grandchildren will take care of their food and bedding, and pick them up the following day. Devout Buddhists will donate food to feed the monks and laypeople in the temple during this time. The day which the elders end their stay at the temple is called Boi Jah Ka.
Aug	Duan Gao	During this month, the farmers tend to their rice crops.
Sep	Duan Sip	In the middle of the lunar month, there is an important festival, "Tang Som Daw Long." Offerings are made of a special sweet made from rice, sugar and honey. The villagers make beautiful fruit carvings in the evening before the festival. The following day, before dawn, the community members will help cook 49 balls of sticky rice. This will be given as an offering to the temple.
Oct	Duen Sip Et	"Haen Som Ko Ja," is a ceremony to make merit for deceased people. Another important ceremony this month is the end of the Buddhist Lent, marked by a unique Thai Yai festival "Boi Chong Phara." In the period before the end of the Buddhist Lent, each family will construct a "Chong Phara" castle to welcome the Buddha from heaven. There is a parade and traditional dancing for around 3 days. The farmers begin harvesting the rice crop.
Nov	Duen Sip Song	This month, there is an important festival to offer candles, light floating lanterns, offer cut rice. Farmers finish harvesting rice.

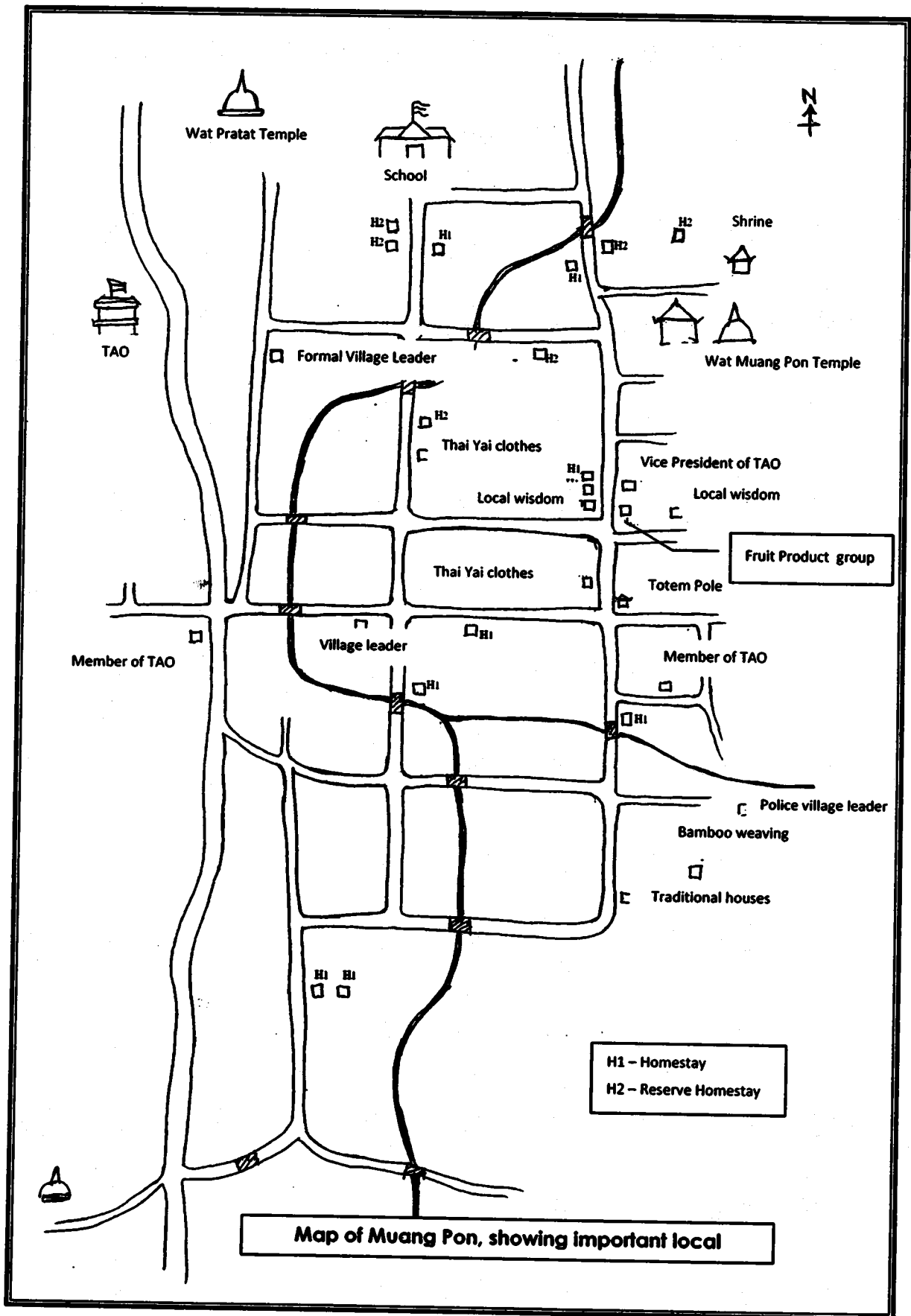


Figure 28: Mueang Pon, showing important local institutions

## ii) Local Wisdom

The village has considerable indigenous local knowledge, including local Thai Yai language, healthy Thai Yai food, cutting and stitching traditional Thai Yai clothing, bamboo weaving, crafting 'Chong Phara' spirit shrines, and processing organic fruits into delicious fruit snacks.

## iii) Natural sites

In the community forest area, on a mountain top, there is a sacred natural well (บ่อน้ำทิพย์) with water all year, highly valued by local villagers who drink the water to bring good luck and to relieve aching muscles. According to local legend, a foreign visitor once bathed in the sacred well, causing it to dry up for the first time in known history. The villagers organised a ceremony to make penance, and after this the sacred water returned to the community. There is also a small cave, called "Tum Pradu Mueang," which has been landscaped a little.

## iv) Tourism related local community groups

**Homestay Group.** This group was originally established in 2002, when the District marshal, Mr Surapol Satayarak contacted Mrs Kalaya Chairaj (a local teacher), because there was insufficient accommodation in Khun Yuam to cater for tourists visiting Bua Tong sunflower fields. This first attempt at homestay was not successful, because the community were not properly prepared to receive guests and did not yet understand the concept of homestay.

Later, in 2004, 16 community members went on a study tour to Mae La Na community in Pang Mapha district. The homestay program was re-initiated by 3 local teachers, using their own funds to buy beds, blankets, mosquito nets, etc. The first tourists arrived in October 2007. A further study tour in 2008 to Mae Kampong Village (Chiang Mai) was supported by the TAO. After this, Mueang Pon was selected as a 'cultural village,' and received 1.4 million Baht, used to construct a cultural center, toilets, landscaping, and the purchase of equipment.

There were then some further problems, because 1) the use of these donated funds was not considered to meet the needs of the homestay group and 2) the new TAO president did not consider homestay to be important, so there was no consistent follow-up support from the TAO. Nevertheless, despite challenges, the group has gone on to be quiet successful. A success factor is the fact that there were already functioning community groups in Mueang Pon, such as a fruit processing group, Thai Yai clothing group, performance group and youth guides. In addition, there were several Thai masseurs who now offer massage to guests.

The group membership fee is 50 Baht, which goes into the group savings account. Admission to the group is based on having 'local skills', and being prepared to follow the rules. In principle, there is a queue system to rotate opportunities to host guests, massage, etc. (Note that the survey team did not assess this to be effective in practice during the field visit.)

The group also offers tasty food, which is not very spicy, and considered to be very healthy. Thai Yai dishes contain many local herbs. The maximum capacity for welcoming tourists is limited to 70 guests. Being selected to accommodate guests depends on 1) the host is prepared to welcome guests, and 2) tourists' requests. The homestay committee shares roles, and discusses guests' feedback in order to improve the homestay experience for guests.

## Impacts of tourism in Mueang Pon

### Negative

- In the beginning, the community were not prepared to welcome large numbers of guests. They lacked sufficient hygiene and hospitality skills. Later, the group learnt to refuse requests which were beyond their capacity and develop services step by step.
- Families are often very/too busy during traditional holiday times (e.g. New Year)

## **Positive**

- No noticeable changes to traditional lifestyle;
- Better upkeep and cleanliness of homes;
- Improved cooperation between local community members;
- Various cultural activities have been stimulated by tourism;
- Practice English and improve communication skills;

## **Experience welcoming tourists and working with marketing partners**

The group are promoted through web sites and pamphlets. Tourists and tour operators usually call the Homestay group for more information or write an e-mail. Foreign tourists are generally happy with the program, and punctual. Thai tourists are generally quite flexible, and more focused on comfort. Cultural exchange is based on shared activities, such as exploring the village or the welcoming ceremony. There is also a visitors' book to record guests' impressions of their stay. The villagers have tried to learn about different needs of different nationalities.

The group have also worked with several tour operators such as Rim Nue Tour (CNX), the Northern Thailand Tourism Federation and Noom Sao Tours (BKK). They have learned a lot from working with tour operators, including to pay commission (ค่าน้ำ)/not charge tour guides and drivers who escort tourists to the community, developing a special price for children, developing inexpensive souvenirs, and including the cost of souvenirs in the price of the tour.

## **Other community groups**

Dok Uang Ngam food processing group. Mrs Khumyo Krongkanjongij is the president of this group, with 24 members. The group produce 11 different types of snack products. These snacks are made from sticky rice mixed with natural sugar and coconut, preserved, sun dried fruits, peanuts in brittle caramel and peanuts with herbs. The group use a sun-baking oven to dry out the fruit. This is quite a small oven, which limits speed and volume of production.

At present, the group have regular customers in Khun Yuam, Mae Sariang and Mae Hong Son, including "Het Kor Lieow" shop, Pa Bong viewpoint shop, shops in Huay Sua Tao village, and "Som Tum Pa Et." The group are keen to increase production, expand their marketing channels, improve product packaging and establish a revolving fund for development. In addition to commercial activities, the group provides educational scholarships to needy local children and buys organic fruit for their snacks from the local organic farming group.

The group would like to distribute snacks through 7-11 in Mae Hong Son province. Apparently, before 7-11 opened, there was a public discussion and 7-11 agreed to stock some local foods, including from the Mueang Pon group. However, this has not happened. When the group tried to follow up, they were informed that all stock comes from Bangkok, and must pass a single, centralized product purchasing process (!). Understandably, the group members feel that this limits opportunities for local products (as well as increasing carbon...)

## **The Thai Yai Clothing Cutting and Stitching Group**

There are 2 groups cutting and stitching Thai Yai clothing. The first group is lead by Mrs Cholada Supintham, and the 2<sup>nd</sup> group lead by Kru Kalaya Chairaj. Both groups were started in 2003, with limited success in the first 3 years. However, after initiating promotion, and all members wearing the Thai Yai dress to official functions, interest began to grow. The style of clothing has developed steadily, and the group is well known for its hand stitched buttons. The groups have been assisted by the TAO, District Community Development Organisation, Provincial Office for Industrial and Informal Education Department. In 2010, the group had an average income of around \$200 USD month per member, sharing different production roles.



A challenge is that many shops in Mae Hong Son and Chiang Mai wish to take stock on consignment, with payment at a later date, based on sales. The group do not want to carry this risk. They prefer to sell the garments outright. They have experience of stock disappearing without the receiver accepting responsibility for their loss. Development needs include assistance to link with markets outside MHS province, which are prepared to buy their stock. They would also appreciate funds to buy more raw materials for production of stock, and industrial sewing machines. This would facilitate production of greater volumes of products.



**Photo box 14: Baan Mueang Pon**

#### **The Alternative Agriculture Group**

This group is more of a loose network of individual farmers than a formal group. These farmers also work with sustainable agriculture networks at district and provincial levels. They work according to the principles of mixed agriculture, with the intention of reducing the amount of chemicals used as far as possible. The group shares experience and ideas about how to succeed with sustainable agriculture. Altogether, there are 4 families active in this network.

#### **Nearby tourism sites**

- 1) Nong Haeng hotsprings
- 2) Tung Bua Tong Mae Ooh Kor
- 3) Tor Pae, Mae Ngao

#### **Travel**

Mueang Pon is located on route 108, Mae Sariang – Mae Hong Son. It is 12 kilometres from Khun Yuam. It is possible to travel to Mueang Pon by public coach (Sombat Tour), bus from Chiang Mai (Prem Pracha) and song teow from Mae Hong Son – Khun Yuam – Mueang Pon.

**Table 13: Summary of field survey in Mueang Pon Community, Khun Yuam Sub District**

Issue	Outcomes
<p>i) Ethnicity, heritage, local wisdom, living cultural practice;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Thai Yai</li> <li>✓ 12 months of festivals, 'Sang Long',</li> <li>✓ Herbal medicines – Herbal medicine Healer is Mr (Paw Tao) Mae Ka Raksooksamlaan. He also makes local wooden eaves 'Baan Soi'</li> <li>✓ Weaving – hat, lamp shade, animal shapes (Artisan - Uncle Jing, Aung Boom Chaiwitoon). The same man is a traditional spirit healer – diagnosis of sickness using spirit wisdom</li> <li>✓ Clothing (Thai Yai) 24 in group</li> <li>✓ Loong Laeng makes decorations for religious ceremonies – 'Chong Phara', 'Doong'</li> <li>✓ Paw Tao Torn – hosts the spirit of the Chao Mueang (like a voluntary possession)</li> </ul>
<p>ii) Local livelihoods/relationships with environment, natural resources;</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Rice, Soy, Garlic</li> <li>✓ orn, peanuts, red onion, sesame, teak</li> <li>✓ Mixed orchards: lynes, sweet tamarind</li> <li>✓ Chinese cabbage, Eggplant, long beans, coriander, chile, cucumber</li> <li>✓ Local garden-orchards</li> <li>✓ Many families raise chickens to eat</li> <li>✓ 12 cows – Loong Stieng</li> <li>✓ Look for traditional medicines and wild seasonal vegetables (Som Pee) in the forest</li> <li>✓ 'Mueang Fai' irrigation (3 concrete, 4 wood)</li> <li>✓ Village 2 – conservation zone. Community forest. Village 1 (2 000 rai). Village 2 (2 000 rai).</li> <li>✓ Since last year (2553) (GPS identified)</li> <li>✓ Conserved flowers – 2 000 rai – 'doc khum doong'/'doc uang'. Connected with Buddhism. Fragrant flowers</li> <li>✓ Some hunting – deer and wild pigs</li> <li>✓ Huay Nam Pon stream/Huay Yam stream/Huay Nam Som stream – water all year</li> <li>✓ Fish</li> </ul>
<p>iii) Tourism resources, (nature, facilities, activities, highlights, com dev.);</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Friendly, welcoming local people</li> <li>✓ Nature: Fields, Cave, Sacred Well (Por Nam Thip), Stream/Rivers – Link with Hotsprings</li> <li>✓ Culture: Temples – Mueang Pon, Blai Doi, Tung Mueang Pon (Thamagai), Kong Moo Nua</li> <li>✓ Traditions(Shan): Boi Khao Ya Ki, Poi Sang Long, Boi Ja Ti, Boi Jah Ka, Tang Som Tor Long, Haen Som Tor Long, Haen Som Kor Ja, Chong Phara, San Lak Mueang (totem pole)</li> <li>Handicrafts: bamboo weaving, Thai Yai clothes, Chong Phara, doong, etc.</li> <li>✓ Food, fruit production group (11 different products – local style rice popcorn)</li> <li>✓ Morning market + Thai Yai Food – 'Jin Loong', 'Blah Oop', 'Gai Oop', 'Gaeng Pak Wan'</li> <li>✓ Facilities: homestay, Community Center, Culture Center, mobile phone coverage</li> <li>✓ Good access, Not good parking in the village</li> </ul>

**Table 13: (continued)**

Issue	Outcomes
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ <b>Highlights: people, culture, wat, traditional houses, occupational groups, food, view</b></li> <li>✓ <b>Community Dev.</b> Occupational groups, organic agriculture group, school is very active, TAO, Youth Guides (20), elderly citizens' group which make brushes</li> </ul>
iv) Confirmation of information: festivals/traditions/agro cycles;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Kuan Khao Ya Ki (Feb), Boi Sang Long (Mar-April) Boi Jah Ti, Offering to protective spirits (May), Boi Ja Ka (June), Tang Som Tor Long (July), Haem Som Kor Ja, Chong Phara (Sep), Soo Daen Haeng, Floating Lanterns (Oct)</li> <li>✓ Prepare fields/plant rice: June/Harvest Rice: Oct-Nov/Plant Garlic and Soy: Dec/Harvest Garlic: Mar-Apr/Harvest Soy Beans: Apr-June)</li> </ul>
v) NRM/conservation/assess potential for low or renewable energy;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Community forest (see above)</li> <li>✓ Solar power for baking bananas</li> <li>✓ Opportunity – water – No – wind – No –</li> <li>✓ Have a biodiesel machine, but no ingredients</li> </ul>
vi) Vulnerability: e.g. poverty, drugs, legal status, land tenure, gender;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Poverty: 30% of community. 50 families. No land, have to take seasonal work. Not easy to include because these people need to work a lot – need to find a good strategy</li> <li>✓ Women have a strong role in the community</li> <li>✓ Drugs – no problems reported, some alcohol</li> <li>✓ 200 people without citizenship in the village. Only 2 families without card in village # 1</li> <li>✓ Land – some have deeds (chanot) some not (nor or 3) Community members know who!</li> <li>✓ Not easy to control access of outside people, because located right next to main road</li> </ul>
vii) Experience of community/CBO's with tourism and tourists;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Medium level of experience</li> <li>✓ Homestay– 7 years. 7 houses. Extra houses (10)</li> <li>✓ <b>Thai tourists</b> (TAO, civil servants, family groups, students) Some foreign walk in, EU and Japan</li> <li>✓ No problems yet</li> <li>✓ Most people stay 1 night</li> <li>✓ Local Guides – No. Youth guides – 20 people</li> <li>✓ Occupation groups have experience, especially with Thai guests</li> <li>✓ Performance</li> <li>✓ Interested to welcome groups of tourists who are interested in health tourism</li> </ul>
viii) Observed levels of local participation in tourism management;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Medium</li> <li>✓ At group level rules not strictly enforced, but manageable</li> <li>✓ At community level, linkages could be better</li> <li>✓ Community groups can sell products to CBT guests – e.g. local Tai Yai dress to guests</li> <li>✓ Visitors still make merit at temple</li> <li>✓ Many people in the community would like to participate more in tourism (from interviews)</li> </ul>

