

## Chapter 6

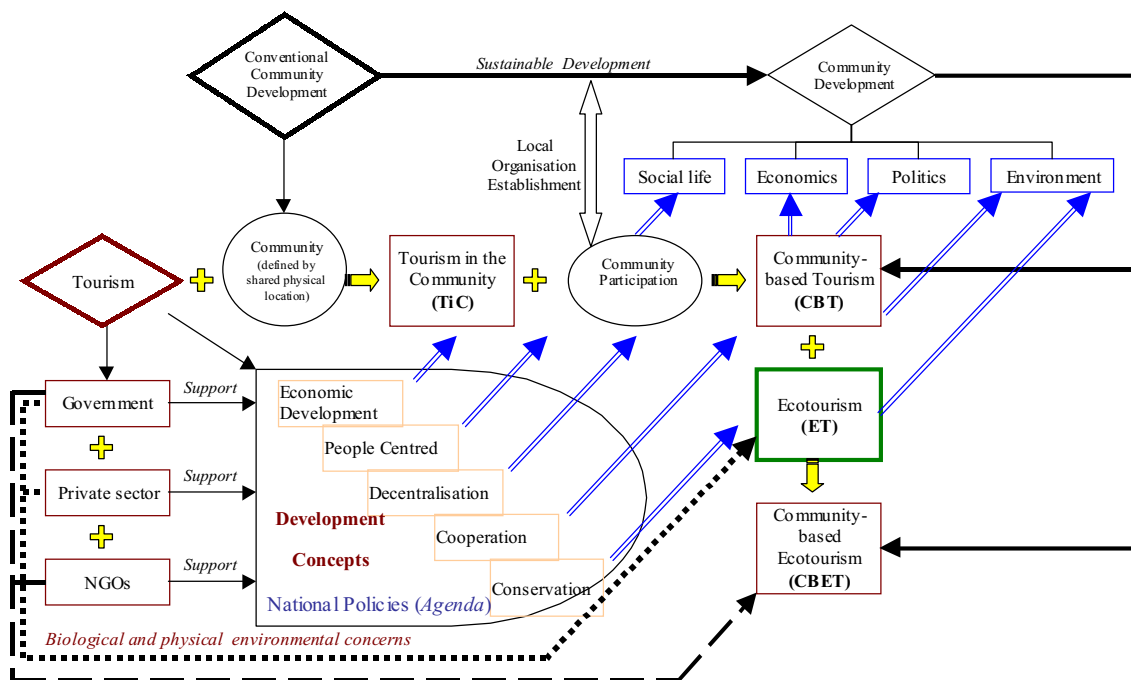
### Community-based Tourism in Thailand

#### Introduction

This study of community participation in ecotourism development in Thailand focuses on rural communities as tourism destinations. Many of these communities are applying the concept of ecotourism (ET) to the process of community development. This practice has been described as ‘community-based ecotourism’ (CBET). The study reviews and analyses the past development of tourism and the implementation of ecotourism in the community. *Tourism in the Community (TiC)* is used to denote all forms of tourism that take place in the (rural) community.

Rural communities can be involved in tourism in different ways. TiC may have been promoted in a community as a result of the government’s development policy of using tourism to raise people’s income and conserve their culture and identity, or a community may have initiated tourism activities for economic, social, cultural and political purposes. Generally, the community is the focus of tourists’ visits as their intention is to ‘taste’ local culture. However, most local people receive none or very few benefits from these visits because their involvement is usually limited to selling a small quantity of low priced local crafts and services only. In contrast, the major share of any profit from these visits goes to various middlemen, from within or outside the community, especially tour operators and souvenir shop owners. Such tourism has led to adverse impacts on the host communities such as negative changes in socio-cultural values, as well as in the behaviour and attitudes of local people and has been a source of waste and pollution. Although many concerned government agencies have been aware of these problems for several decades, very little has been done to protect host communities or ensure the equitable distribution of benefits. However, many non-governmental organisations have searched for a new form of TiC, which allows local people to control tourism and its impacts and earn the largest share of the tourists’ expenditures. This has led to the promotion concept of community-based tourism (CBT), whereby tourism is managed and controlled by the community. Ecotourism (ET), which is a tool for conserving the natural and biological environment worldwide, supports this concept effectively and is often referred to as community-based ecotourism (CBET).

The transformation from and fragmentation of TiC to CBET is illustrated in **Figure 6.1** and discussed throughout this chapter. In brief, TiC is a part of the mixture of the tourism and



**Figure 6.1 The transformation from TiC to CBET**

conventional community development concept implemented in the community, basically for economic development. The new paradigm of national development, particularly in Thailand, gives greater emphasis to people and decentralization, and accepts the concept of sustainable development that provides an opportunity for the participation of local people's organizations. Community participation then became the central component of tourism and community development and the basis of community-based tourism. New community development, including tourism, then extended its goals to benefit the social-life, politics and environment of the community. Cooperation with outsiders is essential for successful community management and should support community control of any development. When ecotourism, which is generally seen as focussing on biological and physical environmental resources, has been adopted, community-based ecotourism has emerged as a central practice of the community to manage ecotourism.

The evolution of TiC from community as the 'target' of tourism to its 'manager' in Thailand is rather complex, because of the socio-economic structure of the rural communities and the various forms of involvement of outside stakeholders. There is no single form and pattern of such evolution. To clarify the matter and facilitate understanding, this study has classified TiC into 'conventional TiC' and CBT and similarities and differences in these types in terms of geographical features, main actors and in terms of concept have been identified and discussed.

It is essential to understand TiC development on the basis of the experiences of rural communities throughout the country that have been involved in tourism, particularly CBT. To achieve this the relevant discourses, i.e. literature, news, articles, reports have been reviewed and some communities have been visited and the forms of their involvement in ecotourism are listed in **Appendix 5** (Table A5.2). My own knowledge and experiences of tourism is another source of information. To deepen this study, primary information was collected from communities using two complementary data collection methods – a postal questionnaire survey that targeted eighty communities involved mainly in CBT, and an in-depth survey of four selected communities.

This Chapter gives an overview of tourism in the community (TiC) in rural Thailand and its evolution. The concept of CBT, CBT practices and the challenges of CBT for local Thai communities are also discussed.

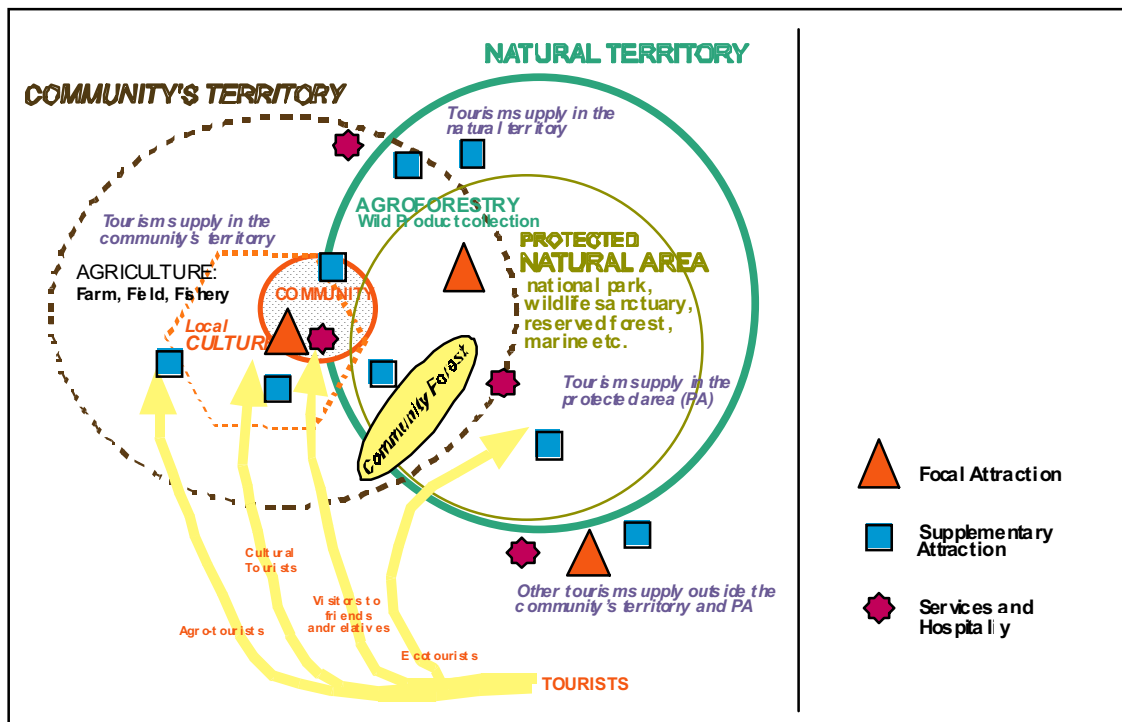
## **6.1 Tourism in the Community (TiC)**

Many rural communities have settled in close proximity to the forests and other natural areas, including protected areas. However, many protected areas were occupied or have been used by local communities long before they were proclaimed as protected areas. In both cases serious political and ecological problems have often resulted.

Tourism in the community (TiC) in Thailand has been developed for over three decades, with and without planning, as part of the country's tourism development efforts, particularly to promote rural Thai culture and raise the income of people outside Bangkok. New forms of TiC such as CBT and CBET have been promoted strongly only in the last decade. A few TiC projects have been developed by communities themselves, but the majority of such projects have been pushed by the government, and by the private sector. Most communities are involved only in providing the tourist attractions and selling crafts and arts products. Thus, very few communities have been able to exercise any control over the way tourism has developed and the impacts that have accompanied it.

### **6.1.1 People, Nature, Culture and Tourism**

The relationships among the three major elements in the community – people, nature, and culture – and with tourism is the main theme of TiC. These elements have evolved with the development of the community according to many factors and through time. **Figure 6.2**



**Figure 6.2 The relation between people, nature, culture and tourism in the community**

illustrates the relationships among these elements and shows how tourism has taken advantage of them.

‘People’ here refers to the local population of the rural community whose way of life is based mostly on agriculture (plantations and fisheries) and on their traditional or native culture. There may or may not be interaction between the local people and the tourists, depending on whether or not the former get involved in tourism and its management. If so, the extent of interaction between local people and the tourists is likely to increase. However, many locals appear to characterise the tourists as coming and consuming their resources, while they get nothing.

‘Nature’ is something normal and simple for local people who use natural resources for their subsistence needs. ‘Culture’ refers to the way of life of the people, their traditions, values and customs, local production, and social relations within the community or their interactions with the environment. Although the culture is not static, it is slowly changing through time. All sorts of cultural elements have become tourism resources. Contact with outsiders may alter the dynamic of the local culture and change its direction.

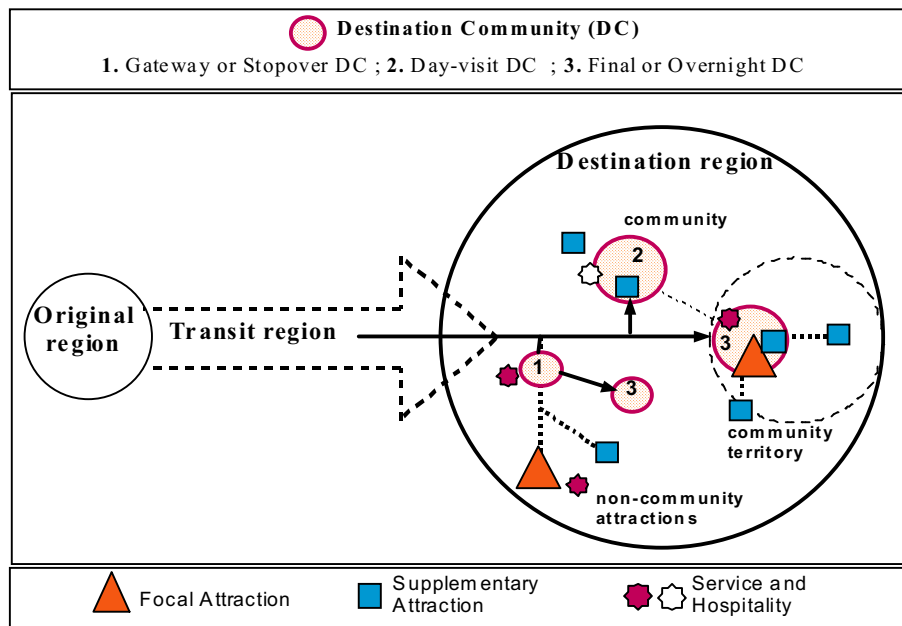
In brief, people living in rural areas are usually surrounded by or in close proximity to forests or coastal areas. Their way of life is based on agriculture/farming, wild product collection, fisheries, their religious and spiritual beliefs and behaviours, and they are closely connected

with natural cycles. These have become tourism attractions in the post-modern period. A community's knowledge (in Thailand it is often referred to as 'local wisdom' or *phum panya thongthin*), customs and traditions are generally presented to tourists when they visit a rural village. This is sometimes the beginning of a tourism-based local economy or at least a partial shift away from a production oriented or subsistence local economy to a service oriented local economy. While the local people often deal with nature in a consumptive and conservative manner, and accept some change of their culture, conservationists and ecotourists prefer to see them as conserved objects. Such different aims on natural and culture management may create conflict among local people and outsiders.

### 6.1.2 Type of TiC

TiC can be categorised into several types according to the community's location, the motivation of tourists and their need for accommodation. Easy accessibility may allow tourists to visit a community and then return home or move on to another destination within the same day. On the other hand, remote and difficult to access areas may require the tourists to stay overnight. This affects the pattern of services at the destination. Practically, other factors that may influence the type of TiC are the characteristics of the tourist attractions that are available, the pattern of tourism services provided and the way in which the community is being promoted. Thus, TiC can be classified into 3 types: the gateway destination community, the day-visit destination community and the final or overnight destination community as illustrated in **Figure 6.3** and described below.

- 1) The gateway or transit community: This type of community is not well known for its tourist attractions. It serves mainly as a stopover or pass-through point for tourists or as a gateway to the final tourist destinations. However, later on the village may be promoted for its natural and cultural resources. Local people may sell some foods or local products to tourists or be employed as tourist guides or porters. Examples of this type are Ban Na Kha, Changwat Udon Thani; Ban Tha-ton, Changwat Chiang Rai; Ban Na Pho Klang, Changwat Ubon Ratchathani; and Ban Phu Kradung, Changwat Lei. This type may include small towns and sub-districts that are at the centre of transportation networks such as Ban Phe, Changwat Rayong; Pak Nam Khanom, Changwat Nakhon Sri Thammarat; Ban Umphang, Changwat Tak etc.



