COMMUNITY BASED TOURISM IN THE NORTHERN ECONOMIC CORRIDOR OF THE GREATER MEKONG SUBREGION: A CASE OF CHIANG KHONG DISTRICT IN THAILAND AND LUOANG NAMTHA DISTRICT IN LAO PDR

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ABSTRACT

This study is aimed to: 1) investigate the current situation of Community Based Tourism (CBT) development; 2) examine the key factors that influence the promotion of CBT; 3) identify how cooperation in cross border CBT management can be formulated in the case study destinations.

To achieve the objectives of the study, in addition to documentary analysis, the methodologies adopted for data collection were: semi-structured interviews; focus groups with local residents and other stakeholders; participant observation; and self-completion visitor surveys. Moreover, an assessment criterion was established to assess and evaluate the situation and potential of CBT in the case study communities.

Content analysis was employed to the qualitative data. SWOT analysis and Gap analysis were used in identifying CBT situation as a benchmark of the theoretical concept of CBT. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data from questionnaire survey, where the samples were selected by accidental random sampling. The frequency tables were used to report data.

The study revealed that the potential of CBT development in Luoang Namtha District is higher compared to Chiang Khong destination. Further, CBT is recognized as the contributor to the growth of employment opportunities, a reasonable share of the revenues particularly for woman, young people, and aboriginals and conservation of natural and socio-cultural resources.

In Luoang Nam Tha, CBT operation seems to conform to CBT concepts in respect to conservation and local income generation. However,

1 The research was supported by New Zealand’s International Aid & Development Agency and Mekong Institute, 2007.
it faces problems such as lack of local participation in decision making and planning because the decision is made by the state authority and other stakeholders, not the local residents. On the contrarily, CBT in Chiang Khong is just in the beginning of its development process and is determined by the local NGOs.

The key success of CBT depends on the local circumstances but, the study revealed key success factors as: 1) Government policy on tourism development; 2) Promotion of public participation in both tourism operation and receiving economic benefits and collaboration among stakeholders; 3) Marketing promotion; 4) Tourism products development and its impacts monitoring; 5) Sustainable management and operation that address conservation and economic distribution issues; 6) Human resource development, especially in aspects of tourism operation skills and marketing skills; 7) Tourist infrastructure development and; 8) Budget.

The study also revealed a lack of public participation and cooperation among stakeholders in tourism development processes, stakeholders’ knowledge and skills in tourism management and its operation including poor tourist infrastructures. To promote CBT, it is important that the policy must be formulated based on the local situation and address public participation and empowerment issues. It is also essential to upgrade human resources in terms of tourism management and its operation and improve rural and urban infrastructure.

Based on the results of the study, cooperation in cross border CBT management in the two destinations can be formulated in form of networking. Joint-marketing under the theme of ‘Two Countries-One Destination’ is essential. As the destinations are different in almost every aspect, the network can formulate traveling routes that connect the destinations in the two countries where tourist can enjoy tourist activities in both countries and feel that it is worth to visit. Further, cooperation on human resource development is also necessary. Thailand has more experienced in tourism management and its operation, Thailand can provide training to tourism stakeholders in Lao PDR. Thus, collaboration among stakeholders between the two countries will be automatically formulated.

In terms of tourism development cooperation in the GMS, the government of each country must cooperate in promoting tourism and networking. In addition, the promotion of CBT in the GMS as a means to reduce poverty and mitigate environmental degradation in the region must be aggressively promoted.
**Keywords:** Community Based Tourism, Tourism in GMS, Environment.

**INTRODUCTION**

According to the ADB, the concept of the ‘Economic Corridors’ was first initiated and approved by the eight ministerial conference in Manila, Philippines as a priority initiative under the GMS program framework in late 1998. The Economic Corridors is a strategy to spur economic development in the GMS. It is a means to link infrastructure investment with production restructuring, and trade expansion to strengthen regional activity and competitiveness. The ‘Economic Corridors’ aims at attracting and sustaining interest in both infrastructure project development and direct investments in business opportunities in the GMS. As a result, the Economic Corridors plays an important role in economic cooperation in the GMS. It is believed that the success of the economic corridors will bring sustainable development and poverty reduction in the GMS particularly for the Least Developing Countries (LDC) in the sub-region.

Since the GMS have been a remarkable tourist destination in many ways due to its great cultural diversity, heritage sites, and natural assets. International tourist arrivals have soared and this strong growth is set to continue. In the Mekong region, Cambodia, Lao PDR, and Thailand have all proclaimed tourism as a priority growth strategy. Thus, tourism is an important sector in the Mekong region (http://www.adb.org)

The Northern Economic Corridor of the Greater Mekong Sub-region consists of Thailand, Lao PDR, Myanmar, and Yunnan Province of China, they offer exceptional diversity and richness of tourist destinations and attractions. Such richness has created rapid growth of the sub-region’s tourism industry, which provided much needed foreign exchange.
Tourism is a double-edged sword. On one hand, the positive aspects of tourism include income and employment generation, attraction of foreign exchange, opportunities that tourism could provide for regional, rural, and community development, as well as a means for history, culture, nature, and conservation education. On the other hand, the current success threatens the industry’s sustainability by overburdening host communities, infrastructures, and environments. Further, regional and global crises have dramatically affected tourism markets. For example, SARS, bird flu, flu 2009, terrorism, and natural disaster have threatened to growth of the industry.