**Table 13: (continued)**

Issue	Outcomes
ix) Current level of market awareness (interviews and car count);	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Foreign – Low</li> <li>✓ Thai – Medium</li> <li>✓ Walk in – yes</li> <li>✓ Motorbike trips pass the village – some stop. Less than 1 time per week.</li> <li>✓ No tourists in village when we visited</li> </ul>
x) Clarify private/public sector partnerships/potential local networks;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Mueang Pon has DoT Standard/TAT website</li> <li>✓ Tour linkages – 3 regular sending TOs</li> <li>✓ Community Development for Occupational Groups</li> <li>✓ Nai Amphoe</li> </ul>
xi) Accessibility/distance from trans. hubs/availability of facilities;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 12 kilo from Khun Yuam. 80 kilos from MHS/90 from Mae Sariang</li> <li>✓ 185 Kilos from Chiang Mai (Hot route). Bus from Chiang Mai. 6 times per day. Night – 2 departures.</li> <li>✓ Sombat Tour Bangkok Mae Hong Son – Stops in Mueang Pon. 15 hours to Bkk.</li> <li>✓ Yellow song-teow Khun Yuam MHS – 100 o/w. One time per day. Dep. MHS 13:00 – Arr. 15:00</li> <li>✓ No minivans in the village. 2 songteows, Pick Up</li> <li>✓ CEO/Provincial Tourism Strategy. Constructed toilets, equipment. Cultural Center. TAO</li> </ul>
xii) Confirmation of beneficiaries +/- impacts identified in desk study;	<p><b>Direct</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Homestay group</li> <li>✓ Food group</li> <li>✓ Performance</li> <li>✓ Youth guides</li> </ul> <p><b>Indirect</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Wat</li> <li>✓ Children's Day/School</li> <li>✓ Occupational groups</li> </ul>
xiii) Levels of experience and training of local community tour guides.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Training by school teachers</li> <li>✓ Study Tour MLN, MKP</li> <li>✓ Education District (Kaed Gansuksah) – 2 Years – youth guides</li> <li>✓ 2 guides</li> </ul>

**Table 14: SWOT: Mueang Pon**

Issue	Strength	Weakness
Ethnicity, heritage, local wisdom, living cultural practice, festivals and traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Strong, living local culture</li> <li>- 12 months of festivals (Buddhism/agriculture).</li> <li>- Performance arts/local crafts</li> <li>- Traditional Thai Yai architecture/home</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Currently, there are no weaknesses in this area. However, tourism always brings a risk of cultural change.</li> </ul>
Livelihoods, agriculture/cycles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Self sufficient village</li> <li>- Mueang Fai (local irrigation) system + permanent rice fields</li> <li>- Local food – opportunities for cultural exchange and creative product development</li> <li>- Vibrant, local morning market</li> <li>- Friendly, down to earth people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Chemicals in garlic cultivation</li> <li>- Local politics is divisive</li> </ul>
Relationships with envir./natural resources NRM/conservation/potential for renewable energy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The location of the village is striking – rice fields completely surround pictures que village</li> <li>- Organic agriculture group</li> <li>- Thatching using leaves/weaving</li> <li>- Fruit processing group – solar power</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Nature destinations not special</li> </ul>
Community Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Thai nationality, literate</li> <li>- Strong, experienced and successful local occupation groups – especially clothes and fruit processing</li> <li>- local resource people who can share knowledge and work with tourism</li> <li>- women are active</li> <li>- Strong unity – expressed through cultural and group activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Marketing</li> <li>- Management of homestay group</li> <li>- reluctant to share some family knowledge</li> </ul>
Tourism resources, (nature, facilities, activities, highlights, Souvenirs/local products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- The overall location and ambience of the village is very beautiful.</li> <li>- Traditional homes/temple/school</li> <li>- Roads, electricity, water, phone, homestay and food</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Car parking</li> </ul>
Experience, capacity of community/guides with tourists and tourists, local participation in tourism management, beneficiaries +/- impacts of tourism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Experience welcoming Thai and foreign guests/learning the expectations of different nationalities</li> <li>- Experience working with TO's</li> <li>- Website, which is being used</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Still low levels of community participation in homestay activities</li> <li>- Local guides still not skilled at interpretation/foreign languages</li> <li>- Few links with foreign tourists</li> </ul>
Accessibility distance from trans. hubs/availability of facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Located close to main road, on the MHS loop. Bus access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Still low volume on this route, overall</li> </ul>
Vulnerability: poverty, drugs, legal status, land tenure, gender;	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- No indications of problems with drugs or incursions into forest</li> </ul>	
Leaders?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- teachers and TAO have active people</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- leaders are very busy</li> </ul>

**Table 13: (continued)**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Threat</b>
Current level of market awareness	- Well known community across sectors	
Market Demand	- Demand for cultural tourism/ authentic experience – Thai/ foreign - Demand for local/healthy food - Interest in website	- Bua Tong festival will exceed capacity, if not managed well - overall, declining number of tourists in MHS
Current partnerships/potential local networks	- Rim Nue Tour (CNX), N Thailand Federation of Tour Operators (CNX), NS Travel (BKK) - Opportunities to link with hotels/ restaurants around province	TAO/MHS-CC/Pattana Chumchon
Local NGO/GO policy/support	-	- interference/confusion from diverse orgs?
Funding support	- history of funding support - well connected at provincial level	

### **Conclusion**

Mueang Pon has very high potential as a cultural tourism destination, with interesting cultural, historical, spiritual, agrotourism and fair-trade orientated activities.

Strengths are more striking inside the village than the surrounding area. The people of Mueang Pon maintain a genuinely welcoming, authentic Thai Yai community. Tourists would certainly enjoy exploring the community, tasting local food, admiring local architecture and learning about local culture. The surrounding mountains and rice paddy provide a beautiful backdrop for exploration, with a pleasant climate.

However, the caves and other natural attractions which the team visited during the survey were not striking, and would not warrant serious interest from a nature enthusiast. The hot spring being developed at nearby Nong Haeng offers possibilities for joint product development. However, it remains to be seen whether current high levels of construction will be compatible with the expectations of tourists looking for a peaceful, natural experience. Cooperation will be possible with some markets.

Efforts by the province to promote Mueang Pon are leading to increasing numbers of tourists. At the moment, the majority of tourists are Thais, although the occasional independent foreign traveler does stop in the village, en route along the 'Mae Hong Son Loop' from Chiang Mai to Mae Hong Son via Mae Sariang. Records in the homestay hosts' guest books show that these travelers have enjoyed their stay.

There is a base of tourism services and management. However, these need to be strengthened in order to increase and spread local participation and benefits.

### **Key strengths and opportunities**

- Genuinely beautiful and charming village with fascinating culture
- Community development experience and examples of successful community groups
- Local, healthy Thai Yai food – experience from the farm/garden to the kitchen

### ***Key weaknesses and threats***

- Internal management and levels of participation in homestay group
- Interpretive skills of local guides/language skills
- Potential for political interference from multiple organisations targeting Mueang Pon

### ***Overall assessment of feasibility***

- Very high potential, with strengthening at all levels

### **Key Recommendations**

#### ***Organisation and people***

- Organisational strengthening/additional training for the homestay group. There is already a good foundation in Mueang Pon, but weak enforcement of systems. More work needs to be done to clarify and strengthen group management. This will become more and more important, as the community becomes more popular, and distribution of opportunities becomes more important and potentially divisive.
- Local guide training in culture and livelihoods interpretation.

#### ***Product Development***

- Organic/Thai Yai coffee shop and restaurant. At the moment, there are no tourist-orientated coffee shops or restaurants in the community, but it is only a matter of time. The location next to the main road and close to Khun Yuam makes it a good place for a quick stop. The community could build on the tradition of Thai Yai healthy food, and CBT group to set up a cooperative local healthy restaurant.
- Thai Yai cooking course – should develop a 3-4 hour program, from the organic farm to the Thai Yai kitchen
- Bamboo weaving workshop

#### ***Marketing***

- Marketing training for local occupational groups. This should include how to approach potential partners, how to make a good product presentation, how to communicate how supporting the group can add value through CSR, negotiation.
- Facilitate supply chain linkages with hotels/restaurants in MHS/CNX/BKK. The groups want to expand their market channels, and should be supported to do so. Linkages with convenience stores, hotel chains etc should be initiated.
- Training to understand different needs of tourists and target marketing planning

### **6.3.3 Mae Lui and Mae Ngao National Park**

#### **Location and livelihoods**

Mae Lui community is located in Mae Suad sub-district, in the border area of 3 provinces, Mae Hong Son, Tak and Chiang Mai. The sub-district has a total area of approximately 350 km<sup>2</sup> (218 850 rai<sup>2</sup>). Mae Lui borders Mae Ka Duan sub-district, Sop Moei district to the north (MHS); Ta Song Yang sub-district, Ta Song Yang district to the south; Sop Kong sub-district, Om Koi district to the east (CNX) and Sop Moie sub-district, Sop Moei district to the west.

The community and cultivated land lies inside Mae Ngao National park boundaries. The area is highly mountainous (95%) and forested (although significant deforestation). Approximately 5% of the area is flat land, which is intensively used for agriculture: rice, garlic, soy beans, red onions, chili, fruit and vegetables and human habitation. Streams and rivers are a common feature, with the Mae Ngao river being the most important waterway, flowing through the village, along with the Yuam river. The villagers do not have legal land rights in this area.

There are 12 villages and 20 hamlets in the tambon. Mae Lui consists of 5 hamlets. The people are ethnic Karen (pagaganor). There are 351 homes, 958 people (men 503/women 455). In Mae Lui village there are 44 families and 148 people (75 men and 73 women). 4 families plant paddy rice. 44 families plant mountain rice in the area surrounding the community.

The village was established in 1981 and became a forestry concession site in 1983, leading to the employment of many local people. Gradually, relatives of settlers moved down the mountain to join their families closer to the road. In the early 1990s, many people in the village became Christian. In 1997, the village established a fish conservation area. In the same year, the road was sealed. In 2005, villagers began growing crops commercially, beginning with Soy beans. By 2009 all families in the village were producing crops to sell.

### **Local Culture**

The villagers are Karen Christians. They attend church on Sundays. There are Sunday school activities and donations are made to contribute towards the upkeep of the church.

### **Community development**

The community has had successes and failures with community development. There are various functioning funds, such as the Rice Bank, Mother Earth, 1 Million Baht village fund and Rice Mill fund. There was a village cooperative, but this failed. Community forestry zoning has been established to limit further expansion of agriculture into the forest. This is a serious and visible problem in this area, although Mae Lui does seem to be having more success than other nearby villages. The fish conservation area is well taken care of. There is a fund with over 10 000 THB. Rules are in place (inc. fines of 500-2 000 THB) to enforce conservation. There is also an ecotourism fund with 19 000 THB. The community work together to maintain the local school and church, collect waste and celebrate national holidays. The community works with government and NGOs in areas such as land rights and support for local children.

The village have received support to produce natural dyed products on 2 separate occasions, but this was not successful, because of lack of support to reach markets.

The community has 160 solar cells. Community members would like training about how to repair solar cells. This could even be approached entrepreneurially, as community members are prepared to pay for repairs, which are currently expensive and infrequent.



Table 14: Agricultural Calendar: Mae Lui

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Fish in Mae Ngao River	A lot of fish						Not much fishing due to rain/very high water level					
Fish: Mae Lui stream	Small # fish all year											
4 families: rice paddy						Plough	Plant			Harvest		
44 families: mountain rice		Clear hill		Fire break and burning	Plant rice/ oth. crops	Clear weeds, gradually harvest different fruits and vegetables as they ripen				Harvest rice	Harvest chillies	
Soy bean – 35 families						Prepare the fields	End of July/early August, plant soy		Clear weeds		Harvest Soy Beans	
Peanuts 10 families							Prepare fields	Plant	Clear weeds			Harvest
Community Activities			Prepare bamboo									
			Thatching									
			Weaving									
			House building									
Collect herbs and plants from forest	Collect from rice fields and forest				Collect chillies from fields	Bamboo						

### 6.3.3.1 Mae Lui and tourism

**Mae Ngao river.** Mae Ngao river is the longest, most important waterway in the National Park, originating near to Sop Kong village, in the watershed area, and winding for 42 kilometres through Mae Ngao National Park before joining the Yuam River. The river marks the boundary between Tak and Mae Hong Son provinces. It is a famous river in Thailand, due the influence of Thai poetry, which has created a perception of Mae Ngao as a remote, beautiful and romantic destination. The river is indeed extremely beautiful. Between 10 and 20 metres wide, Mae Ngao is a clean, clear water-way cutting through the national park. It frames Mae Lui village, with the forest and fields as a green, serene backdrop. During the rainy season, river flow is swift, and the river connects with many smaller streams. Local community members use the river to travel by boat around and out of the National Park. Mae Ngao National Park is recently established and is currently applying for full NP status.

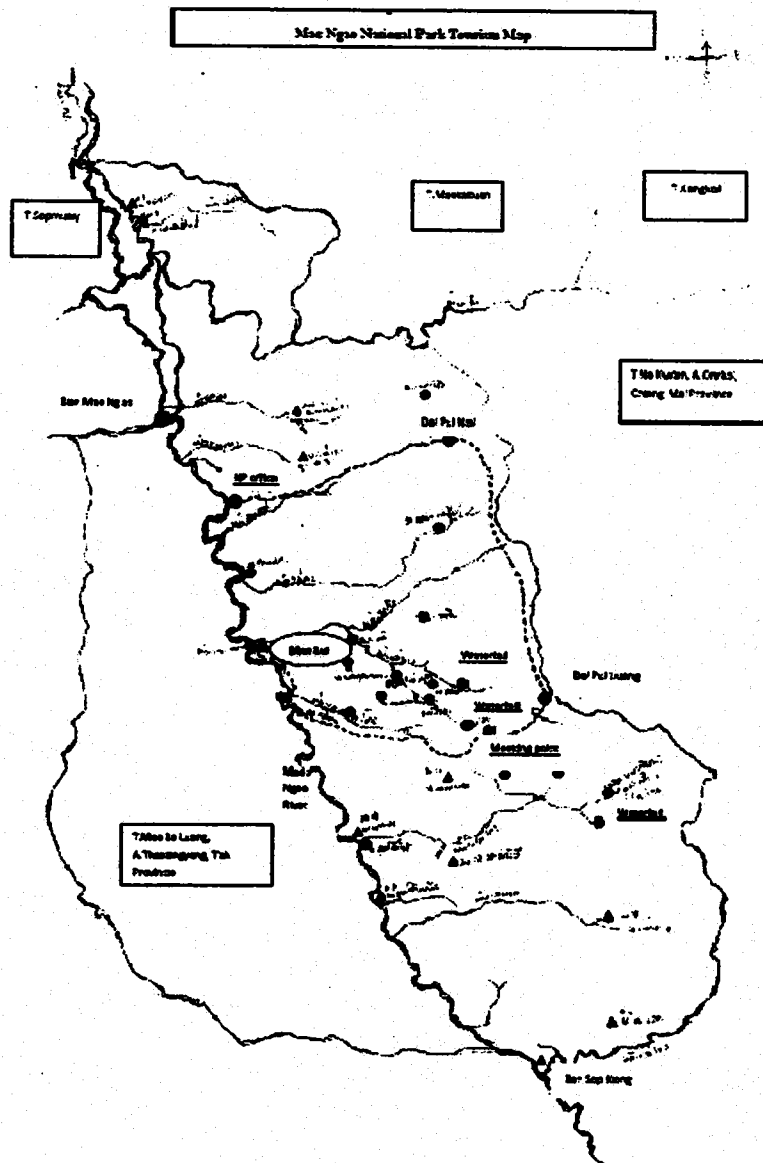


Figure 29: Mae Lui and surrounding communities in Mae Ngao National Park area

**The following sites are located close to Mae Lui and have potential for ecotourism:**

**Mae Lui Waterfall** (Ba Hae Lay) is a 40 metre, single level waterfall, with water flowing all year round. This waterfall is located about 4 km from Mae Lui, which is approximately a 2 hour walk (average fitness). A smaller waterfall (Lay Buey Jah) can be visited along the route.

**"Ob Mae Lui"**, this is a tunnel created by two parallel cliffs meeting above Mae Lui stream, between Upper Mae Lui and Central Mae Lui. The tunnel is divided into two sections. The first section (Ob Noi) is approximately 150 metres, and the second section (Ob Mae Lui) 300 metres. There are also attractive red and yellow stones in the cliff face, en route. The walk is 1 hour from Mae Lui, or 1 full day from the Mae Ngao National Park office.

Ob Mae Lui can be visited on the same route as Mae Lui waterfall: the route is Ob Noi, Ob Mae Lui, Lay Buey Jah and Mae Lui waterfalls.