**Sources:** Synthesised from the situation in Thailand by adopting three regions of tourism system (Hall 2000; Leiper 1995; Weaver and Lawton 2002b) that focus on the destination region, the locality of community and tourism resources, and the concept of destination coverage (Weaver and Lawton 2002b:192-3).

**Figure 6.3 Tourism features of the three types of destination community in Thailand.**

- 2) The day-visit destination community: The communities in this group are located on the way to a main tourist destination or may be easy to visit and return home (or to a hotel in town) within the same day. Thus, the main tourists here are day-trippers or one-day visitors who do not need accommodation. Many communities have attractive places or annual events/festivals that could attract tourists. This includes their material culture, traditions, customs, ways of life and religious festivals. Tourists often seek handicrafts and agricultural products too and architectural elements of houses and temples and other community buildings may be of interest to tourists, as may many local costumes, dances and performances, local foods and drinks. Natural features, especially those that have strong aesthetic appeal, may also attract tourists. Examples of this type are Ban Hub Kraphong, Changwat Phetchaburi; Talat Nam Damnoensaduok, Changwat Ratchaburi; Mu Ban Maeo Doi Pui, Changwat Chiang Mai; Ban Khiriwong, Changwat Nakhon Sri Thammarat and Ko Si-re, Changwat Phuket. Tour operators may organise trips to these places and request some services from locals such as meals, cultural performances and accommodation, particularly for trekking tours that pass through the remote hill tribe villages such as Ban Kho Tha, Changwat Tak; Ban Cha-kue, Ban Kho Ae, and Ban Nong Wen, Changwat Chiang Rai. This type of TiC may be identified as handicraft making villages, historical related communities, Buddhist monk/monastery related communities, special/unique traditional festival/event communities, agricultural or fishery villages such as Ban Dan Kwieon,

Changwat Nakhon Ratchasima; Ban Thai Lue Nong Bua, Changwat Nan; Renu Nakhon, Changwat Nakhon Phanom; and Ban Chiang, Changwat Udon Thani. However, some communities may provide accommodation for tourists in case they want to stay overnight such as Ban Khotha, Ban Khiriwong etc.

- 3) The final or overnight destination community: The community that is the end target of the journey or the trip is usually the main destination community. Visitors need or want to stay overnight at these locations in various kinds of accommodation. The communities may be located in villages, resort areas, towns and cities. These communities may be well known for their places of attractions and for their atmosphere and there is usually a demand for overnight accommodation. Examples include Ko Samui, Ko Tao, Changwat Surat Thani; Ko Samet, Changwat Rayong; Ko Phi Phi, Changwat Krabi; Samliam Thong Kham, Changwat Chiang Rai; Khao Kho, Changwat Phetchabun; and Be-tong, Changwat Yala. Cultural heritage, natural heritage, special objects, and traditional events or festivals, including the interpretation of their way of life, attract tourists to the community. TiC may or may not be managed or supplied by local people. Local people individually might receive tourists as houseguests where an accommodation service is not available. This phenomenon is the initial stage of TiC development in many remote communities, particularly in the coastal villages such as around Phuket, Pattaya and Ko Samui. Such tourism changes the local economy of the communities - from an agriculture-based local economy to a tourism-based local economy. Moreover the informal guest becomes a formal customer and the host becomes a service provider. The relationship between local people and tourists depends on the local's willingness to provide products and services to the tourists. In many cases local people may present something special or non-routine for tourists such as wearing their traditional costumes, playing traditional games and displaying their traditional way of life, as in the case of many hill tribes areas.

There is not always a great deal of difference between these three TiC types, except in some roles and functions of the communities. The first two types may not need any accommodation because most tourists are day-trippers. The first one may be more concerned with its complementary function as a transportation centre, while the second may concentrate on its tourist attractions and some services. Thus, TiC development in the last decade has been trying to promote these services to increase tourism income by expanding the length the length of stay and increasing the number of activities for tourists. Many communities, whether in the first or second categories, are aiming to change and promote themselves as overnight tourism destinations (Type 3). This, in many cases, may result in more problems because of the limitations of other factors such as its attractions, location, tourist's motivation and the readiness of the community.

### 6.1.3 Patterns of TiC

#### Forms and Attractions of TiC

As mentioned earlier, rural communities have been promoted because of their cultural attractions for many decades and nature-based tourism was added on later. In fact, TiC can be classified according to what it is that attracts international and domestic tourists. There are various types such as cultural tourism, nature-based tourism, minority tribe tourism, traditional and event tourism, pilgrimage tourism and resort tourism. Ecotourism and agrotourism are recent forms that have been developed and promoted since the mid to late 1990s. The various types are summarised below.

- 1) Cultural Tourism: The main attractions are traditional way of life of the community. This includes rural atmosphere, local architecture and arts, crafts, and the local way of life. Cultural tourism may also cover historical and archaeological tourism, pilgrimage and hill tribe tourism. Traditional events and celebrations are also included in this type.
- 2) Minority Tourism: Thailand has many minority ethnic groups such as Karen, Hmong (Meo), Mien (Yao), Akha, Lisu, Lahu (Musor) and Kuomintang Chinese Refugees. They have mostly settled on the remote high mountain areas in the Northern Region, and are generally less modernised than rural plains communities (see Davies and Wu 1992). Ethnic groups located in other parts of the country are also attracting tourists such as the Sakai in the South; the Thai Dam, Thai Puan and Souy (or Kui) in the Northeast and the Mon in the Central Region. Each ethnic group has its own history, customs, and traditions, including costumes and ways of life. Cohen (1996b) has extensively studied the form, pattern and impacts of tourism on minorities, in his books namely “Thai Tourism: Hill Tribes, Islands and Open-ended Prostitution”. The authenticity, primitiveness, remoteness, naturalness, exoticism, colourfulness and variety of handicrafts, traditional life and the lack of modernisation is assumed to attract many tourists from urban centres in Thailand and from Western countries. Due to the primitiveness and remoteness of hill tribe villages, trekking tours have become a popular mode of travel to visit them. In the past opium and prostitutes were promoted for some kind of tourists in these areas.
- 3) Traditional and Events Tourism: Religious and traditional culture still exert a strong influence on life in many of the rural communities. Annual or seasonal traditions and events all year round are a common feature of life in these communities. Some communities have special events which are famous nation-wide. This attracts tourists from other parts of Thailand, as well as international tourists who come to visit and join the traditional or religious celebrations and events. Many local events have been orchestrated (usually by

TAT) and promoted at provincial and national levels. Some specific events may occur in a single or a few villages, such as birth ceremonies, funeral ceremonies, wedding ceremonies and spiritual or sacred ceremonies.

- 4) Pilgrimage Tourism: Pilgrimage tourists seek to learn the teaching of religion and to express their religious sentiments at sacred sites and monuments. Some may travel to learn Buddhism and meditation with well-known masters. For example, very large numbers were attracted when Luang Pho Buddha Dasa was at Wat Suan Mokkhaplaram and Luang *Pho Cha* was at Wat Pa Nanachat. Smaller numbers continue to arrive now. Buddha images and related objects are targets for veneration, and some have myths and legends associated with them, giving them a sacred or magic aura. Animistic objects that are associated with the spirit world are also venerated. These may be found in the temples, villages, forests or historic buildings around the country.
- 5) Agrotourism: Agriculture is the main occupation of most rural Thai people, the traditional and low technology in planting, fishing and feeding the animals is still common and attracts urban people and foreigners to the villages. Agricultural products especially various fresh and processed fruits also attract tourists. There are several terms used interchangeably worldwide, agrotourism, agritourism, agricultural tourism, and rural tourism, but the term agrotourism has been used in Thai tourism for almost a decade. Currently it usually takes the form of an organised tour to see agricultural activities and buy products. This form of tourism can easily be managed by the villagers without incurring much expenditure.
- 6) Nature-based Tourism: Rural Thai communities are, geographically and economically, in close proximity with natural areas. The forest and the sea influence their way of life, which is subsistence oriented. Initially, local people may not realise that their natural surroundings are attracting tourists and have tourism value until some tourists and tour operators visit the places or until the government claims those resources as protected areas. Nature tourism then becomes a part of community tourism when tourists visit the community in close proximity to the natural places, are interested in the local atmosphere, need local people to be guides or porters and require other services. Nature-based tourism has been developed into ecotourism in the past decade, and then into community-based ecotourism.

These forms are not always distinct and are often found combined together both in terms of attractions and tour programs. In the initial stage, tourists visited the villages to observe the traditional way of life of villagers, but when formal tourism is introduced subsequently, many resources and activities are commodified to attract more tourists, with or without any modification of those resources. This is a controversial issue in TiC development, and is much debated by community development activists, anthropologists and journalists.

Generally, the purpose of tourists' to Thai communities are relaxation, recreation and nature education, including learning about local culture, way of life and the traditional wisdom related to natural resources management. Tourist attractions can be physical things, myths and legends, cultural practices, products, activities and events located within the community or outside and may belong to or are managed by villagers or other responsible agencies by law or regulation. In conventional tourism, most attractions, whether they belong to or are under the responsibility of villagers or not, are managed by outsiders, that is, by government agencies, private operators and tour guides. This is generally effective in terms of development because these agencies have the capability to invest, manage and promote such attractions, and local people may gain benefits from the development of infrastructure and utilities. However, they may lose their traditional way of life, their right to manage and utilise the resources. Adverse impacts from the development such as traffic, pollution and negative socio-cultural changes may be inevitable.

### **Tourism Services and Management**

Local people in the community can serve tourists with various kinds of services according to what the tourists demand and depending on the financial and other resources available to the local people. Local products (handicrafts, primary and secondary agriculture products and basic local services) can be sold directly to the tourists by local people, while other services such as accommodation (resort and bungalow types), tour operations and transportation might be managed and operated by private outside operators. It is not unknown for individual wealthy local community members to be involved in these kind of operations too, although admittedly it is somewhat rare. Only in the last decade has the idea of community organisations owning and managing these services and products been promoted in many communities and this issue will be discussed later.

Local people are involved in tourism services (as individuals or as a collective) by providing:

- Accommodation, that is guesthouses, bungalows, resorts, homestays and camping services;
- Food and drink, that is local food shops, restaurants, grocery and food stalls;
- Transportation, that is minibuses, motorcycles, tricycles, boats, rafts, elephants, horses and oxcarts, or they may act as porters
- Shops, this at gas stations, grocery stores, local products and handicrafts outlets;
- Local heritage, arts and performances, that is temples, old houses, local museums, cultural centres, dance performances;
- Local guide and wisdom interpretation, that is trekking, fishing, farm visiting, healing with local herbs, massage and so on.

TiC, again, as conventionally practised, does not offer many opportunities for local people to generate income. Most of the services, particularly those that have direct contact with tourists, are managed and operated by outside tour operators. The operators or guides contact local people for some goods and services they want and pay them a relatively small fee for these. Locals generally appear to accept this situation as better than nothing. On numerous occasions tour operators bring in tourists to see local heritage without paying the locals and relying on them to be satisfied with any income generated by the tourists purchasing food or drinks or perhaps some kind of souvenir. Ideally, the new form of TiC will benefit the locals to a greater extent and will lead to a fairer distribution of income derived from tourists visiting the community and fewer adverse impacts on the local culture and environment. This will be discussed later on in the thesis.

## **6.2 Concept of CBT**

Many ecotourism definitions refer to the community as a component of ecotourism or, at least, suggest that the local community or people could profit from this form of tourism. Although ecotourism is mainly a nature-based type of tourism, in most countries the natural areas, in one way or another, have a close relationship with the local communities. Therefore ecotourism development has to be concerned with the role and responsibility of the community.

Communities are generally involved with ecotourism in two ways. First, as destinations or attractions in terms of place, and second as operators or actors in terms of management by people or local organisations. The destinations can be the communities themselves and the natural resources around them that have a close relationship to their traditions and way of life. The opportunity to operate ecotourism resources and activities depends on how much they have the right to manage these resources. The right of local people to control or participate in ecotourism management is rarely granted, particularly in developing countries, where the governments have proclaimed such lands as protected areas. Conflicts related to protecting and managing natural resources often result from such proclamations. To support the community's capacity to manage ecotourism and avoid or mitigate adverse impacts, the concept of appropriate community development has been adopted. Alternatively, community development cannot ignore the existence of tourism in the community.

Community-based Ecotourism (CBET), as a segment of Community-based Tourism (CBT), was termed after the ecotourism discourse had focused mainly on the right and responsibility of local communities to participate in or control (eco)tourism development. One could speak of several levels of participation, but the term 'community-based' basically means community as a centre

of all activities. It can refer to local development and to services and programs that are accessible to a group or population in their own community. In other words a community-oriented approach is used in planning and developing tourism in the community.

### **6.2.1 CBT as a New Approach of TiC**

The impacts of conventional tourism on the communities are the main consideration of community developers, NGOs, sociologists, anthropologists, environmentalists and some government officers and operators. Some suggest avoiding any tourism activities in the (rural and tribal) communities, while some suggest changing the process of development at the community level. However, many of them see TiC development as inevitable and difficult to deny. In this regard, some suggest that if tourism has to develop in the community, the aim should be to earn subsistence income or to put tourists and locals in touch with each other rather than seek high profits, as the mass tourism industry does (Datchanee Aimphan and Surachet Chettamart 2002; Potjana Suansri 2003). Using TiC as the main source of income should be the aim when the community has high potential and an effective development process has been established.

The basic idea of community based tourism in Thailand has been of interest for only a decade or so, but it shifts the role of community (*chumchon*) from tourism objects (*phu thuk thiao*) (Yos Santasombat 2001:197) to tourism controller (*phu khuabkhum kanthongthiao*). Community-based tourism (CBT), has been defined as ‘a type of tourism run by and for the local community’ (France 1997:16) and community-based ecotourism (CBET) has been defined as ‘ecotourism enterprises that are owned and managed by the community’ (Sproule 1998:235). Thus, CBT could appropriately be used to refer to the *new TiC*, because it covers all forms of tourism that occur in the community and tend to be managed and controlled by the community.

The concept of sustainable tourism development supports the participation of local people in all types of tourism development. Furthermore, the development of Thailand, particularly under the 8<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> NESDPs, acknowledges that ‘holistic’ and ‘people-centred’ approaches are the main theme of development (NESDB 1997, 2001). Clearly, ecotourism can easily respond to and support this agenda (TISTR 1997a:5-3).