However, regional economic cooperation and sectored development strategies between the GMS countries have presented many opportunities for development of the tourism sector. These dynamics have created a dire need for development and management that ensure sustainable and equitable regional growth while enhancing local communities’ empowerment and environments integrity.

In respect to management, CBT has been perceived as a mechanism for community development and empowerment as well as the opportunity to solve problems, such as conflicts, poverty and degradation of natural and socio-cultural resources as well as promoting local participation and their collaboration in additional to providing socially and environmentally friendly products to visitors (Sitikarn, 2008). Thus, the involvement of the host community in the tourism development process is essential to achieve sustainability.

Figure 1: Map of the Study Area.
This study uses two case studies of Chiang Khong in Thailand and Luoang Namtha in Lao PDR (Figure 1) to investigate the perception and involvement of stakeholders on development of tourism and CBT in order to 1) determining the potential of CBT development; 2) examine the key factors that influence the promotion of CBT and; 3) identify how cooperation in cross border CBT management can be formulated in the case study destinations.

**Luoang Namtha Province**

Luoang Namtha is in the Nam Ha National Protected Area (Nam Ha NPA), an ASEAN Heritage site, comprises of 222,400 hectares of land, ranging from the lowlands of the Luoang Namtha Plain to 2,000 meter peaks of its northern highland. Luoang Namtha comprises of 5 districts namely; Namtha, Muang Sing, Vieng Phoukha, Muang Long, and Nalae, with a total land area of 9,325 square kilometers. The population in 2005 was about 145,000 (about 16 people per square kilometer). Within the borders of Luoang Namtha’s is the 222,400 square hectare (Nam Ha National Protected Area), the 4th largest NPA in Lao PDR.

The province is home to 23 ethnic groups, making it one of the most ethnically diverse provinces in the country, which make it a remarkable repository of ethnic diversity and indigenous knowledge. There are four major ethno-linguistic groups: Tibeto-Burman, Austroasiatic, Tai-Kadai, and Hmong-Mien. The traditional dress, beliefs and rituals of these ethnic groups are a valuable part of the cultural heritage of Lao PDR (see Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 1: Luoang Namtha Ethnic Groups (Lao PDR).</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Area</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muang Louang Namtha</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maung Sing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meang Long</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muang Vieng Phouka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muang Nalae</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Only 22 percent of the province populations are Buddhists, with the majority of the population practicing various forms of ancestors and spirit
worship. They are grouped into the broad ethnic classifications of *Lao loum* (lowlanders), *Lao teung* (highlanders), and *Lao soung* (highlanders). The ethnic groups of each category are 33%, 29%, and 38%, respectively, with over 85 percent of the population are engaged in agriculture as their main occupation. Main geologic features include the Namtha and Sing Valleys, low calciferous mountains and the upper Mekong River that separates Lao PDR from Myanmar. (www.wikipe-dia.org)

Due to the integrity of nature and the diversity of culture, Luoang Namtha is the birth place of the first community-based ecotourism project implemented in Lao PDR. The Project was implemented by UNESCO in partnership with Green Discovery in 2001. It aimed to develop an economically viable tourism development model that contributes to the conservation and protection of Lao PDR’s unique cultural and natural heritage including sustainable human development and poverty alleviation. The project was awarded the UN Development Award for Poverty Alleviation in Lao PDR and a British Airways Tourism for Tomorrow Award (Schipani, 2006).

The National Tourism Authority of Lao PDR is the primary implementing agency of this project and cooperates with the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and Ministry of Information and Culture. At the same time, technical assistance and monitoring are provided by Regional Advisor of Culture of UNESCO offices in Asia and the Pacific. The project’s main donors are New Zealand government and International Finance Corporation. The tourism industry in Luoang Namtha has been steadily expanding over past decade, driven primarily by ‘backpackers’ seeking to explore the provinces’ natural, cultural, and historic attractions. From 1998 to 2004, the number of tourists’ arrival increased from 18,600 to 41,658. During the past 5 years, the province has consistently captured about 6-7% of the entire Lao tourism market.