**Other, smaller sites include**

Mae Bang waterfall (a small falls connected to Mae Lui stream)

Bat Cave: this is a 30 minute walk, passing the fish conservation area and community fields

Fish Cave: this cave is 6 km from Mae Lui, close to Mae Ngao river and Baan Na Doi hamlet. It appears like a well, with large fish swimming in it. These fish are the same species as Fish cave in Mae Hong Son Tham Plah Pha Sua National Park. They are believed to be sacred.



**Photo box 15: The beautiful Mae Ngao river runs through Mae Lui**

## Activities

**Rafting:** It is possible to raft for 1 hour down the Mae Ngao river, from behind the village, past the fish conservation area, to the National Park headquarters, taking around 3 hours.

**Trekking** to Doi Pui Luang mountain: This mountain viewpoint offers good views from 1 500 metres above sea level. It is only accessible on foot. The mountain range stretches to Om Koi province in Chiang Mai. During the winter, there are stunning views of Mae Hong Son's famous 'sea of fog' from the summit. It is a good choice for an adventure trip combination if tourists want to combine CBT/cultural exchange with a strenuous trek and jungle camping.

The following sites are located further from Mae Lui and have potential for longer programs:

**Mae Piow Waterfall:** This is a 150 metre high, beautiful waterfall in pristine forest, with water flowing all year round. It can only be reached by foot. Usually from Doi Pui Luang.

## Traveling to Mae Lui

It is a serious journey from Bangkok to Mae Ngao National Park. There is no coach from Bangkok which passes this route. Tourists must take a Bangkok – Mae Sariang coach, and get off at the Mae Sariang Mae Ngao intersection. Then, travel down route 105 (Mae Ngao – Sop Moei) for around 40 km. There is a turn off to the National Park, which is a further 4 kms. From the National Park to Central Mae Lui is 25 kilometres. Some sections of the road are unsealed, so it is recommended to use a 4WD vehicle. A better option is to use one's own car or to fly from Bangkok to northern Thailand and rent a car or minivan in Chiang Mai or Mae Hong Son. It's possible to travel from Chiang Mai via Hot. Another option, which could be a great adventure, is to travel up from Tak province, via Mae Suad, Ta Song Yang, to Baan Mae Ngao.

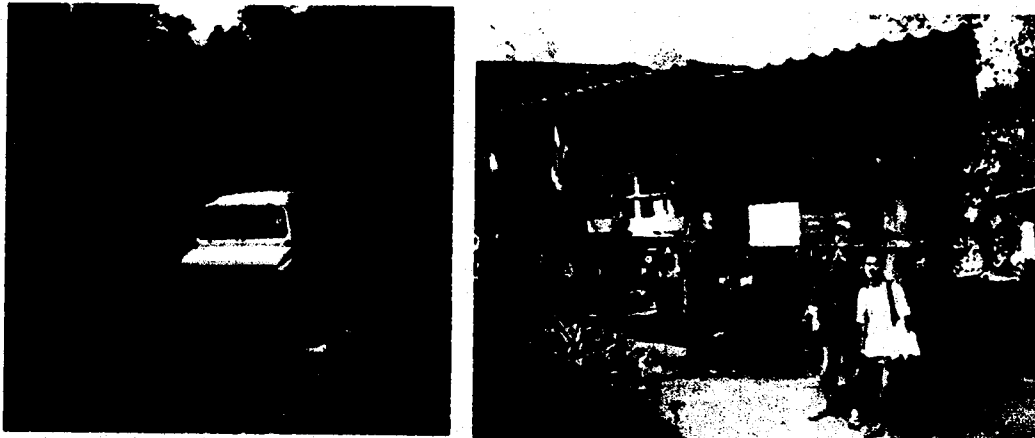


Photo box 16: Traveling to Mae Lui is a good adventure... with a warm welcome waiting

## Experience with tourism – Mae Lui

Mae Lui has a rafting group with 12 members, based on a queue system. The villagers are able to construct these rafts themselves from bamboo. They also sell rafts which have been used 1 time to the National Park for their own rafting program for 800-1 000 Baht per raft.

So far, tourists have used this service through 4 different channels:

- 1) Foreign tourists arriving with a tour operator (50-60 people per year). Tourists go rafting as part of a 3-4 hour package tour. Before rafting, tourists go elephant riding in Mae La Ki village, Mae Wa Luang sub-district (Tak province). This tour is accompanied by a guide called Adul, from Riverside Guesthouse. Tourists ride elephants to the river, go swimming, and then raft to the

National Park HQ. The villagers are paid 250 Baht per person. It takes 2 people to construct a raft. 1 raft can be used for 5-6 tourists. There is no mobile phone connection, so the guide will usually send a letter to the village to confirm in advance. Tour operators usually organise tours during the periods April and May, and October to February. Tourists usually do not stay in the village overnight. However, if there is a request for an overnight stay, the village can accommodate. There are 3 'homestays' and a 'cooking group' of 5 people. The guide brings cutlery, plates, etc. So far, there is no formal organisation or system in place for these services.

- 2) Tourists arriving on rafting trips organised through Mae Ngao National Park HQ. If there is a small group of tourists, then the NP use their own team as rafting guides. If there is a bigger group, the NP employ members of the Mae Lui rafting group to help guide the rafts. Sometimes, the NP also employs local people as porters during nature-study trekking trips. There are 5 people who regularly take work as porters (250 THB/Day).
- 3) Local civil servants and other professionals taking a break in the national park and visiting Mae Lui to go rafting. This used to be a significant market. In 2007, more than 500 people took rafting trips. However, in 2010 there were only 100 local visitors.
- 4) Foreign tourists for 'catch and release' fly fishing. This is a recent development, unique in Thailand. In 2010, the community decided to go into partnership with 'Montana' tour company to offer fishing programs inside the community's fishing conservation area. The idea is that this partnership will increase the cash value of conservation for the villagers and provide an alternative income stream to ease pressure on the forest.

The agreement was coordinated by a local tour guide, Mr Pirawat Kowdrakul (Bobby), who also owns a fishing shop in Mae Sariang. The agreement includes a 'concession' clause giving the tour company exclusive rights to organise fishing trips in the conservation area. This does not extend to other types of tour. Tourists are forbidden to take any fish out of the conservation zone. Only tourists with experience in 'catch and release' fishing are accepted on the program. This agreement is not limited to Mae Lui. A committee includes villagers from Mae Lui, Na Doi, Um Loh, and Sop Kong. The agreement includes fishing concessions along the entire stretch of river which each village takes responsibility to conserve. The business deposits 1 000 THB per tourist per day into a joint bank account overseen by the District Secretariat. The tour operator will also make a biannual donation to support villagers' conservation efforts.

Additional interesting history related to tourism is that in 2009, an investor made an arrangement with Mae Lui community to construct a resort opposite the village. The resort owner tried to employ the villagers to cut down trees on the Tak side of the border to construct the resort. Villagers from Tak province made an official complaint, and warned the resort owner. When the resort owner continued to persuade the villagers to cut trees, they decided to cancel their agreement with the resort owner. The NP authorities confiscated the wood which had been cut to construct the resort.

#### **Tourism Activities Organised by Mae Ngao National Park**

**Mae Ngao National Park Headquarters:** The HQ is established in a shady teak forest, on the banks of the Ngao river. The HQ provides a picnic/camping area (5 rai) and 3 bungalows. Nature-study trekking and rafting are organised for tourists during the winter season.

Longer nature hiking trips, organised by the National Park are possible, which allow tourists to trek quite far away from the road, to undisturbed areas of the forest. Popular routes include a 2 day/1 night trek to Doi Pui Luang mountain to enjoy the "sea of fog" and chilly early morning air from the summit. This is only appropriate for tourists who enjoy active adventure.

Other activities which can be organised by the National Park include a trek to Oh Loh Kro waterfall, which cascades for over 150 metres through the heart of the forest in a series of steps. Swimming is possible. The National Park charges 200-250 Baht per day for porters and 300 Baht for guides. The trip takes 3 days, and is a tough endeavour. The first leg of the trip can be tackled either in a 4WD jeep, arriving at Na Doi village, or by river. Jeep rental (return) can be organised for 1 500-1 800 Baht. After this, hikers must make the rest of the journey on foot. Hikers can stay in Karen villages en route. The trip is suitable for travelers who enjoy real adventure and cultural exchange. It is necessary to book 2 weeks in advance.

The National Park also organises rafting trips along the Mae Ngao river for 1.5 to 2 hours. Local people in Mae Lui are usually employed to build the rafts from bamboo. This fun, very scenic trip winds through the forest, giving tourists great opportunities to see the forest without needing to get too exhausted trekking off the road. The trip costs 500 Baht per raft, per 5 passengers. The rapid are grade 1 and 2, making the trip is safe for inexperienced rafters (as long as they can swim). Rafts are used 3-4 times to save cutting bamboo. Tourists must book 1 week in advance. The best time of year is from November to February.

There is a restaurant in the National Park, open only during the winter from 08:00 to 22:00. The contact number for the National Park is 053 681 323.

**Table 16: Summary of field survey in Mae Lui Community, Sop Moei Sub-district**

Issue	Outcomes
i) Ethnicity, heritage, local wisdom, living cultural practice;	Ethnic Skaw Karen people. Christian, with several active leaders Youth group, women's group, village volunteers group (4) Herbal medicine doctor Local artists – musicians (Day Nah/S'ng/Buffalo horn) Knowledge of local legends Local dress, language, homes. Revolving agriculture Choir singing (Christian)
ii) Local livelihoods/relationships with environment, natural resources;	4 areas of paddy, 4 areas of mountain rice 2 'Mueang Fai' local irrigation systems Crops: rice (for consumption), soy beans, peanuts, chilli, 10 000 – 60 000 income per year Planting and harvesting, no processing Animals: 16 buffalo/no cows because too hard to care for. Pigs and chickens raised to eat in the village Forest: 5 zones: watershed, conservation forest, cemetery, community forest for utilization, cultivating fields (rotation) Forest: deer, wild pigs, monkeys, gibbon, hornbill, wild chicken, anteaters Vegetables: orchids, mushrooms, fruits, bamboo shoots Watershed: Mae Lui Stream, Jor Ler stream, Mae Bang Stream, Mae Pae stream, Kolo stream, 1 km area of fish conservation zone. All families fish
iii) Tourism resources, (nature, facilities, activities, highlights, com. dev.);	Nature: Bat cave, fish cave, Mae Ngao, Ba Yaeh Ley and Lay Bue Jah waterfalls/ob Mae Lui and ob Noi/ Mae Bang Waterfall, Nature study trekking trail to Doi Pui Luang with Mae Ngao National Park; Culture: weaving, bamboo weaving, local language, homes, simple lifestyle, fishing Food: mountain rice, chilli paste. Local cucumber curry Running water, solar power, road partly sealed, <u>no phone signal</u>

**Table 16: (continued)**

Issue	Outcomes
	<p>Highlights: friendly people, located next to river, peaceful, rafting during season</p> <p>CD: conservation group and fish conservation area. Community land rights volunteers</p>
<p>iv) Confirmation of information: festivals/traditions/agro cycles;</p>	<p>Christian</p> <p>Agricultural festivals</p>
<p>v) NRM/conservation/assess potential for low or renewable energy;</p>	<p>Community forest, forest ordination, fire break, fish conservation. Extensive use of solar power.</p> <p>Plan by Department of Energy Development – hydro power – Mae Lui is target area</p>
<p>vi) Vulnerability: e.g. poverty, drugs, legal status, land tenure, gender;</p>	<p>Self sufficient village</p> <p>Before, drug problem, but now apparently solved</p> <p>Relations with NP are good in terms of tourism cooperation</p> <p>Currently in the process of a pilot project to define 'community land rights' together with the National Park staff</p> <p>Local women are active/participate in CD</p> <p>Thai citizenship</p> <p>Good access (relatively)</p>
<p>vii) Experience of community/CBO's with tourism and tourists;</p>	<p>Tourism groups: rafting 12 people working on queue system, local porters – 5 people, 250 THB/day</p> <p>Cooking group – 5 people (guide brings equipment)</p> <p>Experience: foreign 30-40 yrs.</p> <p>Elephant riding/swimming/rafting 2-3 hrs. 250 THB/person. 2 people to build raft. 4-5 passengers</p> <p>Mixture of + and – experience with private sector, both Thai and foreign. Agreement with fishing tour operator</p> <p>Community leaders actively interested to develop better tourism management</p>
<p>viii) Observed levels of local participation in tourism management;</p>	<p>W/ Nat. Park. Build rafts,</p> <p>Homestay – some experience but not systematic</p> <p>Level of participation in tourism with NP currently low</p>
<p>ix) Current level of market awareness (interviews and car count);</p>	<p>Low for Mae Lui, high among Thai tourists in high season for Mae Ngao NP</p>
<p>x) Clarify private/public sector partnerships/potential local networks;</p>	<p>Local organisations – several 100 guests per year:</p> <p>From NP – apr 200 guests per year during holidays</p> <p>50-60 people on package tour incl. elephants</p> <p>Montana Catch and Release fly fishing</p>
<p>xi) Accessibility/distance from trans. hubs/availability of facilities;</p>	<p>MSR – Sop Moei 25 km, Sop Moei Intersection 15 km, NP intersection 4 km, Mae Lui Bon 12 km, By raft to NP 13 km (3-4 hrs.)</p>
<p>xii) Confirmation of beneficiaries +/- impacts identified in desk study;</p>	<p>Local people would like to strengthen the system/management</p> <p>: 3 families direct benefit – homestay</p> <p>: 250 per trip per person and tips</p>
<p>xiii) Levels of experience and training of local community tour guides.</p>	<p>No training yet or system for hosts or guides</p> <p>Direct Experience in rafting, homestay, food</p>

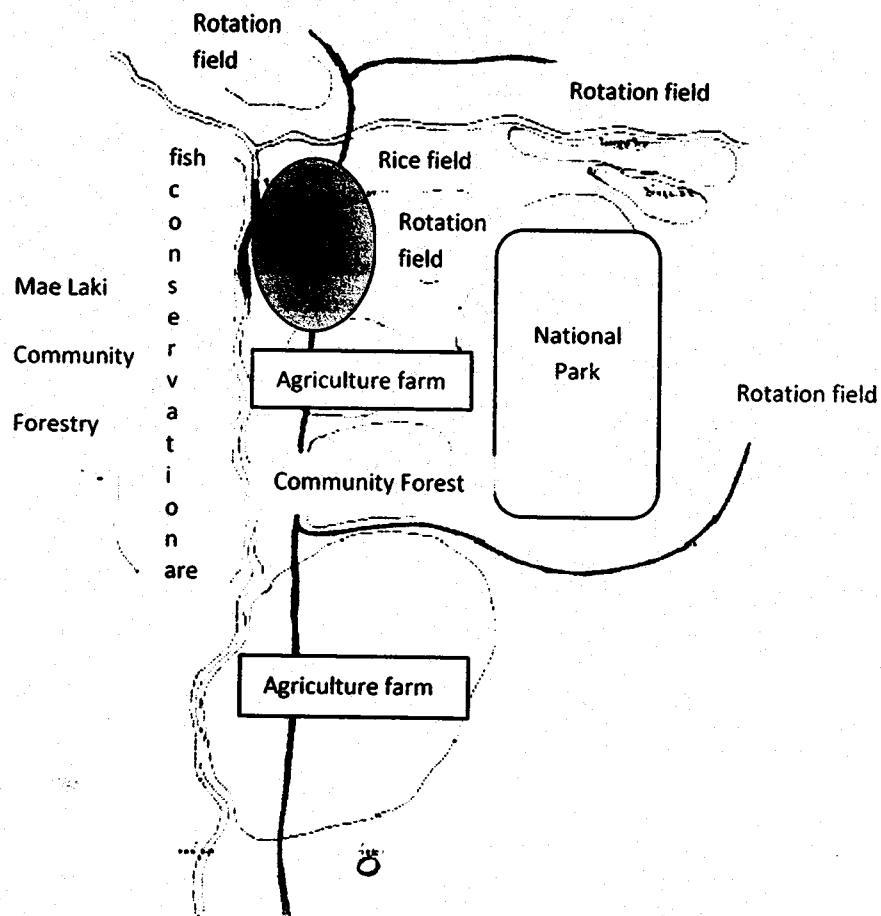


Figure 30: Map of Mae Lui Land management

Table 17: SWOT: Mae Lui

Issue	Strength	Weakness
Ethnicity, heritage, local wisdom, living cultural practice, festivals and traditions	Many local people with living local knowledge Dress, language, Karen homes	Decreasing transfer of knowledge between generations (increased by conversion to Christianity in terms of original Karen beliefs).
Livelihoods, agriculture/cycles	Revolving cultivation	Inside NP boundaries. Pressure on NP
Relationships with environment, natural resources NRM/conservation/potential for low or renewable energy	Successful NRM/fish conservation zone with well enforced rules Community have added value to their NRM/conservation work through fly fishing	Inside NP boundaries. Pressure on NP
Community Development	Support from many organisations/funds – both religious and civil/gov. Positive leader	Support for natural dyed cloth failed due to lack of consistent market access. Failed co-op.
Tourism resources, (nature, facilities, activities, highlights)	Rafting, nature trail, caves, interesting sites such as Ob Mae Lui, Ob Noi/Doi Pui	No information about tourism sites, or information to prepare tourists
Souvenirs/local products	Natural dyed cloth	
Experience, capacity of community/local guides with tourists and tourists, local participation in tourism management, beneficiaries +/- impacts of tourism	Experience leading rafting trips, welcoming and hosting tourists; Experience working together with tour operators and Mae Ngao NP	Lack of training for local guides. No system/management for homestay or local guides No information for guests



**Table 17: (continued)**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Weakness</b>
Accessibility distance from trans. hubs/availability of facilities	OK in summer and winter. Difficult in rainy season	No direct transport or phone signal
Vulnerability: e.g. poverty, drugs, legal status, land tenure, gender	No indications of drug problems	Maintaining a livable balance with the forest/National Park
Leaders?	Strong leaders with good support from the people Youth leaders Religious leaders	
	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Threat</b>
Current level of market awareness	Not directly, but through TO's National Park Montana/NG Fishing Tours	Still limited awareness, and the community are not able to communicate easily with the outside world <b>no phone</b>
Market Demand	USP with fishing and apparently a growing market Access to Thai and foreign tourists	Difficult to learn about and access the community No promotional materials/information
Current partnerships/potential local networks	Mae Ngao NP Montana Fly Fishing Tour (Riverside Guest House) MSR Knowledgeable people about caves closeby (John)	
Local NGO/GO policy/support	CCF network to develop children and facilitate citizenship District secretariat	
Funding support	From Montana	

### **Conclusion**

Mae Lui has a strong mixture of attractive tourism resources, overall successful community development and sustainable natural resource management experience, good relations with the National Park ensuring market access, at least in the high season, and experience welcoming tourists. Local leaders are enthusiastic. The community is working with a local NGO on a pilot project to establish community rights to farm in the national park.