### **6.2.2 Concept and Definitions of CBT and CBET**

Community-based Tourism (CBT) or Community Tourism (CT) is “a type of tourism run by and for local community. It may be alternative in character – or may cater for larger numbers

and have more in common with aspects of mass tourism – which can be associated with organised packages and even coach travel” (France 1997:16). CBT utilises a wide range of resources that locals are able to manage and involves “respect for local culture, heritage and traditions”. CBT is generally “considered a privately offered set of hospitality services (and features), extended to visitors, by individuals, families, or a local community” (Dernoi, 1988 cited in Wearing and Neil 1999:2). CBT is always a small scale enterprises that provide facilities such as “small hotels, pensions, restaurants and other facilities which form an integral part of the community in which they are located” (Mowforth and Munt 1998:252).

Similarly, when such a form of tourism “implies respect and concern for the natural heritage, particularly where the environment is one of the attractions” (Hatton 1999:3) it may called Community-based Ecotourism (CBET or CBE) or in Thai ‘(*kanchatkan*) *kanthongthiao choeng niwet doi chumchon*’. According to Sproule (1998:235):

CBE[T] refers to “ecotourism enterprises that are owned and managed by the community. Furthermore, CBE[T] implies that a community is taking care of its natural resources in order to gain income through operating a tourism enterprise and using that income to better the lives of its members. Hence, CBE[T] involves conservation, business enterprise and community development.

Responsible Ecological Social Tours (REST)<sup>32</sup>, is one of the Thai NGO enterprises that have been working with many communities, including Ban Khiriwong – one of the case studies, in tourism development under the Community-based Sustainable Tourism (CBST) approach. They have provided a definition of CBST that “emphasises the participation of community organisation and sustainable tourism management”. Characteristically it is “managed by local communities, based on the communities’ strengths and capabilities, a part of the development process, and a way to improve a community’s quality of life both in terms of raising its income and its standard of living” (REST 2001). According to Potjana, a project co-ordinator of REST, CBT seeks to contribute to “the process of community development” and ensure that “communities benefit more from tourism” (Potjana Suansri 2003:11)

It can be seen that the components of tourism in CBT are a bit different from ecotourism. CBT can be a part of ecotourism while ecotourism can be a part of CBT. CBT tourism resources may be emphasised in three areas i.e. pure natural resources, cultural resources that are related to

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<sup>32</sup> REST is a business tourism operator that is licensed according to Tourism Business Act and Tourism Act 1992. Prior to 2000, this group was a project under the Thai Volunteer Society (TVS), a very powerful and well-known NGO, and was known as TVS-REST. It became an independent organisation for two main reasons: the need for self-reliance in running the project, and a disagreement with mother organisation about using tourism as a tool for community development or to work with the local communities. TVS appeared to be afraid that they would lose their image of being a respected NGO if they support tourism development that may negatively affect the grassroots.

natural and ecological aspects, and culture within the community. CBT focuses mainly on the idea that communities must play a major role in tourism management and services. CBT has to be managed sustainably and may or may not emphasize environmental education. However, it should include some activities that provide cultural exchange and learning between tourists and the host community.

### **6.2.3 Community Participation as the Heart of CBT**

Ecotourism is claimed to be a tool for community development, for local economic development and for conservation of the community's culture. Integrating ecotourism with community development can not only help the community to develop appropriately, but can also control the development of tourism in the community. The main concept of community development involves community participation, which ultimately aims at the empowerment of the local community. Power is essential to resources management, it is about “the capacity to have meaningful (effective) input into making and implementing decisions” (Fisher 2003), whereby people have the authority to implement or reject any development strategies. Therefore, community-based ecotourism development also emphasises community participation as the priority or the heart of the development. The empowerment of the people then, is one of the targets of all CBET projects. In the past, all development used to be managed and controlled by government and private operators, while ordinary people and the grassroots had little chance to participate and manage the development. This has been changing in the last few decades. To the goals of empowering people, supporting human rights and devising opportunities for communities to plan and manage their own resources have been adopted by all stakeholders in several development activities.

If we classify people's participation into many rungs of a ladder, ‘empowerment or community control’ is the top rung (the ideal state) while the lower rungs include a reduction in the role and power of community (a less desirable state) and non-participation or having no power. This was classified in many forms in the work of Arnstein 1969; Choguill 1996; Dewar 1999; Pretty 1995; Selener 1997; Selin 1999; Wilcox 2000. A review of the concept and principle of community development, which focus mainly on community participation, as the basis for CBET will be presented in **Chapter 7**.

### 6.3 CBT Practices in Thailand

There are two main approaches to promoting CBT in Thailand. The first approach aims to ‘empower’ local people to manage tourism in or related to their community in order to reduce adverse impacts on the local social life, culture and environment. This approach is based on the belief that local people have greater awareness of the need to conserve their own social and physical environment, greater responsibility for achieving this, and indeed the right to be involved in any decisions that affect them. A second approach aims to change the pattern of visits and the behaviour of tourists who visit the community by limiting the number and selecting only so-called quality tourists. CBT needs responsible tourists who are understanding and willing to learn about different cultures and environments without adversely affecting them. This approach is based on the belief that responsible tourists will not only reduce any negative impacts and support the community to conserve their heritage, but will also transfer valuable ideas for raising the awareness of local people. Attracting a special or niche market is the main idea of this approach. These two approaches are not easy to implement in reality as they each require considerable efforts and enthusiasm. However, many practitioners have skilfully used both approaches to develop CBT.

To prevent and mitigate adverse impacts from tourism on the community, many solutions have been proposed. ‘*Support local economies*’ and ‘*involve local communities*’ (Eber 1992) are among the principles of Sustainable Tourism Development and, generally, were included in all alternative tourism promotion after 1992. ET is the most popular form of this approach. CBT mostly acknowledges ET as a key element. Thus, Community-based Ecotourism (CBET) has been used to denote CBT that focuses mainly on ET.

*Kanthongthiao choeng anurak* has been promoted since the mid 1990s in many communities cross the country. The promotion, however, covers both natural and cultural tourism in the community, and community participation (*kanmi-suanruam khong chumchon*) is one of the main issues of concern. Regarding CBET or ET that is related to the local community, Yos Santasombat 2001:10; author’s translation) has defined it in terms of several dimensions as...

[T]he assembly of people’s organisations at the community level, or as part of a single ecosystem, searching for an alternative form of self-development including the management and utilisation of the natural environment for equitable and sustainable tourism. Such development is based on local knowledge, and emphasises the application of ethical principles, the sustainability of the community and the balance of nature.

The form and pattern of CBT can be classified according to a number of aspects<sup>33</sup>, for example its initiation and establishment, the purpose of development, actors and stakeholders, strategies and practices, and management steps. This classification of CBT in this section is based on several secondary sources of information and the data obtained from the postal surveys carried out by this researcher.

### 6.3.1 CBT Initiation & Establishment

CBT can occur in all rural areas if they can attract tourists. The size or type of community is not a limitation. It could be a single village, a group of villages/sub-district or even a district. The age of the settlement is related to land and settlement security, which is one of the critical factors for solidarity and the readiness of the people to participate in tourism activities. From the postal questionnaire survey, the population size of the communities surveyed varied from 101 - 21,623, with the average of 3,174 persons. The average age of the same communities was 107 years old with a range of only 7 years to 300 years.

The initiation of CBT in the Thai context has depended on both local and outside supporters. Self-initiation is rather rare in Thai society because most rural communities are usually concerned with agriculture. Some communities came into contact with tourists who visited the community by chance or whose purpose was to meet a community in a remote area somewhat untainted by modernisation. After coming into contact with tourists for some time such communities established tourism and hospitality services, usually at the suggestion of the tourists. The majority of communities initiated tourism activities with the support and advice of outsiders, such as community developers, NGOs, private operators, environmentalists, academics etc. The main idea was to use tourism as a tool for community development. Communities with tourism potential may be identified by outsiders or by local people themselves. The preparation and development of the resources for tourism, has usually been carried out by local people in co-operation with supporters in the form of co-management, action research, the establishment of community businesses and so on.

There are basically four types of initiation process:

- 1) Using usually hitherto unrecognised resources for tourism: Many communities have resources with considerable tourism potential. These include both natural and cultural

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<sup>33</sup> Synthesised from many sources such as Phatthana Chumchon [1999]; Potjana Suansri 1997a, b; REST and Buchan 2002; REST, *et al.* 2002; TAT 2002; Udon Wongtubtim and Research Team 2002b; Walailuk University 2001 (also see **Appendix 5.2**).

features in and around the communities. This may be recognised by local people, pioneer travellers, developers, or other outsiders who have made contact with the community. The resources may already be well known (this is rare) or just discovered. Then a tourism project is established. In most cases the local people did not recognise the value their resources might have for tourism until an outsider brought it to their attention. The tourism project initiated for Ban Krung Ching (waterfalls and national park area) in Changwat Nakhon Si Thammarat (Miya Ha-wa, *et al.* 1997) and Ban Mae La-na (caves) in Changwat Mae Hong Son (Udon Wongtubtim and Research Team 2002a:107-111) are examples.

- 2) Modifying local socio-economic activities to CBT: Socio-economic development projects in most communities have created job opportunities for local people, increased their income and fostered pride in their identity. The activities include agriculture development, social and welfare improvement and conservation of cultural and natural heritage. The 'Study on Alternative Management of Ecotourism in Five Communities in Changwat Chiang Rai' by Phanomwan Yu-di contains some good examples of this type. Those communities are Ban San Pa-sak (alternative health), Ban Nong Song Hong (agriculture), Ban Huai Khrai (forest-ecology), Ban He-ko (hill tribes culture) and Ban San Pa-ko (historical and cultural conservation) (Udon Wongtubtim and Research Team 2002a:121-123). These kind of activities help people to come into contact with outsiders, such as developers, researchers, study group visitors and explorer tourists. To prepare themselves to receive visitors, these communities, on the advice of outsiders, established a local body to deal with tourists. In some cases CBT group was established immediately and in other cases it was established at a later stage.
- 3) Transforming the problems/problem solving into tourist attraction: Many communities have to struggle with environmental, political, social and cultural problems. Their struggle frequently takes the form of protesting and fighting for survival or establishing conservation activities. To get support from outsiders, particularly the middle class in town, tourism has been used to bring them to visit the community and learn about its problems and the activities being undertaken to solve them. This was a very effective practice in Ban Mae Tom (a community forest) in Changwat Phayao (Wina Domphanadon 1997), Ban Ko Yao Noi (a struggle for local fishery) in Changwat Phangnga (Phot Rattikan 1997) and Ban Chao Mai (protecting the dugong) in Changwat Satun (Miya Ha-wa, *et al.* 1997).
- 4) Transforming conventional tourism to CBT: Many communities have already been in touch with mainstream tourists by providing services and looking after attractions. Many local people have realised that they get a little or nothing from these visits, while receiving many adverse impacts. They subsequently transformed tourism in their areas to exercise more control over it and manage it under the local ecotourism organisation such as in Ban Hmong

Doi Pui in Changwat Chiang Mai, Ban Nong Mae Na in Changwat Phetchabun, (Udon Wongtubtim and Research Team 2002a:104-106), and Ban Umphang (author's postal questionnaire survey) in Changwat Tak. CBT is the most suitable form of tourism for them to manage.

It should be noted that a community may have more than one reason to establish CBT in the community. Moreover, initiating tourism activities in communities that have no tourism may be easier than transforming conventional tourism into CBT. The main reason for this is that people are reluctant to change the character of something that they are currently benefiting from. Moreover, changing from conventional tourism to ecotourism may create problems in marketing and disagreement among local people.

### **6.3.2 CBT Development Aims**

The objectives or purposes of promoting CBT in Thailand are quite varied. There may be a single objective or a combination of objectives set up for CBT development projects. It may include economic, social, environmental and/or political purposes, which a local community aims to achieve. The purposes of CBT can be:

- 1) Raising income and eliminating poverty: Any form of tourism can expand the employment opportunities of the local people, increase household incomes directly or indirectly, and help to eliminate rural poverty. Conventional tourism can create employment for local people, such as in hospitality services, as porters and local product sellers. This benefits only those few people who have access to such jobs, often the better off in the community. However, a purpose of CBT is to encourage local people to establish community tourism businesses in collective form to enhance collective benefits. Then the benefits can be distributed to the community members, including the poorer members of the community. Nevertheless, CBT may only provide a subsistence income because of the limitations of the market and the management skills of the community. This situation, however, is desirable for some community members because they do not want the tourism industry to dominate the community or its economy. Thus, it is difficult to totally eliminate poverty. In many cases income distribution leads to the benefits being spread too thinly to lift people from poverty. This is particularly the case when CBT remains on a very small scale.
- 2) Mitigating environmental and social impacts from conventional tourism: Rural communities are vulnerable to the adverse impacts of conventional tourism, e.g. environmental and social degradation. Thus, a common purpose of CBT is to reduce these adverse impacts. Ban Umphang was clearly set up for this purpose (TAT 1999a). Theoretically, it is believed that local people will manage tourism more responsibly than outsiders, because they love their

own community and environment, have generally lived there for many generations and intend that they and their children will remain there. There are at least two arguments against this theory. One argument, often stated by government agencies and deep environmentalists, is that local people cannot do better at conservation than the responsible agencies and more educated people. Another argument is that all forms of tourism have adverse impacts (eg. see Third World Network). Thus, promoting tourism at the community level will only cause these adverse impacts to reach the pristine and virgin areas faster.

- 3) Conserving natural heritage: Most rural people may not realise the intangible value of their natural and cultural heritage, but do appreciate that it is necessary for their survival. Thus, outsiders or some elite persons in the community may promote CBT as a tool for raising conservation awareness and changing the local people's behaviour towards utilising the resources. It is common to ask local people to consider what is more profitable: killing an animal on a single occasion (which they often do) or paying to repeatedly view it (which tourists are willing to do). Ko Taen (island conservation), Tha Madua (Three-Colour crab conservation), Huai Hi (forest and wild orchid conservation) and Sasom (community forest) are communities where conservation of the natural heritage was the purpose of CBT (author's postal questionnaire survey).
- 4) Conserving and rehabilitating the local wisdom and identity: Local communities will feel a sense of legitimate pride when others (visitors, volunteers and tourists) appreciate their culture and way of life. Thus, the incentive to interpret and transfer local knowledge and wisdom to tourists is not only to gain income, but also to develop unity on the basis of a shared community identity. CBT has the potential to play an important role in this process. Training local people to act as guides and cultural interpreters should therefore be seen as an important part of CBT development, as in the establishment of local-museums (e.g. Ban Chan Sen, Ban Nong Khao) and folk houses (e.g. Ban Umphang) (REST, *et al.* 2002).
- 5) Broadening their knowledge: CBT creates opportunities for local people to meet people from other communities and even other countries. This creates opportunities for people from different backgrounds to exchange knowledge and understanding. Some villagers say that they can travel around the world without leaving their homes and can have new daughters/sons or relatives to stay overnight (villagers at Tambon Muang Mai, Amphoe Amphawa, Changwat Samut Songkhram). Although some think of this as a by-product of tourism, others feel this should be the main purpose of CBT.
- 6) Promoting people's participation: Local participation is a part of the CBT development process, which aims to empower local people to manage tourism in the community. It also helps them to co-operate with government agencies and other outsiders as equals, rather than be manipulated by them. Participating in the development process not only widens

their scope of management but also increases the confidence of local people to take care of their natural resources and lives. However, different levels of participation have been promoted in different areas depending on the development concept used and the readiness of the local people. CBT could be a tool to support and force government officers to recognise the rights and responsibilities of local communities, but many of them may not totally change their attitude or their bureaucratic culture.