Overall, despite the challenges with communication and natural resource management within the national park, the community would offer a great opportunity to engage with community based natural resource management in cooperation with National Park authorities and private sector partners (fly fishing with guaranteed donations to conservation).

### **Key strengths and opportunities**

- Linkages with Mae Ngao national park and location next to Mae Ngao River
- Adding value to conservation through linkages with private tour operators
- Good nature of local people. Better than average Skaw Karen food.

### **Key weaknesses and threats**

- No training ever provided for local guides or hosts/no management system
- No information/promotion plus difficulty of contact
- Poor state of forest in areas very close to Mae Lui (perception)

### **Overall assessment of feasibility**

- High for moderate numbers of visitors, mainly in the winter season. Moderate for consistent visitors all year. Must work with National Park and TOs/hotels in MSR.

### **Key Recommendations**

#### **Organisation and people**

- CBT Management: full CBT preparation and management training is needed. There has never been any systematic preparation for tourism in this community;
- Local Guide and Homestay Host Training: in nature and culture interpretation and hospitality, as well as understanding the needs of guests;
- Water and rafting safety training: this would be useful for the local guides, who are already leading trips along the river. If local guides were trained through a quality system, then it would also help to justify a reasonable wage for their work.

#### **Product Development**

- Well organised homestay program with set cultural exchange activities;
- Could look again at natural dyed cloth for supply chain linkages.

#### **Marketing**

- Need to facilitate communication – phone. This is essential for long term success;
- Training to understand more about tourists, marketing partnerships and access. Initially, the community can work with the national park and their current partners (Montana). However, experience shows that community members need to be able to adapt to change to maintain markets. Marketing training can help in this area;
- Good information about the community and its services needs to be developed.

**Note:** Although implementing CBT in this community does have risks, due to its national park status and serious pressures on natural resources, there are also many strengths and opportunities. As a pilot area for 'community land rights', Mae Lui would be an extremely powerful model if the current damage to the environment could be reversed using tourism as a core strategy.

### **6.3.4 Mueang Paem**

Mueang Paem community is located in Tham Lot sub-district, Pang Mapha district. The sub-district has a total area of 240 km<sup>2</sup> (150 095 rai<sup>2</sup>). Mueang Paem borders Myanmar's Shan State to the north; Spong Sub-district, Pang Mapha district to the south; Pai District to the east and Pang Mapha sub-district, Pang Mapha district to the west. The sub-district is mountainous and heavily forested, with running water year around. 95% of the area is mountainous. The area is well known for world-class caves. There are 7 villages and 2 hamlets in this area.

Mueang Paem, Moo 5 of Tham Lot sub-district, is an ethnic Karen village, located inside The Pai Watershed Wildlife Sanctuary. The village was established from 1957 to 61 by Karen farmers from Mae Yen, Pai district and Baan Huay Nam, in Mueang district. The village grew during the 1980's and is

now a thriving, impressive sized village. Mueang Paem has 140 households, and a population of 559 people (295 men and 264 women). Mueang Paem is an attractive village, with many traditional Karen houses, with distinctive wooden planked walls, woven bamboo floors and thatched roves. Mueang Paem has a Buddhist temple, a Christian Church, a village school, village hall, information center, running water and 3 tourist centers. The main information center, at the entrance to the village and a further center at the home of the Kumnan (village chief), are in poor states of repair. However, the cultural center in the local school is well kept. Zoning is effective in Mueang Paem, including village area, cemetery area, cultivating area, rice fields, forest for utilization, forest for conservation and watershed area. The overall protected area is approximately 5 000 rai, representing 58% of the total area.

### **Community Development**

There are various community funds, including the 1 Million Baht village fund with 15 members, a Poverty Aleviation Fund with 280 000 Baht, a TAO fund with 100 000 Baht, an AIDS fund (unknown amount) and the Mother of the Nation Fund, which has 7 members. There is a women's natural dyed weaving group with 50 members. The group goals include conserving traditional Karen weaving practices, earning additional income and new skills, and closer cooperation. The group has several challenges. The main challenges are developing and adapting their products to meet market needs and marketing. The group still focuses their marketing on tourists visiting the village as the main target group, but the number of tourists is decreasing. 22 families have loans from the Bank for Agriculture and Cooperatives.

There are also several groups directly related to tourism. These are 1) the rafting group, with 28 members, 2) local guides group, with 60 members, and 3) a homestay group with 9 members. Each home can accommodate 4 guests. The fee for homestay is set at 200 Baht per night per person, including dinner and breakfast. In addition, because the village used to be popular among trekking operators, several other houses welcome occasional guests.

### **Local Culture**

Important local ceremonies include

- 1) During the "Kee Jer" blessing ceremony in February and September a sacred thread is wrapped around the wrist of the people, animals and trees being blessed. This ceremony is held to request protection from sacred spirits of the forest and mountains, to acknowledge the interconnectivity of all living things and to send prayers. The ceremony cements the spirit of solidarity, cooperation and sacrifice in the community. Community members also show respect and thanks by sharing their harvest with spiritual leaders (Hee Koh).
- 2) 'Liang Hua Fai' ceremony is held in May to show respect to the sacred spirits of the forest and mountains; to express special thanks for the resource of water and to request permission and blessings from the spirits which care for the rain and local "Muang Fai" irrigation system, so that villagers' crops will have sufficient water to thrive, will not suffer from pestilence and the villagers will have sufficient food. This ceremony supports conservation of the watershed by creating awareness of the role of forest as the source of water and strengthening familial bonds to protect the forest.
- 3) During the "Sae Kur Sae Chi" ceremony, the villagers make an offering to the spirits of the fields, forest and mountains. They pray for enough rain and a bountiful harvest. They also pay respect to "Hee Kor", the spiritual leader who leads the ceremony. The villagers also discuss and reach an agreement on how to divide labour in the fields.
- 4) The "Kee Lor Jor" ceremony is held before the villagers thresh their rice harvest (October). The purpose of the ceremony is to express thanks to all community members who have assisted each other to harvest rice in the mountains and paddy fields. The ceremony is also important in teaching the local youth (by example) the importance of showing respect and expressing thanks to their relatives and elders.

- 5) The tradition of "Oh Ber Koh" is held to eat and celebrate the new rice crop. Relatives and friends have a special opportunity to eat together and admire each others' rice harvests. Elders gather to teach and bless local youth. The ceremony has particular importance in teaching the new generation about the rice cycle and Karen culture and lifestyle. Elders will also teach youth how to engage with outside society.
- 6) "Chewa" is the traditional dress for maidens. This traditional white, woven dress is worn only by unmarried women, stretching from their throat to their necks. Once a lady is married, she is no longer allowed to wear a Chewa. The design of married womens' clothing "Cheka" includes "nee chi" stitching, modeled after running water, or a spider's web. This is symbolic of strong, enduring relations between husband and wife. After marrying, the women can only wear other colours such as blue, red or pink. Karen men usually wear bright red shirts, from childhood to old age, which is woven by their mother or wife. When Karen people marry, they wear headscarves.
- 7) Traditional wisdom: some of the elder villagers have knowledge of herbal medicines, bamboo weaving, and also knowledge of traditional Karen legends.

### **Agriculture and livelihoods**

The people of Mueang Paem are predominantly rice farmers, planting rice according to a 5 year rotational cycle. Garlic and soy bean are also planted. 90% of people in Mueang Paem have land to cultivate. Only 10% do not have land. Compared with other highland villages, Mueang Paem is fortunate, because 80% of families plant rice paddy. Only 20 of families cultivate highland rice. 30% of families have some kind of legal land entitlement.

However, the village still has frequent misunderstandings with the forestry department, because their land management system is not formally recognized. In addition to crops, villagers also raise animals, including cows (50 families), buffalo (most families own at least 1 buffalo), pigs, and chickens as supplementary income. Women weave clothing and shoulder bags to wear and most sell a small number for additional income. Local people also keep home vegetable gardens for their own consumption. There are 3 shops in Mueang Paem, selling food such as noodle soup.

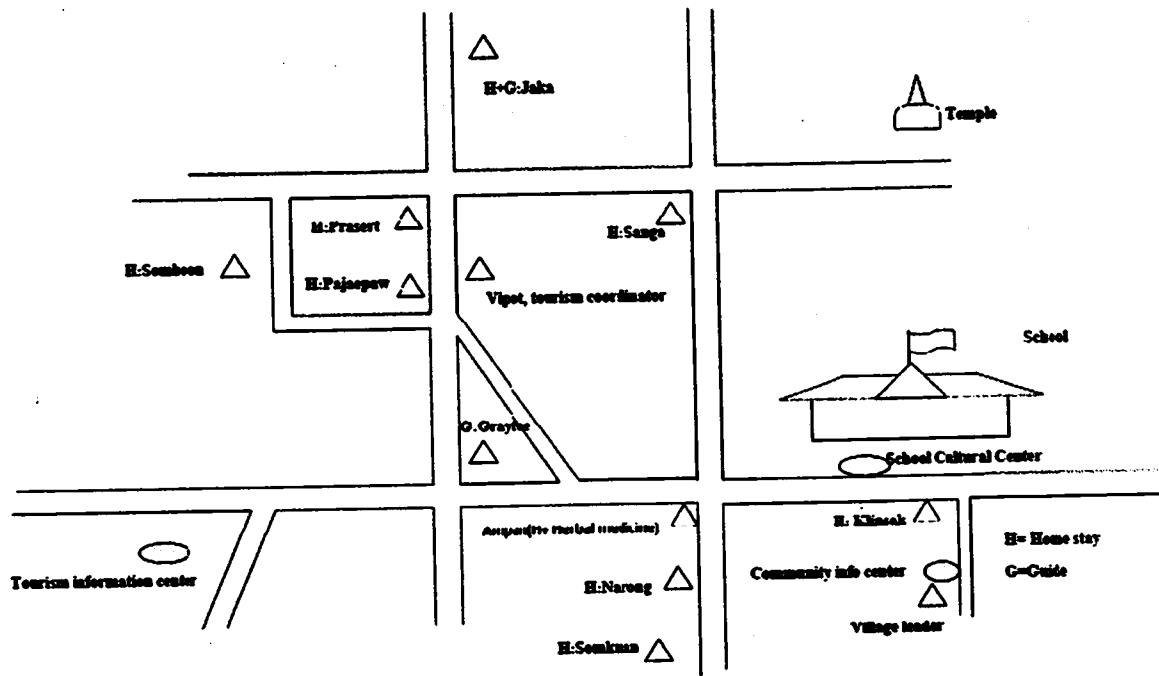
### **Natural Resource Management**

There are 7 streams in Mueang Paem. The most important waterway is the Paem stream.

The people work together to construct the "Muang Fai" local irrigation system, based on local wisdom. This system damns streams, and redirects water into the fields. The local people build the dams from bamboo stakes driven into the river bed, earth and leaves. Access to water is based on who is most active to build the muang fai, and settled through negotiation. The highland rice cycle is based on a 5 year shifting rotation system, with rice, sesame, corn and fallow periods. Herbs and vegetables are also planted in the rice fields, so that the villagers can harvest crops throughout the year, as they ripen.

Karen people in Mueang Paem manage forest use by designating several zones with clear rules and regulations for using and conserving forest resources. The zones include watershed (no use is allowed), forest which can be utilized but not cultivated, forest which has been ordained (a Buddhist tradition) and is a conservation area, a swamp (many animals and birds), 2 areas for raising animals and the villagers' mountain rice fields. As is common for Karen people, the villagers have deep knowledge of edible plants and herbs, and are able to extract many benefits from the forest without cutting trees.

The NRM situation is made challenging because of the presence of Ella, a Red Lahu village, high in the mountains, farming inside the watershed area. Cultivation in the watershed area is a major concern for the villagers, because it affects their access to water for agriculture. Negotiations took place between village leaders in Mueang Paem and Ella, to try and reach a compromise about which areas of the watershed could/could not be cultivated. So far, these negotiations have been relatively successful.

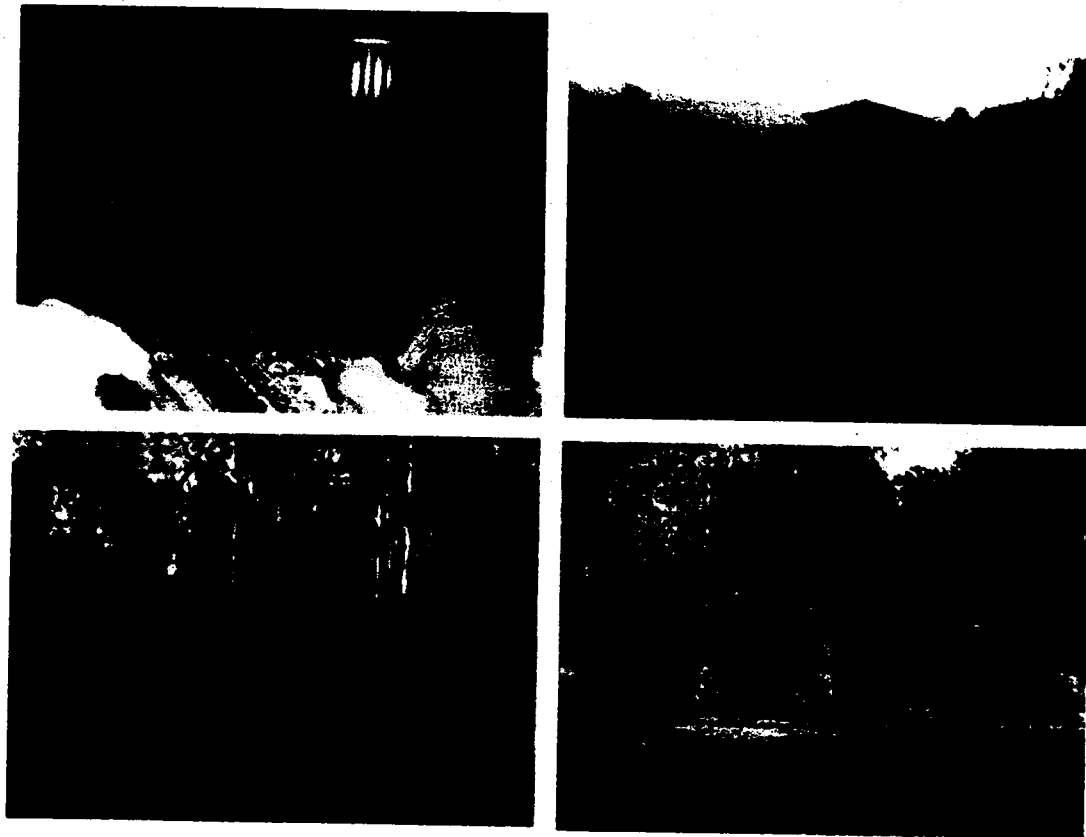


**Figure 30: Mueang Paem Map: Showing important local institutions**

### Tourism Resources

The community has the following tourism resources:

- Huay Rai/Tham Pae Cave. An underground stream runs through this interesting cave for 600 metres. It is possible to travel by raft from one end to the other.
- Tham Yao (Long Cave). This 1 kilometer long cave is a truly exceptional attraction, and fragile – it is still a living cave, with countless cave pearls, emerging stalactites and stalagmites. With attention and appropriate management, the cave could be one of Mae Hong Son's most impressive destinations for tourists and students. Wild prawns, bats, and colourful mosses can be seen inside the cave.
- In the past, the villagers have had some conflict with tour guides and tourists who have removed beautiful objects from the cave. The villagers once boarded up the entrance to the cave. However, this resulted in nightmares for the man who boarded up the cave, so the villagers agreed to open the cave again.
- Jedi Cave is 800 m deep. It is used by Buddhist monks as a meditation retreat.
- For several years, Mueang Paem has established a successful fish conservation zone. The aim of the zone is to prevent over-fishing, so that the fish have an opportunity to breed, and the community will be able to fish sustainably. The zone covers a 1 km stretch of river, where villagers are prohibited from fishing. This zone is enforced through a mixture of civil agreement, based on informing the villagers why conservation is important and traditional beliefs, through the ceremony "Bo Ta." This is a very serious oath sworn to the guardian spirits of nature not to disturb a natural area. The highlight for tourism is a pretty spot next to the river, where there is a deep pool and the river is absolutely teeming with large, healthy fish. Fishing is allowed in other areas of the stream, but only by hand, no illegal equipment.



**Photo box 17: Meeting with the Mueang Paem Tourism Groups and surveying the conservation trail**

**Table 18: SWOT Mueang Paem**

Issue	Strength	Weakness
Ethnicity, heritage, local wisdom, living cultural practice, festivals and traditions	Living Karen culture, festivals, natural dyed cloth and bamboo weaving, food, homes, herbal medicine, bamboo crafts, dress	No local artists or musicians Lack knowledge of how to develop traditional cloth products, promotion & marketing
Livelihoods, agriculture/cycles	Large area of rice paddy Animal raising (buffalo/cow) Forest area used for food and NTFP's	Community do not seem enthusiastic to work together as a group in economic issues, for example selling weaving
Relationships with environment, natural resources NRM/ conservation/potential for low or renewable energy	Beautiful nature with plentiful, well protected natural resources. Nature study trail. Can be a study center. Clear NRM zones. Consistent NRM activities. Fish conservation area. Mueang Fai irrigation system/fire breaks.	Good management, but no tourism/ study tour program to share/ communicate this work. No linkages between tourism product and NRM successes.
Community Development	Thai Nationality Rice paddy fields Sustainable NRM Women have important roles/ participate in CD Electricity, water. Road, phones, internet, 3 information centers	Lots of people above 30 are illiterate Can't extend area of land Experience of failure with CD projects related to money – cooperatives/funds Tourism centers have not been taken good care of

**Table 18: (continued)**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Weakness</b>
Tourism resources, (nature, facilities, activities, highlights,	<u>Amazing caves</u> – Tum Yao – world class potential Archaeological/historical remains (old temples)	Tourism centers not taken good care of No elephants (perceived as main reason why arrivals decreased)
Souvenirs/local products	Weaving/natural dye	Low knowledge of design and how to market outside the village
Experience, capacity of community/ local guides with tourists and tourists, local participation in tourism management, beneficiaries +/- impacts of tourism	Hosts, guides and community leaders have experience offering homestay and other community services and cooperating closely with at least 3 TO's Village is well known by TOs Opportunities to cooperate with hotels/restaurants in Pai, MHS. CNX	Villagers are in a hurry! Want to see results now! Little knowledge of English, and not all literate in Thai Conflict between local guides and professional guides, leading to distrust Fewer tourists Lack a leader who is prepared to coordinate the overall tourism program Don't consider how tourism could benefit the community outside income. No systematic assistance
Accessibility distance from trans. hubs/availability of facilities	Moderate – not near or far	Moderate – not near or far
Vulnerability: poverty, drugs, legal status, land tenure, gender		Still some land conflicts w/ NP
Leaders?	Strong leader with vision	
	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Threat</b>
Current level of market awareness	Well known community in tourism circles	Difficult to control existing partners, which could undermine new CBT/ cooperative systems
Market Demand	Increase in FIT, driving tourists, study tourists, family tourists	Less interest in trekking trips
Current partnerships/potential local networks	Cave Lodge	
Local NGO/GO policy/support	Well located – easy access for government support	
Funding support		

### Conclusions

Mueang Paem community need to define tourism beyond only economic benefits. The community have proven in other areas that they are able to work together effectively.

However, the community seems to be weak managing funds, in particular associated with tourism. Easy money during the mass tourism boom days in the late 1990's/early 2000's meant that the community were able to earn good money without needing to have good management. Now, trekking and adventure markets have moved on, but many community members are still sitting around, missing the past, and hoping that things will get better.

Matters were made worse because elephants, which used to be a pull for tourists for many years, had to be returned to their owner, reducing the attractiveness of the village further.

The communities' natural, cultural and human resources are definitely strong enough to organize tourism very well. Tham Yao and the nature trail, combined with the picturesque community are attractive. Mueang Paem could also cooperate with other villages in Tham Lot area. The question is whether the community members will be able to break out of their mass tourism habits to catalyze real change in the way they consider and operate tourism.

#### ***Key strengths and opportunities***

- Amazing tourism resources, such as Tham Yao, nature and forest conservation trail
- Possible to organise a very interesting 1/2 to full day trip easily
- NRM/conservation

#### ***Key weaknesses and threats***

- Currently, poor management of tourism and high levels of self-interest
- Community over focus on quick profit from tourism, used to mass tourism
- Existing relationships with tour operators pressure the system

#### ***Overall assessment of feasibility***

- If assisted to facilitate improve market access/management, potential is very high

#### **Recommendations**

##### ***Organisation***

- ✓ Organisation strengthening – CBT for NRM and community development. Accounts. Identify and build the capacity of local leaders who will take ownership for tourism
- ✓ Put current buildings to better use and develop better information for tourists
- ✓ English Training: community guides, youth guides, host families

##### ***Product Development***

- ✓ Sensitive and careful development of caves (priority Tham Yaow): walkways, information, training for guides, solar powered lanterns, gate to close cave
- ✓ Weaving: design capacity building, techniques for selling more politely – now, the villagers still use the classic 'hassle the tourists to buy as they walk past' approach!
- ✓ New program to share NRM successes (community forest)

##### ***Marketing***

- ✓ Marketing and IT training could help to access Thai markets (school has internet)
- ✓ Promotion of village partnerships and market linkages – tourism and weaving/textiles

In addition to assisting the local communities, there is an urgent need to protect local caves of exceptional value. This should best be pursued on a sub-district level, to make use of local experience, including the case study of Tham Lot cave, which is widely respected as best practice for local benefits. Because Pang Mapha is already known as a cave destination, it would be possible to develop Tham Lot Sub-District as an international model for sustainable cave tourism. By harnessing the knowledge of researchers and local cavers, a study center could be developed, in cooperation with local communities, and ensuring their benefit.



### **6.3.5 Mok Champae**

Mok Champae is the name of the Lee La Wadee Flower, which was abundance in the early settlement 100 years ago. Baan Mok Champae is located about 20 kilometres from Mae Hong Son, separated into two zones. The first zone is the original settlement, located on flat land surrounded by mountains with thick forest and high precipitation. Weather is cool all year round and very cold in the winter. The land is also fertile with two rivers nearby – the Sa Nga and Sa Ngee Rivers, so there are no problems with water supply. The second zone, in the highlands is a Hmong settlement, with some Thai and Yunan Chinese settlers.

This study is focused on the lower zone of the in 4 villages which are Baan Mok Champae, Mae Sa Nga, Huaykan and Tobsok village. The first 3 villages are Thai Yai, while the latter one is Karen. In these villages, people still live a simple life with daily practice of traditional culture.

#### **Economy and occupation**

70% of the Population's occupation are farmers. The major products are rice, garlic, soy bean, Cabbage, tea leaves and other. There is a constant moving of the population

Deforestation problems. Agricultural practices are still traditional without new technique and there some areas which still lack water supply management even though water is abundant.

#### **Tourism attraction**

Because of being agricultural community, the local people have not had much interaction with tourism. The village is a small community on the way to more famous destinations such as Baan Rak Thai, Border Visit, tea tasting, Hill Tribes, the Royal Residence and Pang Ung which is the newest famous attraction that everyone who comes to Mae Hong Son must visit!

Tourism destinations in the lower zone are managed by outside agencies such as Poo Klone Hot spring, Private spa and resort, Golf course, Pasua water fall in the Tampla-Pasua wildlife conservation area. The area which could be developed into a community attraction is Poo Klone Hot spring which is nearby the privately run hot spring and also there is a small waterfall which has not been officially open because there is still no tourism facility in place yet.

However, when the team interviewed the president of the TAO, we learned that the community members have no group to manage tourism activities, which are not a priority.

Furthermore there are another 3 attractions in the area which are: Hauykanan Temple, Mok Champae Temple, Mae Sa Nga temple which is highly respected.

#### **Public utility**

households have electricity supply from EGAT. There are mobile phone signals in all 4 villages, with water supply. However, there is always problem with water shortages in the summer time from March until May except in Tobsok village where they have water all year round.

#### **Education**

Most of people can read and write Thai language with 70% finished primary school and 20% for the high school.

#### **Occupational groups**

- Food Processing group, they have the activity but lack markets;
- Wax Candle group, problems are the price of raw materials/financial support;

- Dried Flowers for funeral group, they need to develop design/craftsmanship;
- Hand woven group, is done by the elderly with no proper management.

### Community fund

There are several community fund with different rules and regulation to serve the community and each of them has about 100 000-300 000 BHT. there is a management problem especially in the loan management where there are many unpaid debts among the members.

**Table 19: SWOT analysis of Mok Champae**

	Strength	Weakness
Ethnicity, heritage, local wisdom, living cultural practice, festivals and traditions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- They have Thai Yai cultural practice such as Poy sanglong festival, Candle festival</li> <li>- They are maintaining a good tradition of thai Yai Tribe.</li> <li>- They have craftsmanship skill and knowledge</li> <li>- Still use Thai Yai language and wearing traditional cloths</li> </ul>	Chemical agriculture is not charming or attractive to ecotourists
Livelihoods, agriculture/cycles	Simple agriculture life	Not enough water storage and supply to supply sufficient water.
Relationships with environment, natural resources NRM/ conservation/potential for low or renewable energy	Natural water supply all year round Fertile land Abundance of forest Community food bank. Banana plantation area.	Main stream agriculture
Community development	There public road which connect the every house.	Lack of community group to do handcrafts for supplementary income. Deforestation (TAO: by outsiders). Lack of knowledge on new agricultural practice on farming, fishing and ranching. Not enough water in summer time No market place for agricultural products Not enough land for plantation, no land title deeds Chemicals used in agriculture.
Tourism resources, (nature, facilities, activities, highlights,	Scenic bike route	While the area is pretty, there is nothing striking. Must compete with amazing Pang Ung/Rak Thai, etc.
Souvenirs/local products	Major producer of Banana leaf roof in Mae Hong Son area.	
Experience, capacity of community/ local guides with tourists and tourists, local participation in tourism management, beneficiaries +/- impacts of tourism		The community never have direct experience in handling tourism. They already have a well established private sector competitor, using the same resources (Phu Klone Resort), so difficult to break into this market.

**Table 17: (continued)**

	<b>Strength</b>	<b>Weakness</b>
Accessibility distance from trans. hubs/availability of facilities	20 km of paved road	
Vulnerability: e.g. poverty, drugs, legal status, land tenure, gender	No visible sign of drug problem.	
Leaders?	Local administrator is widely accepted by the local.	
	<b>Opportunity</b>	<b>Threat</b>
Current level of market awareness	It can be stop over area of the passer by.	
Market Demand		There are much more attractive destination nearby.
Current partnerships/potential local networks		The Community lack interest to participate in tourism activities, which is more important before start working with outside agencies.
Local NGO/GO policy/support	Can invite the royal development project team to be an advisor.	
Funding support	Local administrator, Royal development project	

### **Recommendation not to proceed with tourism activities in Mok Champae**

In Mok Champae, the team first conducted an overview survey. The team discovered that neighbouring highland communities such as Rak Thai and Pang Ung already offered a packed program to day visitors, and it was unlikely that the target lowland villages would add enough value to this established program to persuade tourists or tour operators to stop over. Next, the study team interviewed the president of the TAO. The team learned that the priority of the TAO was to support agriculture and enthusiasm for tourism was not high. Thus, the team concluded that Mok Champae should not be targeted for tourism interventions. When this conclusion was presented at the final stakeholders workshop, 31<sup>st</sup> March 2011, the POTS and other stakeholders agreed that this was consistent with their own assessment.

The team recommends that support for the sub-district focuses on agriculture, which is the most important need expressed by the community, and appears more feasible than tourism.

## **6.4 Focus on renewable energy**

The study included a focus on 'renewable energy,' including a survey of provincial policy and the consideration of possibilities in the targeted communities. The main outcomes were:

### **6.4.1 The renewable energy situation in Mae Hong Son**

Mae Hong Son's energy consumption has been rapidly increasing, in particular due to the growth of the tourism industry. Pai district, for example, has reached 8 megawatts of energy consumption, while the entire province only consumes 17 Megawatts! According to a study by the Department of Alternative Energy Development and Efficiency<sup>16</sup>, Mae Hong Son is able to produce up to 83 percent of its energy consumption. The province only relies on the Provincial Electricity Authority in Chiang Mai for 17 percent of its energy needs.

<sup>16</sup> Department of Alternative Energy Development, 2010 and [http://www.kaphoon.com/daily/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=6303&Itemid=121](http://www.kaphoon.com/daily/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=6303&Itemid=121)

Although the province consumption index is increasing, the majority of electricity can still be generated from renewable sources, in particular small scale of Hydropower plants (VSPP), within the province. Electricity is currently generated from hydro and solar power as below:

1. Hydropower Plant	Pha Bong	0.5 Megawatt
2. Hydropower Plant	Mae Sa-Nga	4.7 Megawatt
3. Hydropower Plant	Mae Sariang	0.35 Megawatt
4. Hydropower Plant	Pai	1 Megawatt
5. Solar Cell Power Plant	Pha Bong	500 Kilowatt

Hydropower and solar power replace fuel consumption which would otherwise be needed for generating power by up to 6.9 Million Units and 1 million liters per year. The Pha Bong solar cell plant also plays an important role as a secure source of power for Mae Hong Son.

The Ministry of Energy selected Mae Hong Son as a pilot province for developing renewable energy because of its location (high mountains), and remoteness. Several districts still do not have access to electricity from government services. This is a very worthwhile project. Similar initiatives could be linked to tourism, due to relatively very high consumption by the industry.

#### 6.4.1.1 Related research

1. Assistant Professor Chatchawan Chaichana, Deputy Director, Institute of Nakhonping Energy Research and Development, Chiang Mai University stated that Mae Hong Son province is the lowest energy consumer in Thailand, roughly 0.01% of the entire country. Diesel consumption is 44%, bensil 22% and electricity 18%. Renewable energy is 15%.
2. Assistant Professor Dr Natthawut Dusdee, Energy Research Centre, Mae Jo University, described in his research supported by National Research Council of Thailand "A Study on Electricity Generating Capacity from Wind Power in the Upper Northern Thailand" that there are 8 stations which can install windmills. According to Dusdee, 2 out of 8 stations are Mae Hae, Pai District and Doi Kew Lom, Mae Hong Son. However, wind speed should be tested and researched to ensure the project is productive and worth the investment.

#### 6.4.2 Feasibility of supporting 'Renewable Energy' in the target areas by group

Due to low energy consumption, renewable energy initiatives should be integrated with energy saving initiatives. Depending on the cost-benefits, it may be more practical to reduce the use of electricity, rather than invest in renewable energy. This issue requires further study.

##### 6.4.2.1 In Communities

#### General suggestions at the household level

A pilot project on energy saving and renewable energy could be developed for homestay groups. To succeed, implementing agencies first need to ensure that householders (such as CBT group members) understand and are motivated by the benefits of renewable energy and energy savings. Due to relatively very low electricity consumption at the household level, it needs to be appreciated that there is not a great financial incentive for this. Motivating discussions could be based on the idea that tourism leads to more energy-related expenses. Energy saving and renewable energy can help to avoid an additional burden, and thus ensure most benefits from welcoming tourists. Renewable energy can also be an attraction in its own right for study tours, such as by sub-district administrative organisations, which are an important domestic market for CBT.<sup>17</sup> Training could include choosing and using energy saving equipment in homestays, and how to generate biogas from household wastes.

<sup>17</sup> Nationally, in 2008, there were just over 100 million domestic tourists and 46 million study tour participants with a total expenditure of 790 million THB. The average expenditure per person per trip was 5 300 THB. (MOTS in Tuffin, 2010).

## General suggestions at the community level

- Food Processing Groups – promote solar cell heaters and low energy stoves;
- Use people-energy pumps (e.g. peddling bicycle wheels to irrigate the rice fields);
- Produce clean water for community consumption, instead of buying bottled water. This will minimize waste and save the energy required to produce bottled water;
- Survey forested areas for opportunities to develop micro-hydro power plants;
- Integrate the concept of renewable energy with forest conservation, protecting the watershed, and preventing forest fires that frequently take place in Mae Hong Son;
- Establish a community fund or seed fund for building a community resort using solar power in the accommodation. Promote the resort as a holiday destination, as well as welcoming those who are interested to study an energy saving resort on a study tour;
- Integrate the energy saving concept into tourism activities such as by using reusable/washable food containers (pintos) instead of plastic bags or foam, etc. Drinking water should always be refilled or provided to tourists to minimize the use of plastic bottles.

## Specific suggestions in the target communities

The target communities have potentials for renewable energy and energy saving.

- **Mueang Paem** should use low-energy, rechargeable flashlights to explore the caves. Solar power could be expanded and hydro power considered, based on research;
- **Mueang Pon** is located close to a hot spring. Heat and water can produce electricity. A feasibility study should be conducted to investigate the potential of this option;
- **Mae Lui**. Current energy consumption exceeds production. Mae Lui is located close to the river. In Sop Kong community, community members already use water power to de-husk rice. It may be possible to use the river to generate hydropower as well as to optimize water use for agricultural purposes. The National Park, in cooperation with the Department of Energy has already surveyed the feasibility of establishing a hydropower plant. Stakeholders should consider how the results of this study can benefit the community. During the field study, community members expressed the need to learn how to repair solar cells. This would decrease the time which villagers are without electricity, decrease their expenses and create work for local community members. A solar power plant could possibly be considered. More study is needed;
- **Mok Champae** is a targeted source of power in Mae Hong Son province. The provincial administration has already provided some trainings and equipment for local communities such as solar cell heaters and stoves.

### 6.4.2.2 Businesses and entrepreneurs in Mae Hong Son city hubs

- **Accommodations**: based on the interviews conducted, accommodations are interested in energy saving due to environmental awareness and cost savings. Accommodation owners in Mae Hong Son, Mae Sariang and Pai expressed interest in participating in training or a pilot project related to energy efficiency. Training should be provided on energy saving, renewable energy, effective waste management and sources of financial assistance in case of any investment.
- **Restaurants**: based on the interviews, restaurants are also interested to learn more about energy saving and waste management (which also saves energy indirectly). Restaurants could be invited to join the training recommended above. Depending on the scale of the restaurant, other initiatives could include providing energy saving stoves and heaters, or other energy saving equipment/appliances.