- 7) Regaining self-reliance and strengthening local unity: CBT supports a collective form of management by community members that aims at the equitable distribution of profits. A related purpose is to recover community self-reliance and strengthen unity in the community. In this regard, self-reliance refers to the ability of the local people to make decisions about how to survive and create wealth without the domination of external institutions, especially economic and political institutions. However, some commentators have suggested that CBT is likely to succeed only in communities that are already strong and self-reliant. Nevertheless, CBT is supported by some anthropologists, and some community developers because there are numerous factors that can strengthen communities, and the initiation of collective activities is one of the most important. The social and cultural structure of the community is another influential factor.
- 8) Advertise their social, environmental and political struggles: Some communities have realised that tourism can help them to publicise their environmental and political struggles to outsiders, particularly the middle class in town and gain their support. For example, Ko Yao Noi village in the Gulf of Thailand used tourism activities, including a homestay service, nature tours etc., to publicise their fight to protect coastal resources from large and illegal fishing boats (Potjana Suansri 1997a). A similar strategy was used by the people of Hat Chao Mai (dugong conservation in Andaman Sea), and Kut Beng in Thong Kula Rong-Hai (who were effected by flooding from dam construction). Struggles regarding community forests (Ban Sasom, Ban Mae Tha and Ban Mae Tom) and minority rights on land and resources (most hill tribe communities) are other examples of this type.

Although all of these purposes are generally accepted among CBT actors and local people, some communities may emphasise only some purposes and in fact may see the others as unimportant for their development. This is because of the different backgrounds of communities, their existing problems, their consciousness of the political, ecological and economic issues surrounding them, and their development ideologies. The type of outside supporters (if any) and their development ideologies are important factors. Conflicts regarding purposes are possible especially when some members emphasise income generation whereas others emphasise the conservation of the environment, social values and identity, and income distribution. The various purposes suggest different management and marketing strategies and in fact

communities may even compete with each other rather than co-operate when they adopt a similar purpose.

### **6.3.3 CBT Management & Action**

An analysis of the experiences of many CBT projects reveals the management strategies and actions of local people and community organisations, and demonstrates the adoption of a ‘grass-roots’ approach (Boyd and Timothy 2001) rather than an ‘agencies-driven’ approach. CBT developers and local people often realise that duplicating any process and practice of conventional tourism may cause more harm than benefit to the community. The actions mentioned below have been synthesised from those practices (on the basis of secondary information and the results of the author's postal questionnaire survey), these are:

- 1) Establishing a local tourism organisation: The establishment of a local organisation to tackle tourism is the principal concept of CBT. Such an organisation will represent the community and control and distribute the benefits to all community members. A tourism organisation in the community can be established or organised on the basis of an existing local organisation. The organisation will act as the co-ordinator, manager, and investor for tourism activities and services. Linking with outsiders is essential. In terms of organising, many community developers believe that such an organisation should be informal and must not be controlled by any government agency (such as Ban Khiriwong, Ban Ko Yao Noi and Ban Huai Hi). Government agencies, particularly provincial administrations, however, prefer the local administration organisation (TAO) and/or a semi-formal group established under the administration to be the representative of local people. Community cooperatives such as the Ecotourism Guide Service Cooperative Kanchanaburi Limited (Pongsan Phitakmahaket 1995) or community businesses such as a community tourism company (Narong Petprasoet 1997) are other possibilities
- 2) Providing accommodation and meals: Most CBT developers encourage local people to provide accommodation in their houses including (local) meals under the concept of ‘treating tourists as if they are relatives’. Cultural exchange between hosts and guests can be a feature of these services. Homestay is the most popular type of accommodation service in CBT development. The practice can help local people to earn direct income from tourism with small investment and more or less can retain their normal home routine. Homestay has aroused controversy among academics and social developers and does not get much support from entrepreneurs. Some argue that it is impossible for the host to continue with their normal life because they have to work more to prepare meals and beds, to guide the tourists and most of them have to invest in decorating a room, providing bedding and a modern

toilet. The direct interaction between hosts and guests can lead to cultural exchange and new experiences, but on the other hand local people might just as easily adopt the tourists' culture and values (Nidhi Aeusrivongse 1994, see 4.1). Security may also be an issue in some communities. Some communities may prefer to offer different forms of accommodation such as in a separate house, villagestay and resorts. In some cases, commercial resorts and guesthouses are provided in the community, mostly by individual local entrepreneurs. Camping is also used in some communities that are near forest areas. It should be noted that many developers use homestay as one of the icons of CBT and CBET.

- 3) Providing a local guide service: Learning about the local culture and environment is one of the themes of the ET and CBT markets. Theoretically, local people have better knowledge of the locality than tour guides from outside. Many tourists love to hear local stories directly from the mouths of local people, especially from village elders who can interpret such stories. Young people too can train as local guides and learn their own stories and such training is often organised by academics, NGOs and the TAT. These training programs aim not only to conserve local wisdom but also to create jobs for local youth. To register the youth and elders as local guides under the Tourism Business Act (1992) is a controversial issue in many communities. Under this Act, some youth or elders may be squeezed out because of their poor education background, even although they are well-versed in local knowledge (as in Ban Sasom). In this case, they have to take up other jobs such as portering, driving or interpreting in some villages.
- 4) Managing natural resources: Many natural resources that are near or utilised by a local community have the potential to be tourist attraction places. Management of those resources for tourism by local communities has at least three benefits. First, local people can receive direct benefits from tourism. Second, tourism can help raise the awareness of local people concerning the need for conservation and change the way they use natural resources, and third, tourism may generate income that can be used for conservation purposes. However, the local right to access and manage such natural resources is problematic and controversial. To support this strategy, the concept of community participation in planning, managing and monitoring, which includes co-operation between state and people, in the development process has been proposed. The community forestry concept, which empowers local people to manage forest resources, is believed to be appropriate for ET or CBT.
- 5) Arranging cultural performances and events: Ecotourists also want to see and learn about the real culture of the community. Ethnic arts, costumes, handicrafts, music and dancing are the cultural resources that people can present to the tourists at low or no investment cost. This can encourage the local people to conserve and learn about their culture and their identity. Cultural rehabilitation and heritage conservation are the benefits of this strategy.

However, some have argued that it will lead people to modify and commodify the local culture to meet the tourists' demand for a tourism product. This can mislead to the next generation who are unaware of the modifications and take them for the original culture. In this sense, the commodification of culture affected cultural authenticity (Cohen 1988; Dearden and Harron 1994).

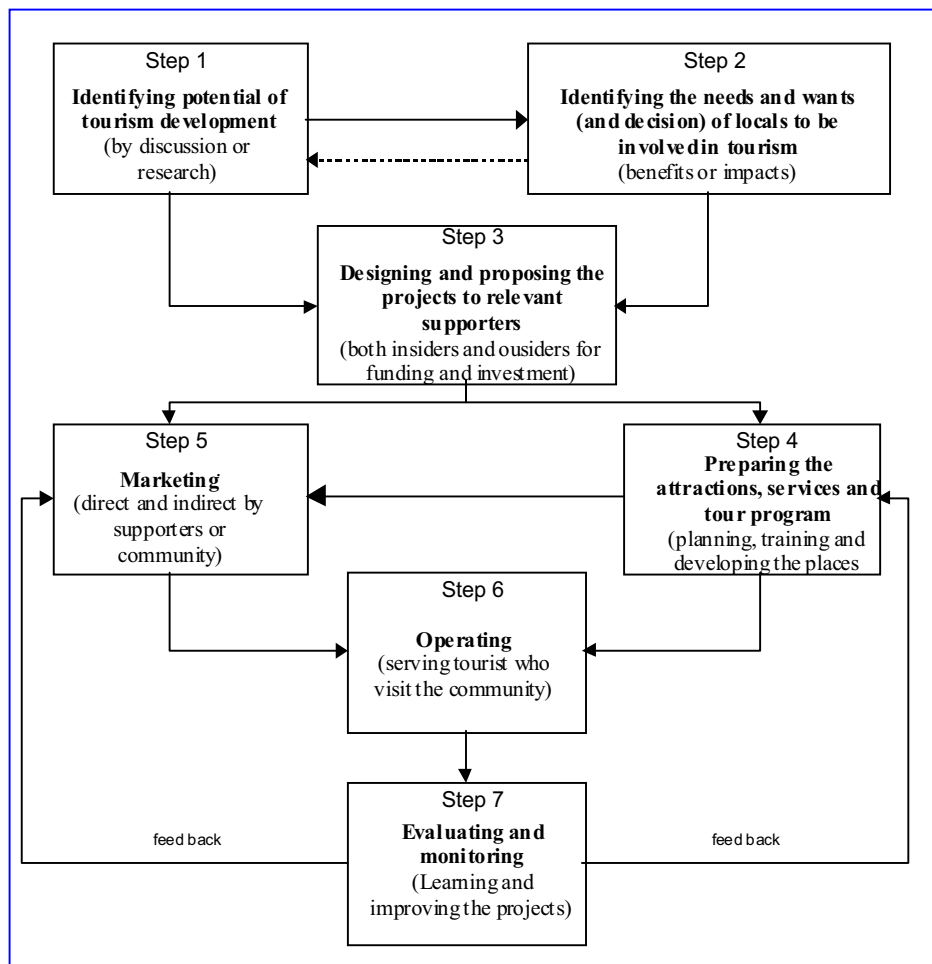
- 6) **Marketing:** Community organisations and local people have limitations when it comes to marketing. Thus, they have to link up with other actors. Some supporters can link with tourists or specific groups of people and invite them to visit the community. Most tourists are study-visitors, researchers, associated organisations and friends. Linking up with marketing agencies is a fast way to invite tourists, however this means sharing the benefits with these external agencies. In this case the community may have little bargaining power to control the number and type of tourists as well as the price of services. Linking up to tourists directly is preferable. This can be achieved through various media including electronic media, which is very effective and can be used also for online booking. This is a particularly good form of marketing in the case of international tourists who are a main target of CBT.

All actions are included in destination tourism management, and are consonant with the concept of marketing mix, commonly known as the '*6P model*' i.e. place, product, people, price, packaging and promotion (Weaver and Lawton 2002b:222-226). In many aspects this model overlaps with the 'pull factors', i.e. geographical proximity to markets, accessibility to markets, availability of attractions, cultural links, availability of services, affordability, peace and stability, positive marketing image and pro-tourism policies (ibid.: 97-107), which influence destination areas. Although tourism (industry) management is complex, programs designed to build local capacity for managing tourism resources should be simplified to make it easy for the local people to learn the necessary management skills. Since CBT is often focussed on generating subsistence incomes, conservation and the like some supporters may ignore or deny the basic business elements of tourism. This often creates conflicts within the various groups involved and makes it difficult to attract tourists.

### **6.3.4 CBT Management & Development Steps**

Although the way of initiating CBT, its purposes, and its strategies differ in different communities depending on the developers and agencies concerned, overall the development steps are almost similar. **Appendix 6** shows the process of development and the development

steps of several developers<sup>34</sup>. This has been synthesised to provide a general set of practical steps of CBT development in Thailand, as illustrated in **Figure 6.4**. It should be noted that although these development steps are generally envisaged as a linear sequence, they can be treated as a cycle and more than one step can take place simultaneously, or some steps may be skipped. The development steps are explained below.



**Sources:** Synthesised from several processes of the CBT development practised in Thailand (Phatthana Chumchon [1999]; Potjana Suansri 1997a, 2003; Ronnakorn Triraganon 1999; Sindhu Sarobon, *et al.* 2002), some of which are illustrated in **Appendix 6.2**.

**Figure 6.4 Typical CBT development process at community level**

Step 1: Identify the potential of tourism development. This step may be initiated by villagers or outsiders that have seen some potential in the community. Then they, after discussion or research, identify in detail what resources in or near the community have the potential to attract tourists. It might be attractive places (natural or cultural) in and around the community, the people and place, traditional crafts and wisdom, the socio-economic, political and cultural

<sup>34</sup> Extracted from Phatthana Chumchon [1999], n.d.; Potjana Suansri 1997b; Sindhu Sarobon *et al.* 2002; Udon Wongtabtim 2002; Yos Santasombat 2001

activities of local people etc. The results of identification will help developers and villagers to decide what to include in and how they should carry out a CBT project such as using Three Colour Crap for Ban Tha Madua, community forest for Ban Sasom, and local fishery for Ban Ko Yao Noi. Theoretically, the potential tourism supply should be supported by other factors such as accessibility and sources of funding and must meet the demand of the tourism market.

Practically, many projects never compare their potential with the real market, they focus mainly on the supply side. However, some outside developers may make a comparison of potential communities before approaching any specific community to run a CBT project. In contrast, the 'wants' of the villagers (step 2) may cause them to initiate CBT and then request outsiders to support them. In some cases, the potential of a community's tourist attractions might be increased, for example by establishing a cultural centre as was the case at Ban Umyom by the Department of Social Development and Welfare (DPW) (1998). Although most rural communities have the same or very similar resources, any comparison with other possible competitors is generally ignored. The obvious decision is to implement CBT. The networking among communities in the same region or others is one way to resolve this limitation.

Step 2: Identify the needs and wants (and decision) of locals to be involved in tourism: Once the idea of CBT is initiated, the relative 'needs' and 'wants' of local people must be identified. Benefits and impacts of tourism should be considered by most of the community members. Practically, most of the projects convince the villagers of the benefits, either economic or environment, of ET. An ecotourism group might be established in some communities as part of this step. However, the decision to get involved in CBT may be made by a few people or by the communities' leaders. The majority of villagers may not reject or be against the initiation of CBT, but they may take a 'wait and see' because they often do not really understand or foresee either the benefits or impacts. The opportunity to say 'yes' or 'no' (including to withdraw the project later on) rarely happens except in some very strong villages that spend a long time to understand both the advantages and disadvantages of this new activity.