- **Tour Operators:** Internally, tour operators could be assisted to save energy in their offices. Externally, tour operators could promote energy saving activities such as cycling, walking (instead of using cars across short distances) and not leaving car engines on while waiting for passengers. They could actively choose to visit communities where renewable energy has been implemented. They could promote waste minimization in tour activities such as promoting refilled water bottles and avoiding using food containers made from plastics and foam.

**Note:** Covered by National Protected areas and high mountains, Mae Hong Son faces difficulties laying electric poles. Another challenge is that faced with strong wind and rain, electric poles are often uprooted and blackouts frequently occur. Whatever interventions are planned, the terrain of the province needs to be taken into careful consideration.

## 6.5 Focus on agricultural linkages

Well developed, planned and managed eco and community based tourism can be a tool to support community members to maintain sustainable aspects of traditional livelihoods which are already well adapted to their natural environments. Ecotourism can create new opportunities for people from different cultures to learn and appreciate local livelihoods and local wisdom in utilizing soil, water and forest in a sustainable manner. Tourists can observe symbiotic relationships between people and the land through ceremonies and traditions related to crop cultivation, before rice planting, harvest, and the post harvest season.

### 6.5.1 Interrelations between Ecotourism and Agriculture

- The experience of the CBT-I team, working for over 15 years with local communities, has proven that beyond creating extra income for farmers, introducing visitors to local livelihoods can generate renewed pride in local culture, restore and help to preserve sustainable agricultural practices;
- Market trends towards conservation and organic food can move producers to consider chemical free or organic techniques in their production;
- Visits to communities link consumers directly with producers. Communities can offer agricultural products directly to their guests as services or souvenirs. This reduces transport costs and commissions collected by middlemen. By communicating how their products are environmentally friendly and more healthy, communities can add value to products such as rice, vegetables, and processed foods. Selling in the villages usually allows for a relatively competitive price. If the community's products are promoted properly and become well known, the products can be marketed further afield.

#### 6.5.1.1 Mueang Paem, Tham Lot Sub-district, Pang Mapha district

Heavily reliant on nature, Karen people are renowned for sustainable agricultural practices and natural resource management. The Karen have developed a strong belief system which helps to conserve nature. The forest is not only a source of food and medicines for the Karen but also a sacred area for the community. Community members perform ritual ceremonies from the start of soil preparation until the harvest. However, due to the history of Mueang Paem as a mass-trekking destination, these aspects of local life have never been integrated into their tour program. This presents an opportunity for Karen people in Mueang Paem to further develop their adventure program to include better interpretation and present Karen wisdom of food security through chemical free, sustainable rotational farming, as well as their success protecting the forest and preserving local seed varieties across generations. This can be done en route to visit the various caves and other attractions in their current program.

Better interpretation which communicates the community's conservation efforts is also likely to add value to local products, such as weavings by the Mueang Paem women's group.

The women's weaving group also urgently needs assistance to develop and market their good quality weaving products. Possibilities for additional natural dyes could be explored.

#### *6.5.1.2 Mueang Pon, Mueang Pon Sub-district, Khun Yuam District*

Shan or Thai Yai people also demonstrate their worldview and beliefs through agriculture. Through various ceremonies they pay respect to earth, water, and forest. However, based on their location in the low foothills, the Shan have moved more quickly than the Karen to adapt production to market needs. They have applied new technologies and moved towards cash crops, including heavy chemical when planting garlic and soy beans. The types of tourists who want to visit Mueang Pon and the how villagers adapt to their needs will be influenced to a significant extent by the initial types of product offered. The CBT group needs assistance to develop products and services for tourists who are interested in organic, healthy lifestyles. This will help to stimulate organic production and demand, and hopefully to catalyze a larger number of local families to gradually return to chemical free and organic practices. As Mueang Pon is still not a developed tourism location, it may even be possible to establish a cooperative organic restaurant, which would have great potential for quick stops by tourists driving along the Mae Hong Son Loop from Chiang Mai to Mae Hong Son via Mae Sariang.

## 7. Conclusions: Key Findings and Outcomes

This study aimed to describe the situation, opportunities and challenges of ecotourism and CBT in Mae Hong Son from provincial to community levels, and across sectors, in order to make practical recommendations for action. In keeping with the spirit of this mission, the study did not attempt to academically define or compare ecotourism, community based tourism, nature-based tourism, cultural tourism etc. The team made a decision to respect the experience and ability of Mae Hong Son tourism stakeholders to define ecotourism according to how they understood and wished to develop it in practice for their province.

Mae Hong Son's vision of ecotourism, reflected in the results of this study, is very promising. Most stakeholders agree that ecotourism should mean the protection of nature and culture; local participation and benefits; pride in local culture; opportunities for learning and cultural exchange and of course, an enjoyable experience of nature, culture and local people. This is a definition which respects people and nature, and sees their necessary interrelationships.

Moreover, many stakeholders across sectors love living in Mae Hong Son, admire its diversity and genuinely wish to make a contribution towards its sustainable development.

This foundation of experience and hope, combined with a wealth of natural and cultural attractions and a supportive policy environment, gives the province a strong foundation to become a world-class ecotourism destination. Whether this will happen relies on the ability of all sectors to draw upon each others' experience, knowledge, skills and passion. It relies on all sectors making more effort than usual, whether civil servants, private sector or academics. It also requires consistent, long-term work, which in turn necessitates greater civil participation.

Our team hope that the ideas and recommendations in this report will assist this to happen.

The main conclusions of the baseline study are as follows:

- Tourism is a National Agenda. **National level government policy** currently places great importance on tourism, the environment, local community participation and benefits. The government is supporting eco/community-based/green/sustainable tourism in Thailand. A golden opportunity was missed in 1998 when the TAT developed a national ecotourism policy which was never implemented due to the financial crisis. Now, over a decade later, many initiatives are being implemented which do not use the term 'ecotourism,' but do support its principles. These include tourism standards by the Ministry of Tourism and Sports, the Tourism Authority of Thailand's '7 Greens Concept,' support for community based tourism and links with His Majesty the King's 'Sufficiency Economy' concept. The Designated Areas for Sustainable Tourism Administration (DASTA) and the Thailand Tourism Fund focus directly on sustainability in tourism. Other national policies include complementary strategies such as reducing climate change and supporting the capacity and competitiveness of Thai SME's.
- **Thai tourism policy** is more holistic than in the past and it is also better integrated between national, cluster and provincial levels. There are also better opportunities for local citizens to learn about and feedback into government tourism planning. However, there is space for more citizens' participation in defining/directing policy.
- **Provincial cluster policy** is less holistic: focusing on economy, investment and competitiveness. However, within the Upper Northern Cluster, Mae Hong Son is the leader for sustainable NRM. Ecotourism is a core part of the provincial level vision.
- **Provincial level tourism policy** focuses include community based tourism (CBT), spa and hot springs; linkages with Myanmar and neighbouring provinces (Tak, Lanna) and links/support



with Royal Projects. There are many currently separate but potentially complementary efforts to identify/test alternative energy and use IT to link MHS with the outside world. These initiatives should be integrated with tourism development to benefit from synergies. Useful national level tools (e.g. standards and awards) which could support the province's vision need to be implemented more systematically.

- ***In practice*** the government balances supporting local and major projects. There are examples of good practice, such as the Mae Hong Son Living Museum project, initiated by the Municipality, and the Royal Project at Pang Ung. There is also support for communities, directly and indirectly. Nevertheless, most funds are being spent on infrastructure and construction. In stakeholder interviews, there was criticism of how public funds are allocated in construction. The study confirms that in certain cases, this is valid. There is also an urgent need to provide more resources to support culture.

#### ***Research and Media Survey***

- Research conducted over the past 10 years in Mae Hong Son can be very useful for assisting current challenges. For example, research conducted by BRT and TRF on MHS's cultural and natural diversity could be an excellent resource for guide training. Community Based Research (CBR) has proven to be a visionary tool for community members to develop models of tourism which are appropriate to their local contexts.

Consistent research by issue, such as archaeology and anthropology, has connected the histories of different districts and is highly valuable as a resource to develop deep interpretative training as well as to evaluate the sensitivity of potential destinations;

- Research resources in Mae Hong Son include Systematic, Issue Based, and Area Based Research. Issues include: Area-based Collaborative Research to develop Mae Hong Son; Biodiversity, history, ethnicity; Case Studies; Best Practices and Tourism Impact; Tourist Behaviour, MHS people's opinions towards tourism and E-tourism;
- Unfortunately, however, research results and recommendations are still rarely used in tourism planning and development, in particular at the district and sub-district levels. TAO planning is often based on internal assessments of potential. More information-based assessments of real opportunities and competitive advantages is necessary. It would be extremely useful to make research outputs more accessible to all sectors;
- Moreover, much research has focussed on 'reporting' problems and identifying their causes. More research should be done to forecast problems and suggest how to plan to avoid them. Much research has focused on local historical, cultural, environmental resources. Lack of application of research outcomes suggests that researchers should work more closely with industry stakeholders to define needs-based research issues.
- However, research alone is insufficient. Tourism policies and action must be supported by deeper consultations with local citizens, and bringing experts into the field.

#### ***Key Influencers and Observers Survey***

- Many talented, experienced people live in Mae Hong Son, who love the province and are committed to making a contribution to sustainable tourism. Mae Hong Son already has many high-quality ecotourism products. Lessons learned and these local resource people need to be better utilized in tourism planning and development.
- In general, interviewees see tourism in a positive light. However, they do not want Mae Hong Son to over-rely on tourism. They believe 'quality' tourists like MHS because it is peaceful and natural. They prefer to maintain the current 'natural' atmosphere rather than strive to increase tourism income at any cost to culture and environment.

- Several interviewees stated that success requires long-term planning and consistency. However, responsible government officers move often, which is an obstacle. As local people are less likely to move, they are well placed to work long-term. Opportunities should be created for them to influence, participate in and benefit from tourism.
- Interviewees consider educating local people to prepare them to manage tourism sustainably is crucial, so that they understand tourism development and have capacity to participate and benefit. More budget should be allocated to capacity. Government commitment/vision/agenda/process are also essential for success.

#### ***Product and Market Survey***

- Mae Hong Son still has exceptional tourism/cultural/natural resources, and few negative impacts. There are good quality CBT and ecotourism experiences across MHS. MHS already attracts high value markets, especially independent travellers (FIT), interested in culture and nature. To satisfy these tourists and to benefit from word of mouth promotion, tourism stakeholders need to respond better to the needs of FIT's.
- Interviewees communicated that successful ecotourism requires more than a 'tourism development' frame of reference. Proactive support for local culture and serious, coordinated environmental management will automatically increase the success of ecotourism. Focus on controlling construction and managing agriculture in NP areas.
- Interviewees agreed that local people are benefiting less due to more competition from outside investors. They requested urgent support for local people and local businesses so that they can benefit from tourism: guides, tour operators, craftspeople.
- Overall, interviewees communicated priority needs for: Multi-sector participation, preparation and planning; product development; training; targeted marketing and information. Priority: tour guides (deep cultural interpretation), communities (manage tourism and impacts), TO's (how to work with communities/NRM.) and training in electricity, water, waste efficiency and hygiene to help MHS hotels become greener.

#### ***Positive and Negative Impacts (Neg.) of Tourism***

- It is striking that despite the fact that there have been few serious impacts so far, most developments in tourism are perceived negatively. Interviewees are pleased there has been little change. 'Conservation' and 'protection' need to be priorities alongside growth. The most serious negative impacts have been in Pai district.
- Social: Neg. Sale of land; poor management of visitor numbers and resulting pressure on social services; bad behaviour by tourists (sex/drugs) influencing local youth/Communities becoming more materialistic. Dishonest behaviour by TO/TG's tarnishing the reputation of the province. Pos.: new skills and hygiene for community members.
- Economic: Neg.: competition, cost of living and operations. Less share of revenue for locals. Tourists spend less Pos.: Tourism income/jobs but it is unsure how much tourism development is benefiting local businesses. Local youth are looking for work in MHS.
- Env. Neg.: Impacts of construction by the private sector and government. Poor hygiene and waste management. Contribution of tourism to resource scarcity (esp. water in Pai/PMP). Interviewees could not to suggest any positive impacts from tourism on the environment. They may be unaware of examples of good practice.

## Case Studies

The following are particularly interesting case studies in Mae Hong Son, from which tourism stakeholders inside and outside the province could learn many lessons:

**Community Based Tourism:** showing how to build local capacity to manage tourism, work with partners and increase benefits to local people and the environment;

**Long Neck Karen:** illustrates the risk of not building tourism based on local resources. When the LNK moved beyond Mae Hong Son, the province lost a big slice of its USP. Meanwhile, the province suffered from poor image of the 'human zoo' perception;

**Pai:** a text-book case study of rapid growth with insufficient planning and preparation causing huge changes to the fabric of community, including land and livelihoods, encroachment into forest and resource scarcity. However, the new drive towards sustainability by Pai Tourism Association could also lead to powerful, positive change;

**Living museum:** This inspiring project is an example of what is possible when the government is proactive and passionate about a project, and engages with citizens to realise a win-win partnership: adding value to culture, local life and the whole city;

**Pang Ung:** This is an excellent example of government cooperation with a local community to manage transport and relieve strains on Carrying Capacity, tangibly reducing impacts on environment and society – proving that it's possible!;

**Others:** There are many other excellent examples of creative, successful tourism development: Tum Plah NP, Santichon beating drugs to develop a winning tourism destination, Fern Resort, The Cooperative Credit Union and Tacompai Farm stay.

### Stakeholder User Needs Survey

- **HRD overall:** it was clear from the study that human resource development is not keeping up with the speed of change. Lots of trainings are being implemented by the government, academics and NGO's. However, these actions are not building local capacity fast enough to prevent local people from suffering from an increasing cost of living, losing competitive advantages to outsiders, abandoning agriculture and selling off their land. Despite policy support for an integrated approach, individual destinations are being developed more than integrated routes/clusters. Support is often fragmented and inconsistent. Organisations do share progress at committee level, but rarely cooperate in the field. The result is that there is very little support from product through to market. This situation is exacerbated because capacity building is often delivered by activity, so trainers do not work consistently with target groups.

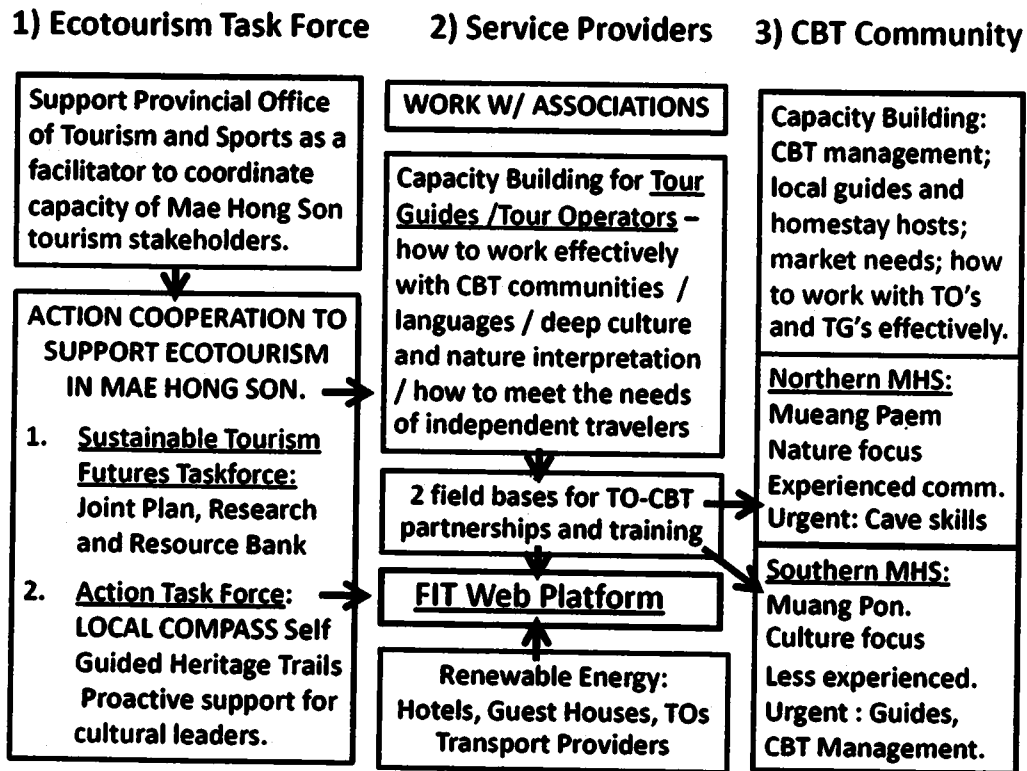
### Specific training needs: (Note: TO = Tour Operator; TG = Tour Guide)

- **TO:** Language and interpretation training for guides. Especially German/French; more training in deep interpretation in destinations. A pool of specialist ecoguides.
- **TG:** How to work with communities. Specific knowledge and skills in bird-watching. English, French, Spanish, German. Train local community guides in interpretation.
- **Hotels:** training in energy saving and improving waste management, plus hygiene.
- **Restaurants:** train staff to better understand tourism and hospitality/service mind.
- **Community:** Train in interpretation, English language, CBT management, increasing and managing participation among community members. Marketing and promotion.

- **Other Hot Issues:** More people's participation in tourism policy and planning; building TAO capacity to use legal instruments to manage tourism impacts; more authority for communities to direct Carrying Capacity/tourism planning; deeper feasibility studies before selecting/developing destinations; better allocation of funds/appropriate construction; finding ways to encourage local people not to sell their land; more importance/value given to the agricultural sector – zoning, balanced resource use, adding value to agricultural products; more field coaching; assist SMEs to compete.
- **Marketing:** Creating honest expectations of MHS ecotourism. Target appropriate markets. Scaling up distribution channels for local products – e.g. 7-11. Starbucks.
- **Culture** – Support for cultural leaders – more resources directly to support culture. Culture lies at the heart of MHS's attractiveness to visitors – support culture to live!
- **Product development** – Competition based more on quality and less on price. To protect the industry, it is essential to protect MHS's natural/cultural heritage and actively support quality tour operators and guides, national parks, the Royal Projects; CBT; Wellness which is clearly environmentally friendly; local products and related events which add value to nature, sustainable agriculture and culture. Focus on themes and clusters in product development, rather than only individual destinations. Bring an integrated pool of skills from product to market into development process.
- **Facilitators:** At each point in the supply chain there are challenges which can potentially be overcome by better cooperation, facilitated with energy and integrity. Many stakeholders in the private sector love Mae Hong Son and have been in business here for many years, not purely for profit, but because they sincerely want to live in Mae Hong Son and be part of the province. Many of these pioneers are finding life more and more difficult due to competition. Many local communities have the capacity to be learning centers for issues such as community management and NRM. However, they still experience difficulties accessing appropriate markets.

Success requires innovation and cooperation between tourism stakeholders help push ecotourism into practice. For example, tour operators and guides who can really work with communities, management which is really environmentally friendly, effective communication of the province's charm. This doesn't require a pilot project, but a committed provincial agenda for long term cooperation which will motivate stakeholders to work together. This mission needs a host and mechanisms to create movement. It must inspire a common feeling of ownership to create change. The mission must go beyond cooperation based only on mutual benefit, and become a common effort to make Mae Hong Son an even better place to live in and to visit.

## 8. Key Recommendations



The original proposal required the team to make recommendations for action focused on 1) the provincial office for tourism and sports (POTS); 2) professional and community tour guides and 3) target communities. Based on the outcomes of the baseline study, CBT-I have worked on and expanded this frame, making core recommendations for action, on 3 levels:

1. **At Provincial level**, focus should be on systematic support for ecotourism in/from Mae Hong Son city. This focus is due to the capital's key importance as a strategic 'provincial ecotourism driver.' Mae Hong Son is a base for most of the province's most experienced, committed tourism stakeholders, skilled in cultural heritage, CBT and ecotourism. The capital also has exceptional cultural and natural resources in its own right. However, MHS stakeholders are experiencing tough challenges, particularly increased competition and a gradual deterioration of product quality, undermining the provinces ecotourism USPs. Now is the time to strengthen ecotourism in and from Mae Hong Son city. If ecotourism is not strong in the capital, it will much more difficult to drive success at/into the local level.

This should be achieved through 2 main strategies. Firstly, a sustainable tourism futures taskforce should be established, under the facilitation of the POTS. This taskforce of experienced and respected Mae Hong Son tourism veterans will have the job of leading the development of a tailored ecotourism development model for Mae Hong Son, based on broad stakeholder consultation and multi-sector, participatory planning. The taskforce will ensure that relevant tourism research is collected, disseminated and put to good use. Practitioners, including young blood, should be invited to join an ecotourism action taskforce, to build on exiting ecotourism and cultural heritage routes in Mae Hong Son, and strengthen Mae Hong Son's ecotourism and cultural community through special events.

Stakeholders interviewed during the study unanimously shared the insight that more fully independent travellers (FIT) are visiting the province. This trend is likely to grow, due to the lack of international flights, combined with the fact that 1) in general, more travellers research and

book travel online, and 2) more travellers are traveling to MHS by bus/car/motorbike (TAT). Activities need to be developed to meet the specific needs of these travellers, who value exploration. E.g. self guided tours and excursions for self-drivers.

The taskforce should work on a '**Local Compass**' for Mae Hong Son: self-guided, themed heritage and nature trails/maps with good quality information, allowing independent travelers to explore, appreciate the city's cultural and natural heritage, and support local community and environment friendly businesses. Local suppliers should be prioritized on these routes, and should be trained to welcome guests. Bike hire should be available. Simple, interactive activities for visitors should be developed. Tourists could collect stamps in a 'Local Passport', which could lead to a reward, such as a 'Green Guest' certificate.

Road routes can apply the same concept to longer routes, linking destinations, based on clusters, and themes, such as 'cave exploration', 'meet the peoples', 'local food', etc.

Special events should be held regularly, opening a space for local suppliers and cultural leaders to creatively share ideas and achievements with each other and with the public.

- 2. Linkages level**, actions at this level should focus on building the capacity of MHS ecotour operators and professional (licensed) tour guides. These key groups require tailored capacity building to better understand the needs of quality independent travelers (for example exploring, enjoying private time, and spontaneous interaction, developing driving/bicycle routes) and to work (more) effectively with community CBT groups and community tour guides. Professional tour guides should receive special training to work as a team with local guides, improve deep culture and nature interpretation, adding value for Mae Hong Son's guests, while optimizing benefits for community and environment.

Tour operators need training to develop 'win-win' tour programs with local communities, which make best use of the tour operator's skills and community members' local resources, while meeting the needs of the target tourists. A later phase of training should focus on participatory product development and formalizing roles and responsibilities of partners. For example, developing a 'ready for market' checklist for CBT communities, and 'Responsible Partner' checklist for tour operators and guides. Formal agreements could also be reached between selected tour operators and target communities.

To improve their sustainability performance, hotels, restaurants and transport providers should receive training in how to reduce energy consumption, alternative and renewable energy, waste management and how to support community enterprises.

Due to the importance of FIT tourists and the increasing role of ICT in Mae Hong Son, a special web platform should be developed to promote MHS eco and sustainable tourism suppliers to independent travelers, including the Local Compass project. The platform should be interactive, making full use of social media channels and stimulating word of mouth recommendations. The platform could also prioritize promotion of tour operators/tour guides/communities which had successfully completed training programs.

- 3. Community level**. Overall, capacity building should focus on CBT Management, building the skills of community guides and homestay hosts and working effectively with tour operators and tour guides. Communities also need assistance to differentiate between (the needs of) different potential markets, select priority markets and tailor their products.

Based on the need for field study centers, in addition to UNJP-development related criteria (poverty alleviation, vulnerability, NRM, etc.) communities should be selected partly based on their suitability as (contrasting) field centers for stakeholder training:

For this reason, the team suggest 2 top priority sites and actions in target communities:

- 1) Mueang Paem, Pang Mapha district: this is an experienced community (the villagers have welcomed guests for more than 30 years), located close to Pai in northern Mae Hong Son. The people are ethnic Karen. Due to the proximity of Mueang Paem to an outstanding cave (Tham Yaow), specific capacity building related to appropriate development and guiding in caves is absolutely essential. Due to the availability of skilled resource people in Tham Lot sub-district, building local capacity to plan and operate sustainable, cave-tourism could best be approached at the tambon level. The focus of interpretation in Mueang Pon could be nature interpretation.
- 2) In southern Mae Hong Son, Mueang Pon should be the priority community. Mueang Pon is a relatively inexperienced community, with striking cultural resources. In Mueang Pon, focus should be on multi-stakeholder participatory planning and developing the community as a provincial field learning center for cultural heritage interpretation.

Other, specific recommendations, per target community are as below:

### **Mueang Pon**

#### ***Organisation and people***

- Strengthening/training for the homestay group
- Local guide training in interpretation/language/local food for health
- Master plan: CBT development to Celebrate Local Crafts & Culture w/ TAO

#### ***Product Development***

- Organic/Thai Yai coffee shop and restaurant
- Thai Yai cooking course and homestay
- Local arts and crafts workshop

#### ***Marketing***

- Product Design and Marketing training for local occupational groups
- Facilitate supply chain linkages with hotels/restaurants in MHS/CNX/BKK
- Training to understand different needs of tourists and target marketing planning

### **Mae Lui**

#### ***Organisation and people***

- Training: CBT Preparation Management
- Local Guide and Homestay Host Training
- Water and rafting safety training

#### ***Product Development***

- Well organised homestay and nature interpretation program in coordination with NP
- Learning and community service for students and volunteers (e.g. water testing)
- Could look again at natural dyed cloth for supply chain linkages

#### ***Marketing***

- Need to facilitate communication – phone
- Training to understand more about tourists, marketing partnerships and access
- Information about the community and tourism services

## Mueang Paem

### **Organisation**

- Organisation strengthening – CBT for NRM and CD. Accounts
- Use current buildings and develop better information for tourists
- English and Culture and Nature interpretation Training: LGs. youth guides, host families

### **Product Development**

- Caves (priority Thum Yaow): walkways, information, training for guides, solar powered lanterns, gate to close cave
- Weaving: design capacity building, techniques for selling politely
- New program to share NRM successes (community forest)

### **Marketing**

- Marketing and IT training for Thai markets (school has internet)
- Promotion of village
- Partnerships and linkages – tourism and weaving/textiles

At the local level, the taskforce must also recognize the challenges faced by enthusiastic but inexperienced local leaders, and ensure that TAO's are systematically supported to conduct information-based assessments of their potentials, and do use their mandate to control and direct tourism development for the benefit of the whole sub-district. Recognizing that not all communities are appropriate for tourism, the task force should also help add value to local products and increase tourism-related distribution channels for agricultural products.

Based on the success of the initiatives above, Mae Hong Son may be established in a future phase as *the center of best practice in Northern Thailand on CBT, Ecotourism and adding value to agricultural products through tourism linkages*. All of the province's wealth of ecotourism resources, research, lessons learned and best practice could be collected, as well as harnessing the skills and experience of tourism stakeholders into a training center for ecotour operators, ecotour guides, CBT practitioners, etc. The center could deliver courses linked with best practice ecotourism and CBT field sites, and a one stop service for tourists.

### **Additional Recommendations**

- Although they may be highlights, CBT/ecotourism projects do not sell Mae Hong Son. The destination of MHS sells CBT/ecotourism. Supporting projects in the field must take place alongside building the profile of MHS as an ecotourism destination;
- Development of a specialist, trained, multi-lingual Mae Hong Son Eco Guide Unit. Expand language opportunities to include French and German as priorities;
- Local product design/packaging to add value to local art and crafts, and a project to catalyze supply chain linkages focusing on Bangkok, Hua Hin, Chiang Mai. Brand.

### **The Environment, Natural Resource Management and Energy**

- Serious, quantitative and qualitative research to identify the resource limits in Pai, MHS and MSR and set resource use benchmarks. Zoning and tax for forest conservation;
- Capacity Building in Energy and waste management for hotels, restaurants, TO's;
- Provincial level promotion of Mae Hong Son as a "Green Lifestyle" city.



➤ **Government/NGO Supporters**

✓ **Provincial Office of Tourism and Sports (POTS)**

POTS as facilitator/secretariat, bringing expertise together from across sectors to facilitate an integrated approach for sustainable tourism development

Facilitate the development of a minimum standard for MHS ecotourism

Lead Guide Unit project for MHS, and urgent guide training for Mae Sarieng

Give certificates or stamps to eco-tourists on a MHS "Green Steps Passport"

Appropriate signage – competition to design local signs from local products

✓ **Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT), Mae Hong Son**

Research on ecotourism markets for MHS – North and South

Develop a targeted marketing plan, through multi-stakeholder process

More information Thai/English/French/German

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## Annexes

### 1. Namelist of the interviewees on Product and Market

	Sector	Hub	Name	Role
1	GOV	MHS	Mr Sichon Suksomboon	TAT, Marketing Officer 3
2	GOV	MHS	Mr Suthep Nuchsuang	Muang District Mayor
3	TA	MHS	Mr Supoj Klinpraneat	President of Chamber of Commerce of MHS
4	TA	MHS	Mr Chodpratompon Sangpirorn	Advisory committee of province. Coordinator (brachakom jangwat)
5	TA	MHS	Mr Gongfaa Benjapongsa	Vice president of commercial unit of Chamber of Commerce
6	TA	PAI	Ms Abhorn Saengchoti	President of Mae Hong Son Women Network
7	TO	MHS	Mr Panot Pakongsup	Manager of Tour Merng Tai
8	TO	MHS	Mr Wallop Chaikram	Mae Hong Son Discovery Tours, Secretary of Cooperative
9	TO	MHS	Ms Pranee/Mr Niti Siriwat	Rose Garden Tours
10	TO	MHS	Mr Panudet Chaisakul	TN tour
11	TO	MSR	Mr Peerawat Kwotakul	Shop Manager (Fishing Gears in Mae Sariang)
12	TO	MSR	Mr Rak Kamnuansilp and Ms Patimaporn Rangsoi	Manager, North West (Accommodation/Restaurant/Guide)
13	TO	MSR	Ms Mellissa Ah Sing	GM Thailand Hilltribe Holidays
14	TO	PAI	Mr Sutep Aimsiranan	Pai Adventures
15	Acc	MHS	Mr Roongroj Sunthadvnich	GM, Imperial MHS Resort
16	Acc	MHS	Mrs Anong /Mr Supot Pothikanit	Owner, Rom Thai Guest House
17	Acc	MSR	Ms Butsya Kamnuanmasok	Manager of Riverside Guesthouse
18	Acc	MSR	(Out off record)	Riverhouse Hotel + Resort MSR
19	Acc	PAI	Mr John Spies	Manager Cave Lodge
20	Acc	PAI	Mr Sandos Sookkaew	Tacompai Resort
21	Acc	PAI	Mr Manop Nuchnoon	Phu pai Resort
22	Guide	MHS	Mr Chakpan Praweenchayakul	Freelance Guide
23	Guide	MHS	Ms Aon Anom	Exotissimo guide
24	Guide	MSR	Mr Saroj Buasri	Freelance Guide in Mae Sariang
25	Guide	PAI	Mr Somsak/Viengsamai Sangsuk	Thai adventure rafting
26	Rest	MHS	Mr Somsak Boonin	GM Crossroads Restaurant
27	Rest	MHS	Mr Bancha Saemaphet/ Ms Angkana Kohwawisarach	Huen Yai Kaew Restaurant
28	Rest	MSR	Ms Sangwan Buranakhun	Caf De Grill
29	Rest	MSR	Mr Beng	Sawasdee Restaurant (Mae Sariang)
30	Other	MHS	Phra Kru Anusithamasan,	Abbot of Doi Kong Mu Temple
31	Other	MHS	Mr Pricha Siriima	Webmaster
32	Other	PAI	Khun Nut	E-Baan Nok Fair Trade

## 2. Namelist of Interviewees on Provincial Policy

1. Ministry of Tourism and Sport, Ms Churairat Praewprai  
*Director*
2. Tourism Authority of Thailand, Mr Pitsanu Arunbamroonwongse  
*Director*
3. Community Development Mr Somdech Pajitrkunchorn  
*Director Extra*
4. Non-Formal Education Ms Thipwan Tiangtawat  
*Director*
5. Provincial Industry Mr Dhamadisorn Muanthong  
*Director*
6. Community College Mr Komsant Koosinsap  
*Director*
7. Rajabhat Chiang Mai University Mr Subhakorn Pratoomthin  
*Deputy Director of Mae Hong Son College*
8. Office of Provincial Culture Mr Pisant Chantrasin  
*Director, Strategic Group*
9. Creative City Group Ms Warapanni Wijaysakul  
*Padong Shop*
10. Department of Public Health Mr Ron Chaikantha  
*Head of Family Medicines*
11. Royal Project Captain Sarawoot Kongrod  
*Chief of Royal Project*
12. Fern Resort Mr Tawatchai Nahtipakorn  
*Owner*
13. Piya Guesthouse Mr Piya Kongpermpoon  
*Owner*
14. Thailand Research Fund Ms Arunee Wianghaeng  
*Advisor, TRF MHS Node*
15. Academic Dr Charoon Kamnuanta  
*President Community College*
16. Project for Life and Culture Mr Boonyuen Kongpetchsak  
*Director*
17. Office of Provincial Resources Mr Lek Wongsa, Head of Resource  
*Department*

### 3. Namelist of Interview on Training Need Assessment

- 1) *Tour Operators*
  1. Mr Philip Van Driesten Kiri Tour (Chiang Mai)
  2. Ms Tita Chaiwongsri Exotissimo (Chiang Mai)
  3. Ms Phailin Phasook Go Chiang Mai (Chiang Mai)
  4. Mr Rax Kamnuansilp North West GH (Mae Sarieng)
  5. Ms Malisa Asing Thailand Hilltribe Holidays (Mae Sarieng)
- 2) *Tour Guides*
  1. Mr Somsak Sangsook Thai Adventure Rafting
  2. Mr Bobby NG River Guides
  3. Mr Saroj Buasri North West GH
  4. Mr Chakpan Praweenchaikul Freelance
  5. Ms Ornanong Kruthong Exotissimo
- 3) *Hotels*
  1. Mr Roongroj Soontawanij Imperial Hotel
  2. Mr John Spies Cave Lodge
  3. Ms Abhorn Saengchoti Banana House
  4. Mr Manop Nuchnoon Phu Pai Resort
  5. Ms Butsya Kamnuanmasok Riverside GH
  6. Out of Record River House Hotel
- 4) *Restaurants*
  1. Mr Somsak Boon-In Cross Roads
  2. Mr Bancha Semapat Ruen Yai Kaew
  3. Ms Beng Sawadee
  4. Ms Sangwan Buranakul Cafe De Grill
- 5) *Community Leaders*
  1. Mr Suwit Walin Vice Mayor Muang Pon Sub-district
  2. Mr Somsak Na Madkam Mayor, Mok Cham Pae Sub-district
  3. Mr Yut Vice Mayor Mae Suad Sub-district
  4. Mr Alongkorn Sub-district Chief, Mae Suad
- 6) *Community Members*
  1. Mrs Chanpen Mae Lui Women Group
  2. Mr Sombat Kingtarakaew Local Guide, Mae Lui
  3. Mrs Kamloo Homestay Host, Muang Pon
  4. Mrs Suriya Wira Fruit Processing Group, Muang Pon
  5. Mrs Fongchan Sirinoi Homestay Group, Pai District