Step 3: Designing and proposing the projects to relevant supporters. The potential of the tourism supply and the decision to get involved in tourism, with or without a prior marketing study, are the sources of project identification. Tourism projects will be designed and proposed to relevant groups, such as community members, government agencies, NGOs or private developers, and donors or investors to get support. This process may take a long time, especially in communities that want a majority of members to understand and join in the project. Where a tourism development proposal is prepared by a small group of people the process may be quicker. Most communities often start with a small group of people who share their ideas with others later.

This, unfortunately, in the long run can often be an obstacle to expanding the number of members.

Step 4: Preparing the attractions, services and tour program: Once the project is started, resources management, services provision and personnel for CBT must be prepared. The preparation includes the management of the attractions (accessibility, landscape, interpretation signs and area and environmental management), local services (homestay, village stay, craft, tour program and guide, and transportation services) and marketing networking (if any). Some communities establish an 'ecotourism group' in this step to organise CBT activities, whereas in some communities existing organisations may do the work. This step also includes group discussions, training programs and study tours that would build the capacity of local people. Education program will create better understanding of CBT/CBET and its impacts and will provide the community with basic knowledge and skills for tourism services such as environmental interpretation, plants or animals identification, sanitation services, a hosting program, business enterprises, entrepreneurs and so on. Study tours to other projects or communities are often used as one of the effective programs for villagers to gain more insight from others. They also have opportunity to discuss relevant issues and create networking with other villagers.

Step 5: Marketing: Few projects give much concern to marketing because it is difficult for them to do so. However, developers and tour operators may support the community with advertising and tour management services. The responsible tours do prepare tourists in advance of visiting the community. They may select tourists and set up orientation programs in order to ensure the quality of the tour. Thus, in this step, most communities rely on marketing from outsiders. However, there are walk-in and stopover visitors to some villages such as Ban Khiriwong and Ban Plai Phong Phang. Outside marketing may increase the number of tourists with little effort from the community, but the community cannot control the type and quality of tourists it receives.

Step 6: Operating: When tourists visit the community, most organised CBT will provide a tour program and services. Distributing tourists to member's services is an important task of the management group to ensure that as many members as possible benefit from the tourism. Practically, the management may be constrained by the poor management skills of organisers, little time available and the lack of readiness of the members, imbalance between the number of tourists and providers, and the lack of ethics or unfair management of community leaders.

Step 7: Evaluating and monitoring: The organised communities will organise evaluation and monitoring activities, particularly after the first group of visitors (which usually consists of a local group organised for testing the readiness of the community). This activity is for the members to identify things to be improved or things to be emphasised to attract more tourists. The members must reflect constantly on what went well, what went wrong, and look for areas to be improved. The results of monitoring are the basis for redesigning activities and services for future visitors, and usually include a further investment proposal (by community and/or developers). Generally, from the past experiences, no records show that a project has been withdrawn after the evaluation, but some may slow down because of some constraints.

Although all steps require a high level of participation of the local people and this planning process intends to empower the people, some communities may not be ready for this because of the lack of understanding among the villagers and a management culture that usually relies on others. Outsiders, particularly government agencies, also play leading role to pursue such management. Furthermore, the steps are similar in each community, there are differences in the practical details because of the different agendas and objectives of actors (particularly supporters) and the readiness of local villagers.

However, in most cases leaders, committee members and some members were the most active participants. The CBT management can be a tool for training and evaluating the readiness of each community for participation.

### **6.3.5 CBT System and Elements**

CBT at the destination area can be viewed as a system in which various components have roles, functions, and responsible actors. Communities mostly provide tourist attractions and services, while tourists and outsiders might play important roles in the marketing and transportation sectors. The CBT system at the destination areas can be explained as follows.

Market: The target of CBT and CBET is the specific group of tourists interested in natural and cultural experiences and in contacting local people. This market is a niche both in the international and domestic markets, which is currently not large enough to bring wealth to the communities or to have serious adverse impacts on them. CBT in Thailand is at the early stage, hence most of the communities still receive a low number of tourists. The main market of CBT is the domestic market, but some communities may receive more international than domestic tourists. According to the author's postal questionnaire survey, about half of the communities received fewer than 500 tourists per year, while about one-fifth received between 501-2,500

tourists per year. Another one-fifth received over than 5,000 tourists, whereas the highest number is 22,000 tourists (**Figure 6.5**). However, the average number of tourists to visit these communities per year is 3,090 which includes 2,617 domestic and 483 international tourists on average, This indicates that tourism in communities was popular in the domestic market. This may be because CT is in the beginning stage – with an average of 6.2 years - and is not well known in the international market. Other reasons are the limited language skills of local people, particularly English, and their non-readiness to approach the international market.

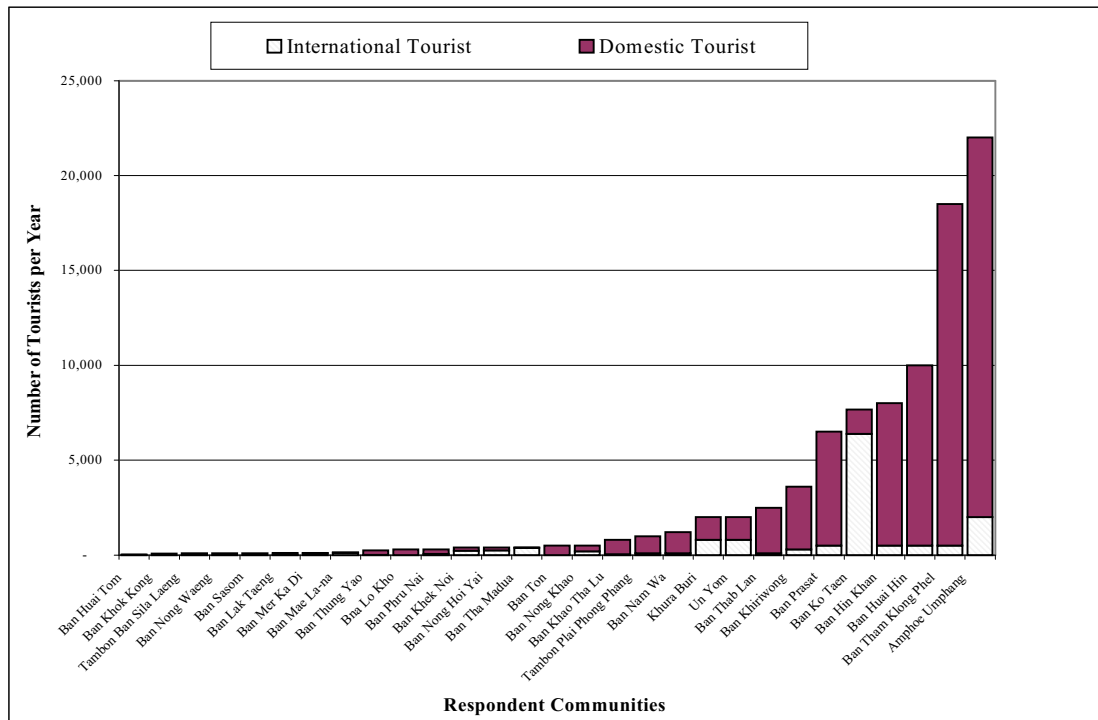
In general, the attractiveness of a community appears to be a more important pull factor than its size. Nevertheless, size is important in as much as it is easier for small communities to distribute the benefits of tourism and easier for large communities to absorb its impacts. The population size and number of tourist is not consistent appear can be seen in **Figure 6.6**. This figure also illustrates a ratio of tourist per resident<sup>35</sup> which is still low in most communities. It implies that the CBT development is currently far from its carrying capacity limit and the number of tourists can be increased. The size of the carrying capacity is different in various places. Its limit can roughly be judged by the availability of services left to serve more tourists and the resistance against any adverse impacts.

Marketing Process: This is not in the hands of the community due to the lack of communication resources and networking. Generally, it is the NGOs, government agencies and private operators who bring tourists to the communities. Establishing channels of direct contact with the market is challenging. Internet and printed brochures are the usual means used by supporters and outside operators. Some community representatives publicise their projects at conferences and workshops and when they travel to meet with interest groups around the country. This is one of the most effective means for promoting their CBT projects and also for linking up with others.

The transportation from outside to the communities may be arranged by the tourists or tour operators. The transport from the nearest mass transit system stop to the communities, such as minibuses, boats and motorcycles, may be owned by local people. Many transportation modes within and around the communities, such as elephants, horses, oxcarts and motorcycles, are owned by local people.

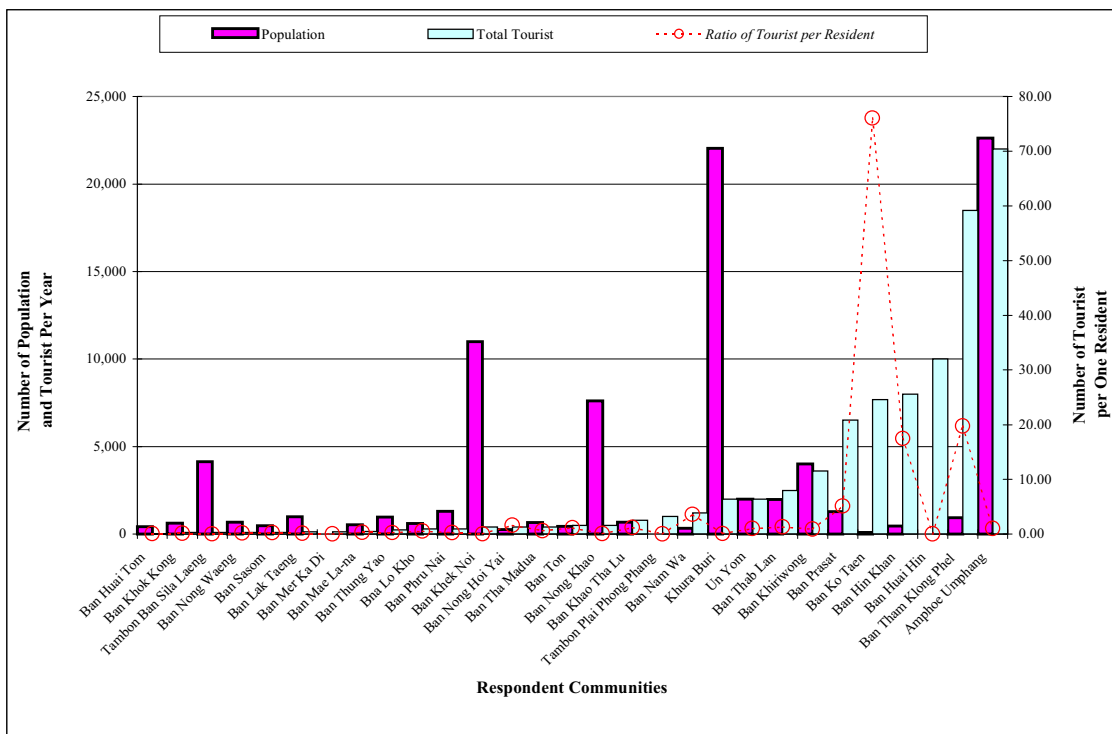
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<sup>35</sup> The number of tourist per resident is often used to indicate the potential impacts of tourist visits to a particular area (mostly at country or regional levels). The number will enable an assessment of whether an area is close to or has exceeded its carrying capacity. More precise study may calculate the number of tourists per involved resident or tourist-nights accommodated in the area. Theoretically, a higher ratio of tourists will give greater economic advantage to the locals, but will possibly create greater adverse social and cultural impacts to the local community.



Source: Postal questionnaire surveys, see more details in Appendix 7.  
 Note: Two surveyed communities did not provide the number of tourist.

Figure 6.5 Number and pattern of tourists to visit the communities



Source: Postal questionnaire surveys  
 Note: Two surveyed communities did not provide the number of tourists.

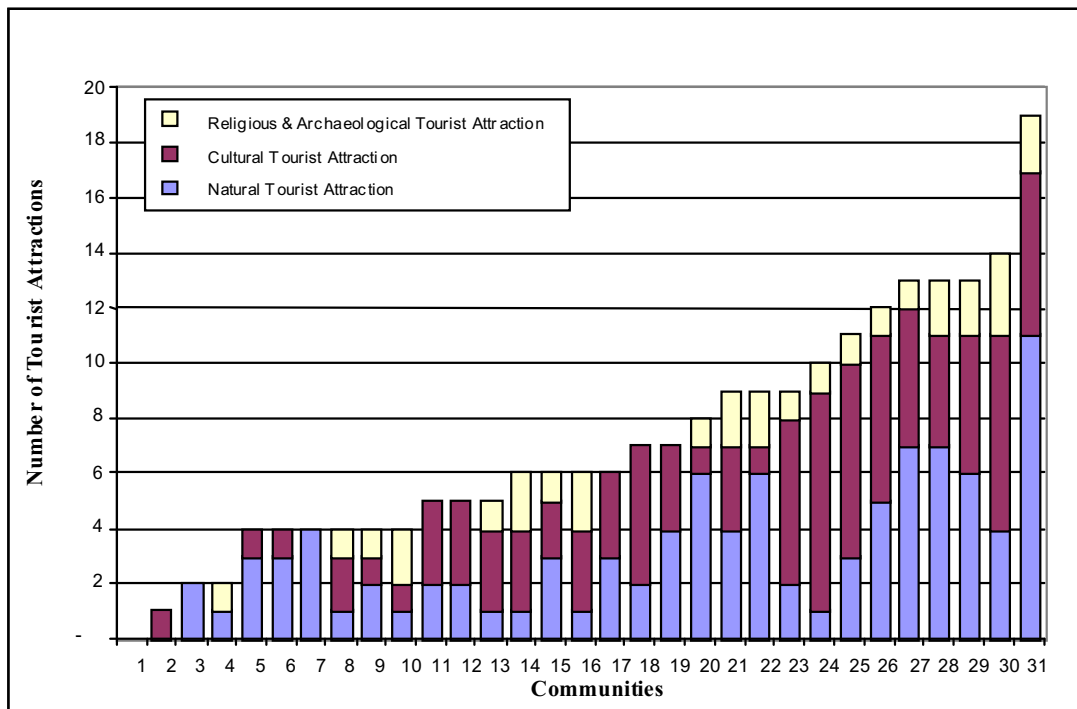
Figure 6.6 The comparison between the number of tourists, the population and a ratio of tourists per one resident

Tourist Attractions of CBT include natural, cultural and religious and archaeological attraction types. **Figure 6.7** illustrates the combination of tourist attractions of the communities that responded to the postal questionnaire survey. They are mixed types of natural and cultural attractions in most areas with an average of 7 natural places, 3 cultural places and 1 religious and archaeological places. Mountains/view point, waterfall, river/creek/canal, forest, and bush around the village are the main natural attraction places, while handicrafts, traditions/customs, agriculture, way of life, and forts are the main cultural attraction places. Buddhist temples and folk houses are the main places of religious and archaeological attraction. It can be seen that not only nature-based attractions are available at the communities level. Therefore, CBT in Thailand is based on a mixture of resources and does not conform to the strict definition ecotourism. The various categories of attraction places are also illustrated in **Figure 6.8**. Local traditions/costumes, handicraft and Buddhist temples are the three most common attractions available in more than half of the communities, whereas mountains, rivers/creeks/canals and waterfalls are the three most common natural attractions. Furthermore, some attractions cannot really be classified into a single category such as the community forest at Ban Sila-laeng, Changwat Nan (nature and culture); Wat Tham Klong-plel, Changwat Udon Thani (temple and cave) and fishery village at Kuraburi, Changwat Ranong.