#### 4. List of Respondents: Key Observers and Influencers' Survey

1. **Dr Jaron Kamnuanta:** President of community college council, owner of Panorama hotel
2. **Miss Arunee Wiengsaeng:** Specialist in research for local community and alternative agriculture (Thailand Research Fund, CBR Node, MHS)
3. **Mr Boonyeun Kongpetchsak:** Project for Restoration of Life and Culture, working team for MHS Network Working to Strengthen Community Organisations
4. **Mr Piya Kongpermpoon:** Owner of Piya guest house, consultant to tour guides, guest house club and provincial committee/ working team – election commission board. board of council of community college
5. **Mr Thawatchai Nahtipakorn:** owner of Fern resort

## 5. The useful websites consulted for the Product-Market survey

		Website
1	Tourism Authority of Thailand	<a href="http://www.tourismthailand.org/where-to-go/cities-guide/activities/destination/mae-hong-son/">http://www.tourismthailand.org/where-to-go/cities-guide/activities/destination/mae-hong-son/</a>
2	Tourism Authority of Thailand Mae Hong Son	<a href="http://travelmaehongson.org/eng-index.html">http://travelmaehongson.org/eng-index.html</a>
3	Mae Hong Son Info	<a href="http://www.mae-hong-son.info/">http://www.mae-hong-son.info/</a>
4	Discovery Thailand	<a href="http://www.discoverythailand.com/Mae_Hong_Son_Pai_River.asp">http://www.discoverythailand.com/Mae_Hong_Son_Pai_River.asp</a> <a href="http://www.discoverythailand.com/mae_hong_son_adventure_and_eco-tourism.asp">http://www.discoverythailand.com/mae_hong_son_adventure_and_eco-tourism.asp</a>
5	Mae Hong Son Travel	<a href="http://www.maehongsontravel.com/mhstour.html">http://www.maehongsontravel.com/mhstour.html</a>
6		<a href="http://www.maehongsontravel.com/trip.html">http://www.maehongsontravel.com/trip.html</a>
7	Panthip Blue Planet	<a href="http://panthip.com/cafe/blueplanet/">http://panthip.com/cafe/blueplanet/</a>
8	Trekking Thai	<a href="http://www.trekkingthai.com/indexe.html">http://www.trekkingthai.com/indexe.html</a>
9	Mae Hong Son Hotels	<a href="http://www.maehongsonhotels.com/guide/province-attractions.htm">http://www.maehongsonhotels.com/guide/province-attractions.htm</a>
10	You Travel	<a href="http://you.travel/Mae_Hong_Son_Province">http://you.travel/Mae_Hong_Son_Province</a>
11	Trips Thailand	<a href="http://www.tripsthailand.com/maehongson.php">http://www.tripsthailand.com/maehongson.php</a>
12	Thailand Be There	<a href="http://www.thailandbethere.com/Provinces/ENG/EG_MaeHongSon.htm">http://www.thailandbethere.com/Provinces/ENG/EG_MaeHongSon.htm</a>
13		<a href="http://iguide.travel/Mae_Hong_Son_Province">http://iguide.travel/Mae_Hong_Son_Province</a>
14	Motocross specialist GT Rider	<a href="http://www.gt-rider.com/">http://www.gt-rider.com/</a>
15	Lonely Planet	<a href="http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thailand/mae-hong-son-province/mae-hong-son">http://www.lonelyplanet.com/thailand/mae-hong-son-province/mae-hong-son</a>
16		<a href="http://www.maehongson.go.th/eng/">http://www.maehongson.go.th/eng/</a>
17		<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mae_Hong_Son_Province">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mae_Hong_Son_Province</a>
18		<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe_Mueang_Mae_Hong_Son">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe_Mueang_Mae_Hong_Son</a>
19	Info Pai	<a href="http://activethailand.com/">http://activethailand.com/</a>
20		<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe_Pai">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe_Pai</a>
21		<a href="http://www.thailand.com/travel/eco/eco_maehongson_trekking(pai).htm">http://www.thailand.com/travel/eco/eco_maehongson_trekking(pai).htm</a>
22		<a href="http://www.slowstylepai.com/">http://www.slowstylepai.com/</a>
23	Info Pang Ma Pa	<a href="http://www.soppong-thailand.info/">http://www.soppong-thailand.info/</a>
24		<a href="http://huaiheevillage.blogspot.com/">http://huaiheevillage.blogspot.com/</a>
25		<a href="http://cavelodge.com/">http://cavelodge.com/</a>
26		<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe_Pangmapha">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe_Pangmapha</a>
27		<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirit_Cave,_Thailand">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Spirit_Cave,_Thailand</a>
28	Info Khun Yuam	<a href="http://www.khun-yuam.info/">http://www.khun-yuam.info/</a>
29	Info Mae La Noi	<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe_Mae_La_Noi">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe_Mae_La_Noi</a>
30	Info Mae Sarieng	<a href="http://www.mae-sarieng.com/">http://www.mae-sarieng.com/</a>
31		<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe_Mae_Sariang">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe_Mae_Sariang</a>
32	Info Sop Muay	<a href="http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe_Sop_Moei">http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe_Sop_Moei</a>
33	Tour Merng Tai – CBT Specialists	<a href="http://www.tourmerngtai.com/">http://www.tourmerngtai.com/</a>
34	Thailand Hilltribe Holidays (MSR)	<a href="http://www.thailandhilltribeholidays.com/">http://www.thailandhilltribeholidays.com/</a>
35	Thai Adventure Rafting (PAI)	<a href="http://www.thairafting.com/">http://www.thairafting.com/</a>

### 6. The Inventory of 160 destinations/activities in Mae Hong Son

Pai		Nature Focus		Activities		Culture and Community Focus		Others		Total
	National Park	Mountain/canyon	Waterfall/river	Hotspring	Nature-based Activity	Culture-based activity	Village visit/Community Based Tourism/homestay	Temple/monument/museum	Craft Center/Markets	22
<b>Established</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Huay Namdang: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Doi Khun Mae Ya: <b>D</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Konglaen (Pai canyon): <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Morpaeng Waterfall: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thapai Hotspring: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Mueang Paeng</li> <li>• Hotspring: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pai Zipline: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New Sahasampan Village (Lisu): <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Santichon Village: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Namhu Temple: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Luang Temple: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Klang Temple: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Pai Memorial Bridge: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pai Walking Street: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<b>14</b>
<b>Potential</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Paembok Waterfall: <b>M</b></li> <li>• Muangsoi Waterfall: <b>W</b></li> <li>• Maeyen Waterfall: <b>W</b></li> </ul>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mae Ping Karen Village: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Mueang Noi CBT: <b>D</b></li> <li>• Hua Pai CBT: <b>D</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maeyen Temple: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<b>0</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Unsure</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Huay Jok Luang: <b>D</b></li> </ul>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Accessibility: E = Easy, M = Medium: Difficult in rainy season, D = Difficult: By 4WD W = Difficult: On foot only (access by walking)</b>										



Pang Mapha	Nature Focus		Activities		Culture and Community Focus	Total
	National Park	cave	Nature-based Activity	Village visit/Community Based Tourism/homestay	Temple/monument/museum	
	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Yao Cave: E</li> <li>• Pee ManCave: M</li> <li>• Pa PuekCave: M</li> <li>• Pa Daeng: M (can be found)</li> <li>• PangkamCave: M</li> <li>• NamlangCave: M</li> <li>• Maelana Cave: M</li> <li>• Namborpee Cave: M</li> <li>• Mae Langchan Cave: E</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kewlom Viewpoint: E</li> <li>• Namlang Rafting: E</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maelana Homestay: E</li> <li>• Jabo Village (Lahu): E</li> <li>• Borkrai Homestay: E</li> <li>• Mueang Paem village: D</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maelana Temple: E</li> </ul>	19
<b>Established</b>	0					16
<b>Potential</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mae Kai Waterfall: D</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pha Mon Waterfall (not open yet)</li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pha Charoen Village: E</li> </ul>	0	3
<b>Unsure</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Accessibility: E = Easy, M = Medium: Difficult in rainy season, D = Difficult: By 4WD W = Difficult: On foot only (access by walking)</b>						

Mueang	Nature Focus				Activities		Culture and Community Focus		Others		Total
	National Park	Cave	Waterfall/river	Hotspring	Nature-based Activity	Culture-based activity	Village visit/Community Based Tourism/homestay	Temple/monument/museum	Development Project open to public	Craft Center/Markets	
<b>Established</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fish Cave-Pasuer: E</li> <li>• Phahintang National Park/Protected Area: E</li> <li>• Fish Cave: E</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Susa Cave: W</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phaseur Waterfall: E</li> <li>• Mae Sa-Nga Klang Waterfall: W</li> <li>• Susa Waterfall: M</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phabong Hotspring: E</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muddy Pool or Poo Klone: E</li> <li>• Huay Duer-Huay Tor Elephant Camp: E</li> <li>• Huay Duer Pier: E</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sesame Oil producing turbin (Sobsoi): E</li> <li>• Pang Mu Village Traditional sesame oil Producer: E</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nam Phiang Din Village: E</li> <li>• Naisoi Village: E</li> <li>• Huay Suer Tao Village: E</li> <li>• Namhu Haijai: D</li> <li>• Huaysee homestay: D</li> <li>• Huay Kung Village: W</li> <li>• Huay Tongkor: E</li> <li>• Village: D</li> <li>• Papaek Village: E</li> <li>• Huay Makeur som: E</li> <li>• Nongkiaw Village: M</li> <li>• Ruamthai Village: E</li> <li>• Rakthai KMT</li> <li>• Microwave Hmong Village: E</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prartart Doi-Kongmu: E</li> <li>• Pranon Temple: E</li> <li>• Jongkam Temple: E</li> <li>• Kamkor Temple: E</li> <li>• Huawiang Temple: E</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Flora-Fauna Conservation Project (Pangmu): E</li> <li>• Pangton Royal Palace: E</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mae Hong Son Morning Market: E</li> <li>• Mae Hong Son Occupational Center: E</li> </ul>	<b>40</b>

Mueang	Nature Focus				Activities		Culture and Community Focus		Others		Total
	National Park	Cave	Waterfall/river	Hotspring	Nature-based Activity	Culture-based activity	Village visit/Community Based Tourism/homestay	Temple/monument/museum	Development Project open to public	Craft Center/Markets	52
							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Doi Pui Summit: W</li> <li>• Papoo Handicraft Village: E</li> <li>• Roongaroon Village: E</li> <li>• Trekking: W</li> </ul>				
Potential	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maesakuet Waterfall: E</li> <li>• Phabong Waterfall: E</li> <li>• Huaypooling Waterfall: W</li> <li>• Huay PongOn Waterfall: M</li> </ul>	0	0	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prartart Doi Kewkamin Temple: E</li> <li>• Pha Ang Temple: E</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Phabong Hydropower Plant: E</li> <li>• Mae Sa-Nga Hydropower Plant: E</li> </ul>	0	8
Unsure	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prabant Koo Cave (Jaktok Cave): E</li> <li>• Pha Daeng Cave: M</li> </ul>	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kongmu Field Rafting: E</li> <li>• White Water Rafting: E</li> </ul>	0	0	0	0	0	4
<b>Accessibility: E = Easy, M = Medium: Difficult in rainy season, D = Difficult: By 4WD W = Difficult: On foot only (access by walking)</b>											

Khun Yuam	Nature Focus			Activities	Culture and Community Focus	Others	Total
	National Park	Waterfall/river	Hotspring	Village visit/ Community Based Tourism/homestay	Temple/monument/ museum	Development Project open to public	12
<b>Established</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mae Suring: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Mae Ukor Toong Buatong: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Maesurin Waterfall: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonghaeng Hotspring: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mueang Pon Village: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Torpae Village: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Muay Tor Temple: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Tor Pae Village: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Thai-Japan Museum: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Orchid (Lady Slipper) Conservation Center: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<b>10</b>
<b>Potential</b>	<b>0</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mae Ukor Waterfall: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Maeyuamluang Waterfall: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Unsure</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Accessibility: E = Easy, M = Medium: Difficult in rainy season, D = Difficult: By 4WD W = Difficult: On foot only (access by walking)</b>							

Mae La Noi	Nature Focus				Activities		Culture and Community Focus	Total
	National Park	Cave	Waterfall/river	Hotspring	Nature-based Activity	Village visit/ Community Based Tourism/ homestay	Temple/ monument/ museum	14
<b>Established</b>	• Kaekomon Cave: E	0	0	0	0	• Huay Hom Village	0	2
<b>Potential</b>	0	• MaeLaka: D • Mae Hu Cave: E	• Dawaduengs Waterfall: E • Mae Najang Waterfall: E • Nateerajan Waterfall: M • Mae Pang or Pangchompoo Waterfall: M	• Maehu Hotspring: E • Maelaka Hotspring: M	• Mae Yuam Wildlife Sanctuary: E	• La Oop Village: E	• Mae Pang Temple: E	11
<b>Unsure</b>	0	0	0	0	0	• Mae Sakua Village: E	0	1

**Accessibility: E = Easy, M = Medium:** Difficult in rainy season, **D = Difficult:** By 4WD **W = Difficult:** On foot only (access by walking)

Mae Sariang	Nature Focus					Activities		Culture and Community Focus		Others	Total
	National Park	Mountain/canyon	Cave	Waterfall/river	Hotspring	Nature-based activity	Culture-based activity	Village visit/Community Based Tourism/homestay	Temple/monument/museum	Development Project open to public	
											17
<b>Established</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Salween National Park: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hin Laan Pee National Park – Million Years Stone Park (Baan Dong Sa-Ngad): <b>E</b></li> </ul>	0	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mae Hu Sunflower Fields: <b>E</b></li> </ul>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mae Samlaep Village: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Thatafang Village: <b>M</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prartart Chomthong Temple: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Saengthong Temple: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Utyarom Temple: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Seeboonrueng Temple: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Kitiwong Temple: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tribal Development &amp; Assistance Center: <b>E</b></li> <li>• Arts and Crafts Centre (Mae Sarieng Branch): <b>E</b></li> </ul>	12
<b>Potential</b>	0	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mae-sawannoi Waterfall: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mae Umlong Waterfall: <b>M</b></li> </ul>	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Thai Boxing Training: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pamalor Karen Village: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	0	0	4
<b>Unsure</b>	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ngao Cave: <b>E</b></li> </ul>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Accessibility: E = Easy, M = Medium: Difficult in rainy season, D = Difficult: By 4WD W = Difficult: On foot only (access by walking)</b>											

Sop Moei	Nature Focus				Activities	Culture and Community Focus	Total
	National Park	Mountain/canyon	Cave	Waterfall/river	Nature-based Activity	Village visit/Community Based Tourism/homestay	
<b>Established</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mae Ngao NP: E</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Summit of Doi Pui Luang: W</li> <li>• Summit of Doi Pui: W</li> <li>• Mae Lui Gorge: W</li> <li>• Ob Noi Gorge (Little Gorge): W</li> </ul>	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• O Loh Kro Waterfall... Ngao River: W</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Elephant Riding at Mae Laki Village: D</li> <li>• Bamboo Rafting at Mae Lui: D</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mae Samlaeb Village: D</li> <li>• Mae Lui Village: D</li> </ul>	11
<b>Potential</b>	0	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Omki Cave: D</li> <li>• Bat Cave: D</li> <li>• Fish Cave: D</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Underground Waterfall: W</li> <li>• Mae Rid Waterfall: W</li> <li>• Buranapraba Waterfall: D</li> <li>• Mae Jey Waterfall: D</li> <li>• Mae La-Or Waterfall: D</li> <li>• Mae Wa Luang Waterfall: D</li> <li>• Poei Ja Waterfall: D</li> <li>• Ba Yea Ley Waterfall: D</li> <li>• Mae Bang Waterfall: D</li> </ul>	0	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mae Lamaluang Village: D</li> </ul>	13
<b>Unsure</b>	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Accessibility: E = Easy, M = Medium: Difficult in rainy season, D = Difficult: By 4WD W = Difficult: On foot only (access by walking)</b>							

## **What is the Thailand Community Based Tourism Institute (CBT-I)?**

CBT-I is a legally registered Thai foundation, established in 2006.

The vision of CBT-I is to: **“provide support and facilitate cooperation among stakeholders from grassroots to international levels, in order to strengthen the capacity of Thai communities to manage tourism sustainably.”**

To achieve this, CBT-I works with local Thai communities, Thai government agencies, tour operators with a firm commitment to responsible tourism, supporting NGO's, academics and the media.

CBT-I unites the skills and experience of the Responsible Ecological Social Tours Project (REST) and the Thailand Research Fund (TRF) Community Based Research Unit, Community Based Tourism Node.

Prior to establishing CBT-I, these organisations worked for over 10 years supporting Thai communities to develop and market community based tourism programs, appropriate to their cultural and natural contexts. CBT-I aims to move this work forwards, by catalyzing cooperation among stakeholders in Thai tourism and inviting them to contribute towards a higher quality industry. We do this through implementing creative, participatory, multi-stakeholder research and development initiatives.

CBT-I have 7 full time staff and 10 volunteers, and is overseen by a steering committee of 7 highly respected and senior Thai tourism and development professionals. In addition to research and projects, CBT-I regularly offer capacity building and study tour services for tourism stakeholders who wish to learn how to develop sustainable tourism in partnership with local communities.