The activities provided at the destination community also consist of ecotourism-like or non-ecotourism-like activities. These are trekking/mountain climbing, camping in the bush, canoeing/white water rafting, farm visiting, study tours and shopping at the local crafts production centres, tourists/host dialoguing (conversation/discussion/exchanging experiences) etc. These depend on the resources available and the specific motivations of the tourists.

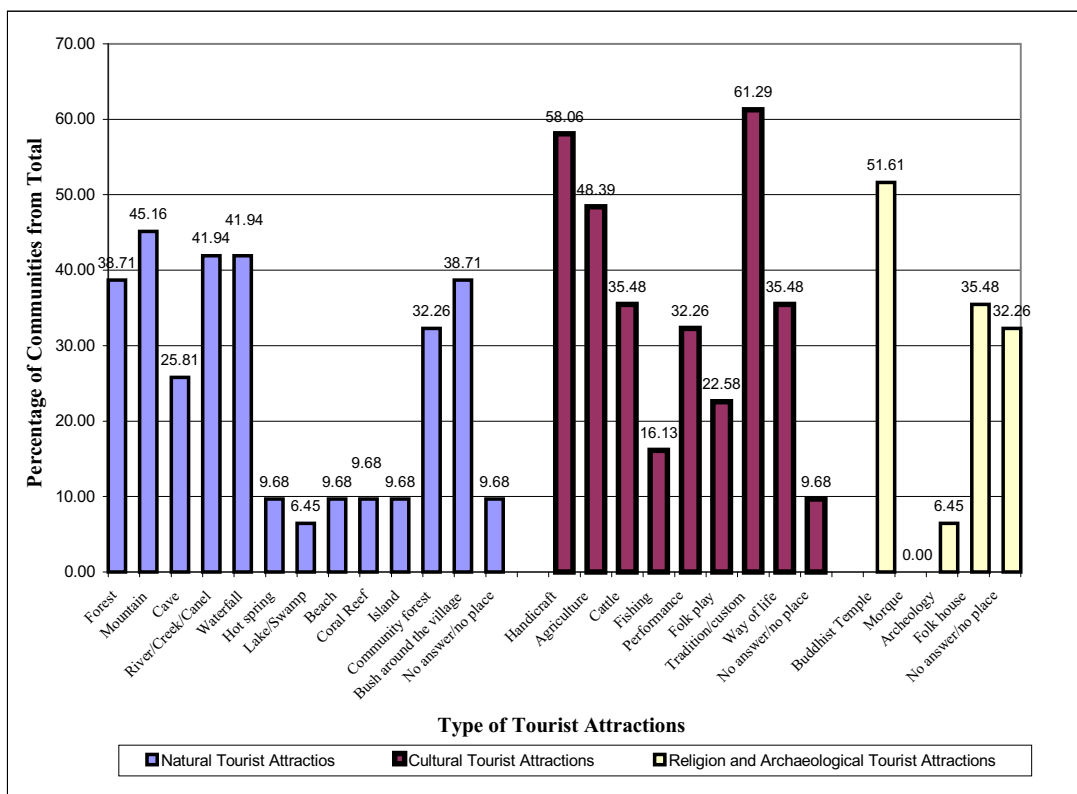
Services are provided by local people (individuals or groups), including other agencies. These services help the destination community to be more attractive and persuade tourists to extend their length of stay. Community services include homestay accommodation, joining local meals with hosts, learning local knowledge directly from local scholars, and touring in and around the community using the local mode of transport. Guided tours are always provided and interpreted by local scholars and trained young people. Local transportation and porter services could expand the jobs to other people in the community, particularly the poor and those with a low level of education.

The results of the postal questionnaire survey showed that all communities have been involved in tourism for some period of time (average 6.25 years) and offer a variety of services and activities. Many communities (74.2%) received tourists that simply dropped by and made a short visit. The villagers were then able to sell goods, services, and to guide them. Selling goods



Source: Postal questionnaire surveys

Figure 6.7 Mixed types of tourism attraction places in and around the communities

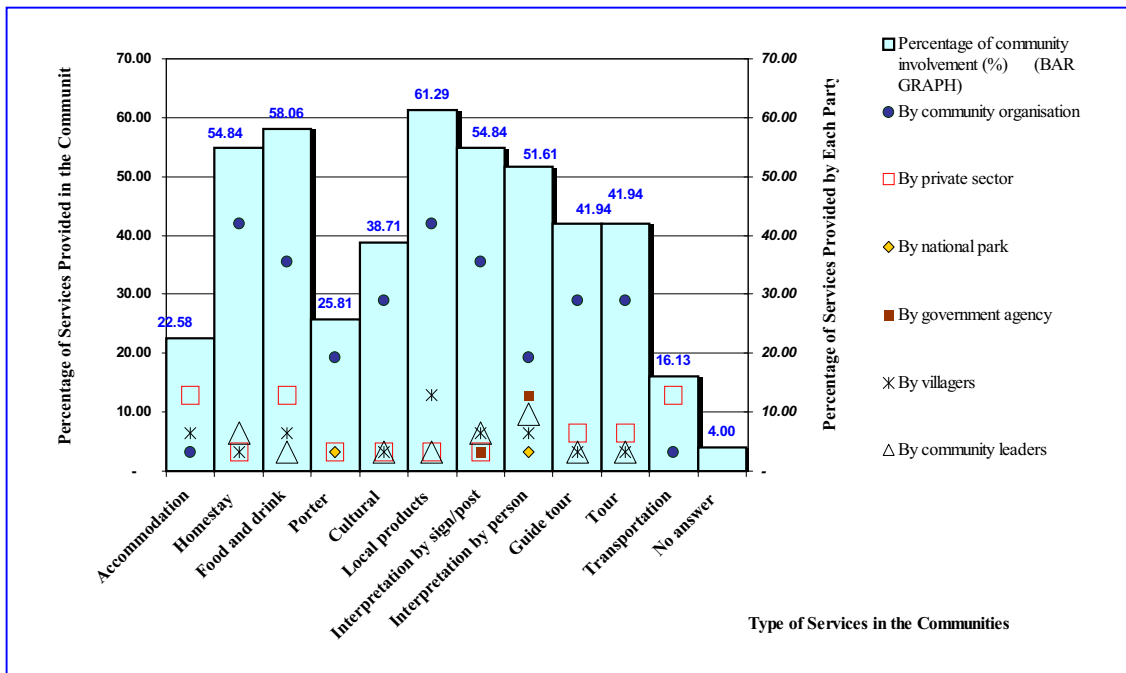


Source: Postal questionnaire surveys

Figure 6.8 Types of tourist attractions found in the communities

and providing services either by the community or villagers is common and a main source of income of many communities.

Community leaders and villagers individually share in the provision of many types of services. Government agencies including the national park authority mainly provide interpretation signs and guides in the protected areas (see **Figure 6.9**).



Source: Postal questionnaire surveys

**Figure 6.9 Tourism services in the community and the providers**

### 6.3.6 CBT Actors

Although the community as a group of people is the focus of CBT, local people and community leaders individually responded to the presence of tourists in the community. Most communities initially were involved in more conventional forms of tourism to explorer tourists by offering some services, perhaps food or accommodation or a guide service.

CBT is often initiated by outsiders and/or receives supports from outsiders, either government agencies, private operators or NGOs. The support may be directly related to tourism development or may be part of a wider community development strategy that incorporates a tourism component that is likely to make a contribution when CBT is eventually introduced.

The postal questionnaire survey revealed that most local organisations receive support from outsiders, which may be a single outsider (38.71%) or two or three outsiders (25.81% and

12.90% respectively), for community development activities. Government agencies are the biggest supporter of over three-quarters of the surveyed communities. While NGOs, business agencies and academic institutes provide support for about a quarter of the surveyed communities. A few get support from international organisations and individuals. Most support is given for physical development (road construction, supplying buoys to demarcate ocean activity areas, pavilion construction) and management (financial, budgeting, academic, training, marketing and promotion) as shown in **Table 6.1**. It has to be stated that some of these physical development activities did not really support CBT.

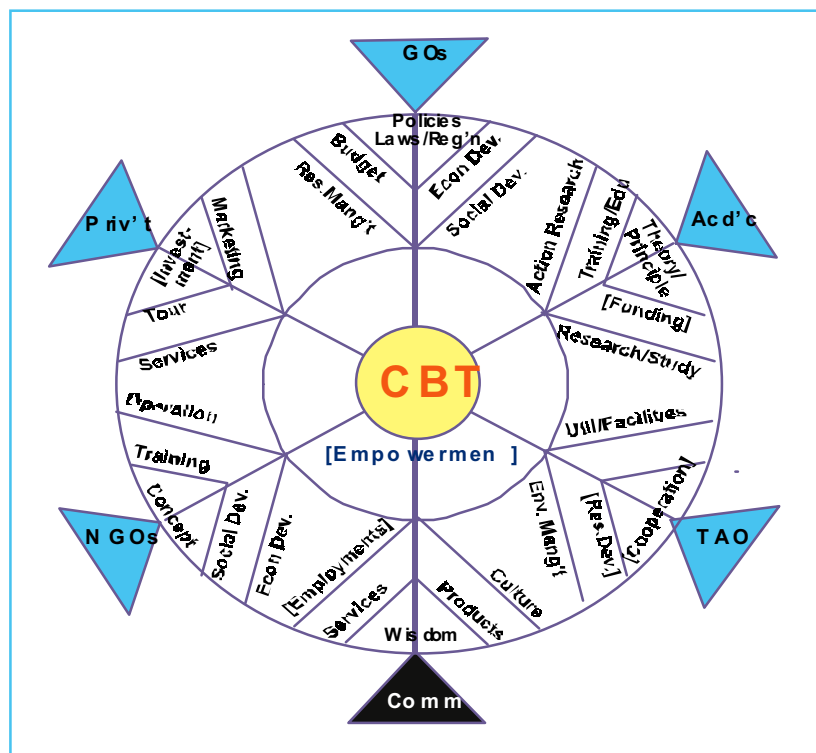
CBT actors, both direct and indirect, can be classified into six groups: government, academics, NGO, private operators, Tambon Administrative Organisation (TAO) and the local community. The roles and responsibilities that are related to CBT are illustrated in **Figure 6.10**. Some names and their relevant projects are summarised in **Appendix 5**. Further information on the six groups of actors is provided below:

- 1) The Government Agencies: Many government agencies deal directly and indirectly with tourism. When the government had a well-defined policy of promoting TiC starting in 1987 (Visit Thailand Year), many government agencies, at national, regional and provincial levels, included tourism development as one of the objectives of their development projects ranging from infrastructure development to environmental conservation. In the 1990s, many tourism development projects have been concerned more on CBT and ET with local participation. Many agencies such as the Department of Social Welfare (DSW), now known as the Department of Social Development and Welfare (DSDW), the Department of Agricultural Extension (DAE) and the Community Development Department (CDD) are responsible for socio-economic development, and they consider tourism to be an important economic sector of the local economy. The Royal Forest Department (RFD) or National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department (DNP) is responsible for conserving and protecting the natural resources and for ecotourism development in protected areas (PA). The main focus of DNP is conservation and ecotourism is biological-based, but local participation in ET or CBT is not well accepted at PA and policy level.
- 2) The academic institutions: These institutions include universities, research institutes, research funding organisations and individual scholars from universities who have played and still play a major role in conducting research and introducing the concept of CBT. Some of them have been involved in action research to help communities to develop tourism services. The academics may get funding from their institutes, or from national and international funding agencies and development agencies such as the Thailand Research Fund (TRF), TAT, UNEP, UNESCO including concerned government agencies. ET and

**Table 6.1 Type of support provided to communities by outsiders**

Outside Supporters	Percentage	Type of support
<i>Number</i>		
1 organisation	37.71	
2 organisations	25.81	
3 organisations	12.90	
4 organisations	6.45	
5 organisations	3.23	
no supporter	9.68	
no answer	3.23	
<i>Type</i>		
Individuals	9.68	financial, data analysis
GO	80.65	marketing and promotion, management, road construction, occupational support, tourism promotion, social welfare, project co-ordination, supplying buoys, forest protection, provision of advisors, research, economic development, forest planting, cultural centre, training, financial assistance, development of places of attraction, pavilion construction, socio-economic development
Academics/ schools	19.35	training, financial, buoy installation, forest plantation, data analysis, conservation, cultural performance
NGOs	25.81	financial, promotion and marketing, environmental management, forest plantation, training
Businesses	22.58	forest plantation, arranging performances, data analysis
International Organisations	9.68	budgeting

Source: Postal questionnaire surveys



Sources: Secondary data, field surveys and personal interviews (see additional information in Appendix 5)

**Figure 6.10 CBT actors and their roles**

CBT related subjects have been added also to the curricula of many colleges and universities and have been the subject of many Masters and Ph.D theses. Some institutes have established ecotourism development centres, e.g. Srinakharinwirot University. Some academics have been involved in training local people for CBT development and services provision, as included in action research supported by TRF (Sindhu Sarobon 2000; Udon Wongtabtim 2002).

- 3) Non Governmental Organisations (NGOs): Normally, NGOs work on social, economic, political and environment issues in the community and some of them are against tourism as they believe it leads to social and cultural degradation. However, tourism has direct and indirect links with community development and some NGOs, having realised that tourism has been a strategy of economic development in a number of communities, have tried to build on this and strengthen the community by establishing local organisations. Forest for Life Projects, Surat Thani Province; Population Development Association (PDA), Development Agriculture and Education Project for Akha (DAPA) and Thailand Volunteer Society (TVS) are NGOs that use CBT as a tool for community development and conservation. Some NGOs may be directly involved in ET or CBT, as an NGOs enterprise, such as Responsible Ecological Sustainable Tours Project (REST), Ecotourism Activities Co-ordination (Community-based Projects) (ETAC) and DAPA Tours and Project for Recovery of Life and Culture (PLC).
- 4) Private Operators: Many private agencies dealing with tourism services and marketing have included communities into their services. Both individuals and companies have supported and promoted communities (i.e. their culture, customs, ways of life, natural areas etc) as destinations. Many local services have been established in conjunction with private operators. Private operators play a vital role in marketing, because all other actors have little experience of this and have no links to the market. However, most operators are concerned with the economic benefits arising from their activities rather than the adverse impacts associated with tourism. Thus, a rather small number of operators are involved in CBT development. Some private sector firms that have been working in the area of ET and CBET have set up associations such as the Thailand Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association (TEATA) at the national level, or the Umphang Tourism Promotion and Conservation Club (UTPC) at local level. The number of private operators interested in and involved in ecotourism are also increasing. Some NGOs such as REST, DAPA Tours, PDA Tours, and Jokor Eco-trek in Mae Hong Son etc. act as operators too.
- 5) Tambon Administrative Organisation (TAO): TAO is the smallest form of local government, whose members are elected – one from each village within a sub-district (*Tambon*) to form a TAO council and some of them are selected to form a management

team. A president of TAO has great responsibility and power to manage TAO activities. The TAO performs duties in accordance with the relevant laws and regulation, and is responsible for the development and conservation of natural resources and the environment in their local community. The TAO can collect some taxes and earn budget transferred from the government to carry out their duties and implement projects. This, in theory, is part of the process of decentralisation whereby local people can decide on and control development. TAO plays a crucial role in tourism development and in the conservation of natural resources and the environment. Many TAOs take action on CBT, whereas some contribute a share of budget and/or support facilities improvement. However, many of them are not much concerned with tourism or environmental management. Since the TAO is a local political organisation, the management team generally is elected for a fixed term only and then a new management team is elected in place of them. The role of the TAO in CBT may be dynamic and may fluctuate depending on the interests of the TAO members, particularly the president.

- 6) Local community: The local community can establish an organisation to take care of CBT or ET, and the members can be the main actor of the development. Although some projects are not initiated by them, many communities show evidence of progress in CBT management with some support from outsiders. Over a thousand communities have been promoted as community tourism destinations in Thailand<sup>36</sup>. Some of them were already well known, while others decided to get involved with tourism because they realised the potential of their resources. Some of these communities set up specific local organisations for managing CBT, whereas some used existing local organisations such as the Housewives Group, Conservation Group and the Youth Club. Nonetheless, in some communities individuals have also started ecotourism projects with the aim of showing the benefits of ecotourism to the rest of the local people and hoping that they too will become involved in some capacity.

In many cases, the activities are carried out on a cooperative basis involving more than one group. The role of community organisations depends on the strength and unity of the members, thus, the main actors are not usually locals. In some cases responsibilities are transferred from one group to another, depending on the issues, the timing and the budget. There are many examples of this kind of cooperation such as the transferring of TAT to UTPC in the case of Umphang, the Regional Army 4 to Na Pho Klang TAO in case of Pa Dong Natham or the cooperation of Komol Khimthong Foundation and TVS-REST in case of Khiriwong etc. (see more in the case studies in **Chapter 6-7**).

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<sup>36</sup> This is not included the promotion of 'One Tambon One Product' (OTOP) that some communities has claimed it as a tourism product. The promotion was initiated after the starting of this study.

Although the basic concept of CBT is accepted among all actors or stakeholders, there is sometimes some tension among them because of conflicting development concepts, objectives and agendas, and the utilisation of resources. To resolve this tension or conflict among actors or stakeholders is the central concern of efforts to implement CBT and ET. One possibility is to create cooperation so that opportunities are shared, people in general are empowered, and as many people as possible exercise their right to make decisions on matters that affect the local community. This will be discussed further in **Chapter 8**.

The level and type of participation of local communities and their cooperation with other tourism actors differs from case to case and sometimes from issue to issue. **Table 6.2** presents a summary and a synthesis of the possibilities for local communities to contribute to several sectors of ecotourism management. This was drawn up on the basis of the postal questionnaire surveys and discussions with many actors. A small number of items may be seen as not representative of the communities, but are nevertheless meaningful for the study.

From the survey, many communities are involved in ecotourism management at several levels and in different sectors. Generally, most of them have good opportunities to be involved in tourism management in the community. Although few communities had opportunities to be involved in managing natural resources and the environment, many of them felt they had a responsibility to manage and control tourism resources, particularly cultural and local natural attractions. The main type of local organisations involved vary according to social, economic and environmental issues, but most of them play a role in environmental management, such as taking care of lands, resources, forest, traditional culture and waste management. **Figure 6.11** illustrates the type of local organisation in the surveyed communities and their role in environmental management.

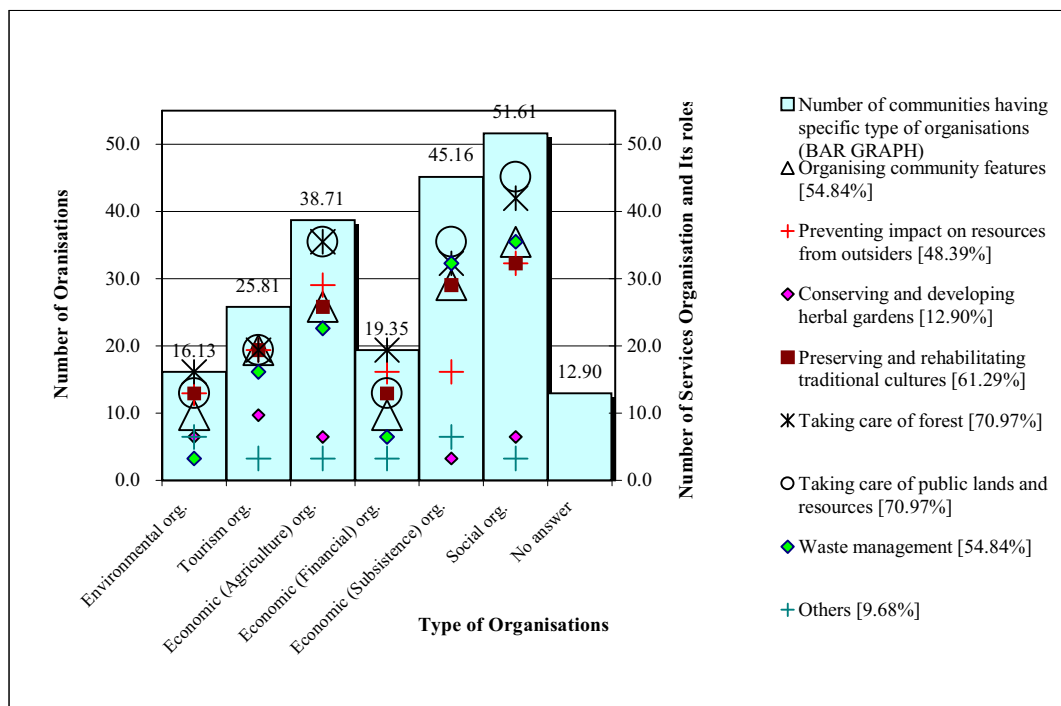
Services provision and marketing are rather new activities for many rural communities. However, in the process of CBT development, local people often have opportunities to play a role in the collective management of local tourism services. Nevertheless, local individuals and outsiders may take on this task on a cooperative or competitive basis. Marketing is the most difficult activity for locals to get involved in. They have least opportunity in this sector, but involvement is possible if they develop their ability and network with outsiders willing to play a part in strengthening the community.

**Table 6.2 The possibility of local communities to contribute in the ecotourism management by sectors.**

General Management		Natural and Cultural Resources Management		Environment Management		Tourism Services (Management)		Marketing	
ratio		ratio		ratio		ratio		ratio	
local	60-80%	local	50-80%	local	70-90%	local	50-90%	local	60-80%
overlapping		overlapping		overlapping		overlapping		overlapping	
outsiders	20-40%	outsiders	20-50%	outsiders	10-20%	outsiders	10-50%	outsiders	50-80%
<i>Respondents</i> 22		<i>Respondents</i> 8		<i>Respondents</i> 7		<i>Respondents</i> 5		<i>Respondents</i> 2	
<p>When looking at the features of local participation including local organisation, generally the locals are able to manage up to 80%, depending on their opportunities and capabilities.</p> <p>They still need some support from outsiders, especially government agencies, which provide facilities, utilities and budget for development, directly or via local administration authorities.</p> <p>It is difficult to imagine that local communities could totally control the development, but they can at control a large part of it.</p>		<p>Local communities can play a major role (from 50 to 80 %) in resources management depending on the resource type and their officially recognised right to do so.</p> <p>In some cases local communities have to let outsiders manage the resources, especially when they are under the control by law of other agencies or need more advance knowledge. Some communities try to establish the community forest in order to play a major role in management.</p> <p>The opportunity to play a major role may be confined only to those communities that have organised collective resources management for a long time (particularly cultural resources) or have good relationships with outsiders.</p>		<p>Local communities can carry out most tasks, especially in terms of environmental management, particularly environmental education and waste management.</p> <p>But when there is a need for higher technology to support the management, outsiders and the state may have to get involved.</p> <p>However, this opportunity may be limited to cases where environmental management is concerned with protected areas that are under the control of government agencies.</p>		<p>A local community, as a collective, can provide up to 90 % of services for tourists. However, up until now, few communities do so.</p> <p>Some local individuals and other parties in the community can share in this sector as local private actors. They may share up to 40%, while outsiders may also take part in the investment.</p> <p>It is possible that some kinds of tourism services need a high investment cost and skilled operators, and this creates opportunities for outsiders</p>		<p>It is very difficult for local communities to play a role in marketing because it needs special skills and wide networking to deal with specific markets. Some of them may already do marketing by presenting their projects in academic forums and travel marketing exhibitions.</p> <p>However, it is possible for communities to get involved in this task in the long term if they can develop their capabilities and connections with outside organisations.</p> <p>This task can be left to outsiders, but the local communities must be strong enough to negotiate with them to ensure an appropriate direction for tourism, appropriate target group, and profit sharing.</p>	

**Source:** Analysed from the results of postal questionnaire surveys.

**Notes:** Percentage (%) means the opportunity for each party to contribute to such activities. This was based on the experiences and opinions of the involved communities (the respondents of the survey). The number of respondents indicates the number of those who are already involved in such activities.



Source: Postal questionnaire surveys

Figure 6.11 Type of community organisations and the role in environmental concerns.

## 6.4 Thai Experiences and Challenge

The terms ‘tourism’ and ‘community participation’ are not new in the development process in Thailand, but ‘community participation in tourism’ is. The community participation concept was proposed for agriculture and community development by NGOs and international development agencies in the 1980s-1990s, under the approach of ‘integrated rural development’ and then ‘participatory alternative development’ (Pornthep Iamprapai, *et al.* 2002), and officially accepted in the Sixth NESDP, 1987-1991 and strongly emphasised in the Eighth NESDP, 1997-2001.

Nevertheless, although the concept of community participation in tourism development may be easy to understand, it is difficult to implement. This is because tourism has been dominated by the government and the private sector since the beginning, while most resources are under the control of central and provincial agencies. There are some limitations too in implementing participatory action effectively in Thai society, namely the existence of deeply entrenched patron-clientage (*rabob ubpatham*), whereby people often rely on officers and powerful people, and the under-education of the majority of rural people. A low level of formal education does not mean a total lack of knowledge of course, but it is the main reason for the lack of confidence

among local people and government officers to support the involvement of ordinary citizens in Thai society.

Although TiC has been developed in many areas throughout the country since Thailand started to promote tourism as a main tool for the country's economic development, most TiC projects are not under the effective control of the community and there is still little real participation. CBT aims to promote the participation of local people in tourism development, as discussed earlier, but it may face serious cultural and political obstacles. It is a challenge for CBT actors and the community to pursue its aims and objectives given this situation. The experiences of many communities involved in CBT in Thailand are summarised in this section, which is based on the experiences of eighty-four communities across Thailand which were reported on at the Regional Community Forestry Training Center (RECOFTC) in Bangkok, conducted by REST, on 28-29<sup>th</sup> January 2002 (REST, *et al.* 2002), and at the Regional Conference on Community Based Ecotourism in Southeast Asia, conducted by REST, RECOFTC and PRLC<sup>37</sup> in Chiang Mai, Thailand, during 3-7 March 2002 (REST and Buchan 2002). This also confirmed the results of the postal questionnaire survey and both sets of results were integrated into an understanding of the development of ecotourism in Thailand.

#### **6.4.1 Initial Experiences of Thai Communities**

The results of the postal questionnaire survey and other sources of information demonstrated a large degree of homogeneity in CBT development with the key issue being a participatory approach to community development. Some variety and non-conformity exists of course and this needs to be explored in order to gain a full understanding of this new form of economic and environmental development at the community level. This situation appears to conform to the local experiences reported on at the RECOFTC and in Chiang Mai.

According to REST and Buchan (2002), CBT development has been initiated for many reasons and has been shaped by both external and internal factors. Visits by tourists without any involvement of communities and, consequently, no benefits for the community has, in the past, created some negative impacts to community members. In many cases, tourists with outside tour guides have visited the communities without learning anything about the way of life and culture of the people and this has caused misunderstanding and sometimes conflicts with the locals. This forced local people to seek opportunities to get involved in tourism development. Government efforts to improve local economies have also led to many communities getting

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<sup>37</sup> PRLC = Project for Recovery of Life and Culture.

involved in tourism development. The internal factors include the need of the communities to use tourism as a tool for conservation of their natural and cultural heritage and to increase the participation of community members.

CBET has been used as a tool for conservation; for quality of life development; increasing knowledge, awareness and understanding of local problems; bringing communities together; opening up opportunities for exchanging knowledge with outsiders; and providing supplementary income for individuals and for community development funds (Ibid:2 -3).

Many of these communities have initiated various activities for tourists, such as forest walking, rafting and paddling boats, camping in the bush, bird and other animal watching, bicycle riding, joining the daily life activities in the farms, paddy fields, houses and community including religious and cultural activities. Historic sites, local museums and traditional performances are the sorts of cultural attractions that have been included in CBET programs. Homestay accommodation (including meals and tours provided by the host) seems to be the main activity that has been promoted in a majority of the communities and many villagers can earn direct income from this service. This conforms to the findings of the postal questionnaire surveys which have been discussed already and illustrated in **Figure 6.7**. This practice seems to be what Sunee (2002:63) called *kanthongthiao choeng niwet baeb phasom-phasan* (integrated ecotourism).

According to the Workshop, the benefits of CBET on the environment are significant: creating environmental awareness and stimulating the local people to get involved in environmental management, encouraging environmental planning, and motivating local people to solve environmental problems. In some cases, the government allows the community and tourists to be the 'eyes and ears' for protecting the environment. In terms of the cultural dimension, the communities take pride in and learn the value of their traditions and culture. This can then be passed on from the older to the younger generation. The social benefits of CBET include cooperating with the government and private agencies, forming close contacts with tourists, improving the quality of life and infrastructures, and strengthening community solidarity. The economic benefits of CBET include increasing the incomes of local people and the community fund, and improving food security. When compared with the results of the postal questionnaire survey, it seems clear that most communities are satisfied with CBET development (**Figure 6.12**), and increasing incomes are thought to be the main benefit of CBET (**Figure 6.13**).

However, the postal questionnaire survey revealed that there are some negative impacts and constraints associated with CBET that need to be considered. Almost 52% of the respondent

communities pointed to adverse impacts of tourism on the communities, including an increased volume of waste, environmental damage, cultural change, and community degradation etc. (Figure 6.14). The CBET Conference in Chiang Mai documented additional adverse impacts, e.g. some attractions became degraded due to the lack of management skills of the local community; new sources of (supplementary) income may cause a gradual change in the culture, traditions and life style of hill tribe people as they come into contact with tourists and become involved in tourism development; conflict among people as a result of different management styles and interests. and the number of tourists was still lower than expected, which may waste time (for waiting) and cause disappointment for some community members.

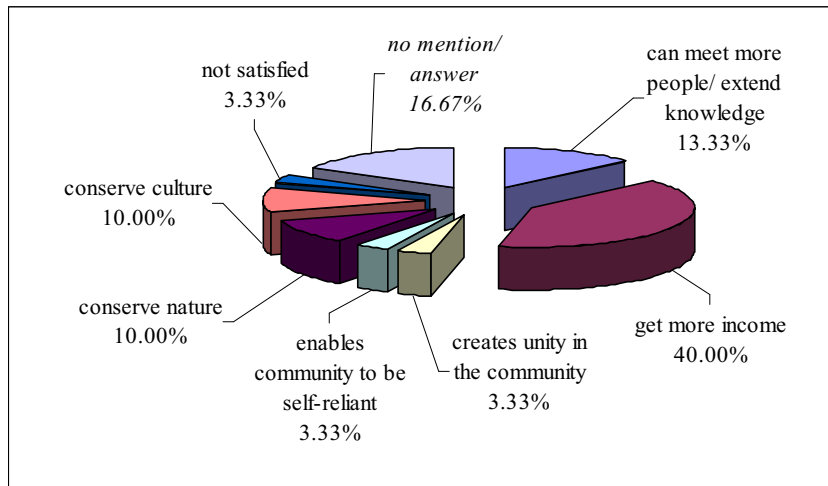
The recommendations from the Workshop were that community organisations should develop tourism management skills and improve the ability to coordinate their activities with other agencies; local research on the effects of tourism should be conducted by the community involved; local knowledge should be combined with the curriculum in the local education institutions; and CBET networking among rural communities should be established and linked with the outsiders. The government was urged to accept the right of local communities to manage natural resources and tourism, to develop tourism master plans, to welcome the local representative at all levels of the development process. Government agencies were urged to support local tourism development programs by providing funding to local communities.

Although there are some positive signs of CBT or CBET development at the community level, some communities still face difficulties as a result of unequal political and power relationships with government sectors. The issues of land rights and the citizenship of hill tribe people are among the most controversial issues. Other issues are uncontrolled tourism promotion in remote areas, community rights and responsibilities regarding resources management, and illegal activities that have followed ecotourism such as drugs and prostitution.

#### **6.4.2 The Challenges of CBT Development**

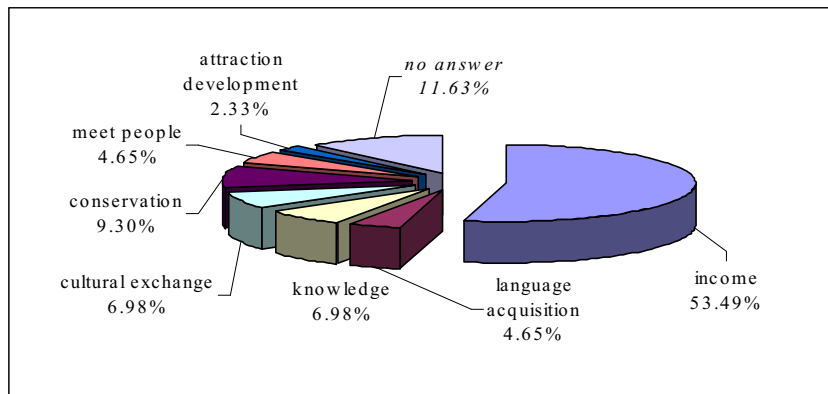
The experience of many communities in CBT development shows that various constraints and problems need to be tackled. These include both internal and external factors. External factors mostly concern the relationship with other stakeholders and related agencies, particularly those dealing with the resources and the market. The internal factors are concerned with the management and the relationship among members within the community.

Some critical problems and challenges facing CBT development are:



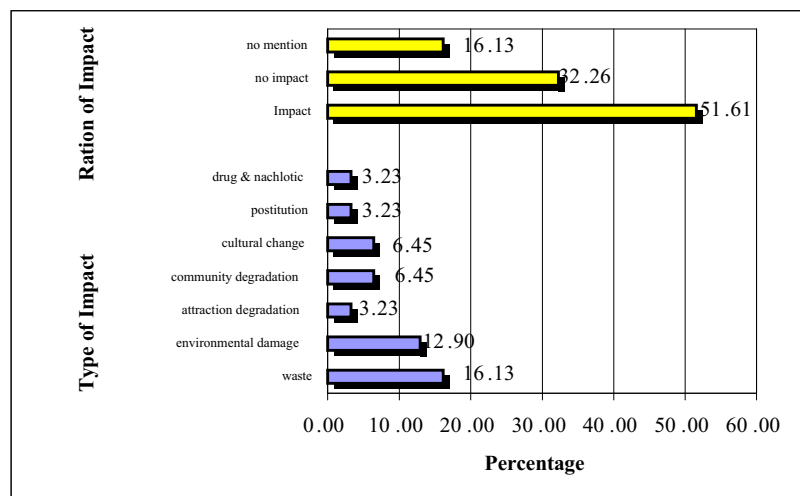
Source: Postal questionnaire surveys

Figure 6.12 Opinions on satisfaction with tourism in the community



Source: Postal questionnaire surveys

Figure 6.13 Opinions on the advantages of tourism in the community



Source: Postal questionnaire surveys

Note: Some respondents witnessed the impacts

Figure 6.14 Opinions on the impacts of tourism on the communities

- 1) Access to tourism resources: Most former common property resources in Thai society have been expropriated by the state. The modernisation of Thai society and the influence of Western colonisation have created a strong nation state that has reduced the strength and power of the citizens, especially in the field of resources management. This has created a weak Thai society in which its citizens want the state to solve all problems (Nidhi Aeusrivongse 2003). Natural, physical, historical and even cultural resources have become state property and are almost entirely controlled and managed by government agencies. On the one hand this has made it difficult for CBT or CBET to develop effectively, as communities are somewhat hampered by state control of the tourism resource base. Thus, the activities of many communities tend to conflict with the responsibilities of government agencies. On the other hand, this challenges the communities not only to develop CBT, but also to increase their strength and independence.
- 2) People's rights and responsibilities to manage tourism resources: Within the last decade, government development policies and strategies have acknowledged the rights and responsibilities of the local people to manage natural resources and the 1997 constitution specifically mentions this. However, only a few government agencies are willing to adopt a participatory approach to development. The main reason for this situation appears to be that government officers do not believe that local people will act responsibly and manage natural resources sustainably. They are also not willing to reduce or lose their power in decision making. However, it has to be admitted that many local people have no confidence to accept responsibility for resource management even when it is offered to them. It appears that they have become dependent on the state and outsiders, especially when it comes to finance and management. Thus, the management of natural and cultural resources for CBT by local people will be a great challenge for most communities.
- 3) Access to the market: Market access is a problem for most communities due to the complexity of the tourism market and the need for special skills and good connections with the outside world, which, of course, are mostly lacking in rural communities. In some cases the communities may have connections with outside government agencies or private sector firms, but mostly the relationship is based on an inequitable distribution of power, placing the local community at a disadvantage in negotiations. Moreover, the concept of CBT development that focuses on social value rather than economic value that many communities and community development activists favour conflicts with the profit making focus of most tour agencies. This is one of the barriers that needs to be overcome if local communities are to play a more active part in marketing. Furthermore, lack of some skills, particularly language skills and service related skills may impede communities from contacting the tourism market directly. In many cases, local people are eager to learn other

languages (English in general and Thai in the case of hill tribe people). Setting up a marketing team, providing proper training programs and creating good links with other agencies are the solution to the marketing problem.

- 4) Networking: Local people rarely are linked vertically with other tourism actors or horizontally with other communities, although a tourism network may already exist in many parts of the tourism industry. This may be a result of the unwillingness of various actors to cooperate on an equal basis and/or to misunderstanding regarding the need for the various communities involved in CBT to be united. Those communities that have some positive experience of cooperation and coordination, may find it easy to establish this kind of networking, however, the lack of budget, qualified personnel and the time to devote to networking may present serious obstacles to succeeding in this area.
- 5) Maintaining the quality of attractions and services: Local communities, normally, have limited management skills and limited budget to invest in tourist attractions and services, which may lead to them being of lower quality than that expected by tourists. Although tourists prefer to pay low prices for local services they still expect them to be of a high standard. To maintain an acceptable quality the local community needs to develop their management skills in parallel with efforts to make tourists understand their limitations. Another problem is that competition with other communities or privately owned services, may, in some cases, lead to more and different activities, which deviate from the CBT concept and lead to a diminution of quality. Thus, rural communities face the challenge of maintaining the quality of attractions and services and keeping them within the framework of CBT development.
- 6) Access to sources of finance and investment: Rural communities and community organisations lack financial resources to invest in tourism development. Most government agencies invest in infrastructure and resources development for the communities. Local administrative organisations may have a role in services and resources management, but they are most likely to restrict their investments to infrastructure projects. There are, however, many sources of funds and loans for local people, such as SIF, OECF, Environmental Fund and Village Fund, NGOs and private operators including international agencies, but not all communities are able to get these funds. The effectiveness of most funds is measured by the end products (physical and economic) such as the *Nueng Tambon Nueng Phalittaphan* (One Tambon, One product: OTOP) Project established by government funds. Managing the fund effectively is another problem of communities because of their lack of skills in financial management and accountancy. Government funds can create opportunities for local people to invest in small and community businesses, but some critics

argue that this creates debts for individuals, and reduces community self-reliance. Whatever the case access to sources of finance and investment is a challenge for CBT development.

- 7) Building the capacity to manage CBT: CBT development needs special knowledge of resources and services management. To make it easy for local communities many developers suggest that the local people should maintain their normal life to serve and attract the tourists rather than get deeply involved in management issues. However, this is likely to lead to them receiving only a small share of the benefits from tourism development and is anathema to the concept of CBT. It is not impossible for local people to become effective tourism resource managers, but capacity building is required. This may include guide and interpretation techniques, organisation management skills, financial management skills, skills related to the conservation and transfer of local traditions and wisdom (from the elders or scholars in the community), and skills in communicating with and contacting tourists and other stakeholders, including basic foreign language skills.
- 8) Participatory development: Achieving community participation in CBT development is a great challenge for all concerned – local people, government agencies, NGOs, the private sector. It must start with a commitment by all stakeholders to make participation a reality. The process of participation may differ from one place to another and from one issue to another, depending on local conditions and the needs of the situation. However, the aims of participation must be geared to the empowerment of local people in the CBT development system, at least at the destination. This in itself is extremely challenging.

## **Conclusion**

Community-based Tourism (CBT) is a new form of Tourism in the Community (TiC), which is focused on two main issues: the participation of the local community and income distribution in the community or the elimination of local poverty. Where it concerns natural and biological conservation or ecotourism (ET), it is called community-based ecotourism (CBET). These terms, however, are used interchangeably in Thailand.

Many Thai rural communities are involved in CBT with support from outsiders (87.09%) – government agencies, academics, private operators, NGOs, local administrative (mainly TAO). Community initiation of CBT is rare, particularly in the initial stage of CBT development. Therefore, the CBT development process is often proposed and planned by outsiders. However, almost all outsiders and other stakeholders accept that the local people should play a crucial role at all stages of the development process.

The results of the general study show the general characteristics of CBT in rural Thailand and the key issue of CBT is a participatory approach to community development. These are summarised below:

- 1) CBT in rural areas can occur in all parts of the country, which are not limited by size or type of community, geography and administrative type.
- 2) Communities, or their members, provide basic tourism services such as accommodation, local food, tours, cultural performances and transportation which are often supported by outsiders.
- 3) People's participation in community and tourism management is often mentioned. However, from the survey, there is no clear evidence about how they manage participation in the community, how many people are involved and what level of participation is occurring in the communities. Some respondents refer to, what is called, 'pseudo-participation'<sup>38</sup> in the development process that relies heavily on the support or control of outsiders. This needs to be examined by further in-depth study.
- 4) Although the problems of communities, including some adverse impacts of tourism are mentioned, the survey does not show any serious impacts. This may be because CBT is in the initial stages and the number of tourists is still low. Nevertheless, the main purpose of the development is mostly concerned with earning extra income, and therefore some impacts may be overlooked. To deal with the problems, almost all communities need more support from the government or outsiders, particularly financially and environmentally, but people rise to the challenge of establishing management tools to tackle CBT and ecotourism.

In-depth experiences of four communities that obtained support from different outside supporters are explored and discussed in the next two chapters. This includes an analysis of their tourism development systems and the impacts (both positive and negative) of the participation of local people and community organisations in CBET management. The potential and the constraints of the communities are also identified.

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<sup>38</sup> 'Pseudo-participation' is a term that refers to the participation that is dominated by outsiders and ignores the main idea of participation, see discussion in **Chapter 8**.