In 2004, over 80 percent of tourists reported that they reached the province by road. The main gateways are the Chiang Kong/Houi Xay international immigration point (46%) and Vientiane via Luoang Prabang (38%). This is consistent with the popular north-south (or reverse) route between Chiang Kong-Luoang Namtha-Luoang Prabang-Vang Vieng and Vientiane, which is a well established travelling circuit in Southeast Asia. Less than 10 percent of the visitors to Luoang Namtha are either coming from or going to Champasak, and about 9 percent utilize Luoang Namtha’s Boten-Mohan international immigration checkpoint with China. In 2004,
over 26,000 tourists entered Luoang Namtha at Boten; however, over 89 percent of these tourists were Chinese nationals, a proportion of which may have been in the country for other purposes than tourism. A small number of tourists reached the province by air (approximately 5%) and an even smaller number of tourists traveled to and from the province by boat on the Namtha or Mekong River. The demographic characteristics of tourists in Luoang Namtha fit the ‘backpacker’ image, who are young, tend to stay in country for a long period of time and modest daily expenditures. The ratio of male to female travelers is about equal. The main markets are the UK, Israel, Belgium, Germany, Australia, the Netherlands, and the US. The numbers of tourists peak during November-January. The ‘high season’ begins in October to mid-April.

**Chiang Khong Province**

Chiang Khong is a district (Amphoe) located at 114 kilometers northeast of Chiangrai Province, Thailand and 55 kilometers east of Chiang Saen District on Highway No. 1129. The district is subdivided into 7 sub-districts (Tambon), which are further subdivided into 117 villages (Muban). There are two townships, Thesaban Tambon and Wiang Chiang Khong which covers parts of Tambon Wiang, and Boon Rueang. There are 6 Tambon administrative organizations (TAO) (see Table 2).

### Table 2: Population in Chiang Khong District.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sub-districts</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Inh.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Viang</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>12,311</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satan</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9,453</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khrung</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>7,024</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boon Rueang</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>7,054</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huy Sow</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12,562</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sri Don Chai</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8,919</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rim Kong</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6,386</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source:** www.wikipedia.org/wiki/Amphoe.
Chiang Khong is primarily known for its border crossings for backpackers and independent travelers traveling to and/or from Lao. It is popular for one night stay and for those who want to travel to Lao PDR or renew visa to Thailand. Most of tourist are Thai. Tourism operation in Chiang Khong is mostly in the hands of the private entrepreneurs, who migrated from other provinces such as Bangkok and Chiangmai. They run the business individually and independently. This includes accommodation, transport providers, restaurants, and travel agency. The locals are excluded in the tourism development processes. However, in 2007, the local NGOs have established CBT at Song Pee Nong Village and tourism networks for the conservation of Chiang Khong, both natural resources and socio-cultural resources.

**Community Based Tourism (CBT)**

CBT emerges from a community development strategy, using tourism as a tool to strengthen community organization through community wide participation. It is essential that the community has substantial control and involvement in the development project. At each stage, awareness and education should be an important element. This will not only keep people interested and supportive, but also promote them to take advantage of opportunities so that the main benefits remain in the community.

Currently, CBT typically subscribes to a number of broadly defined goals such as socially sustainable. This means the tourism activities are developed and operated, for the most part, by local community members, and with their consent and support. Further, CBT is recognized as the contributor to growth of employment opportunities, a reasonable share of the revenues particularly for the women, young people, and aboriginals. This may include revenue streams which go to co-ops, joint ventures, community associations, businesses that widely employ local people, or to a range of entrepreneurs starting or operating small and medium sized enterprises. Another important feature of CBT is its respect for local culture, heritage, and traditions as well as concerns for the natural heritage, particularly where the environment is one of the attractions. According to UNEP, CBT does not simply seek to maximize profits for investors. Rather, it is more concerned with the impact of tourism on the community and the environment. Three types of CBT enterprises are identified:

1. The purest model includes enterprises owned and managed by the community, and where the community members are employed by the project using a rotation system, thus profits are allocated to
community projects;
2. The enterprise involves family or group initiatives within the communities and;
3. The enterprises are a joint venture between a community or family and an outside business partner.

According to REST (1997), to achieve sustainability, CBT must contribute to increasing and/or improving conservation of natural and/or cultural resources, including biological diversity, water, forests, cultural landscapes, monuments, etc.;

- CBT must contribute to local economic development through increasing tourism revenues and other benefits to community participants, and ideally to an increasing number of participants;
- CBT must encourage local participation in its planning and management and;
- CBT has a duty to provide a socially and environmentally responsible experience and exchange for both visitor and hosts.

Sitikarn (2004, 2006) reveals four core characteristics associated with sustainable CBT. They include the following:

- Conservation
  This involves contribution to conservation or preservation of natural environment, social and cultural characteristics of the local community.
- Local employment and income generation and distribution
  This has implications for a range of new business and employment opportunities. Communities are earned from their natural resources in order to gain income through tourism to improve the quality of life of its members. It is assumed that when residents receive benefits, they are more likely to support tourism and conservation, even to the point of protecting the site against poaching or other encroachment.
- Educational experiences and appreciation about natural environment and local culture
  a) CBT provides opportunities for visitors to learn through experiences obtained from the activities undertaken to acquire better understanding of the destination, its natural setting, and of its people, including the multilingual interpreters employed at the sites. The local residents have an opportunity to share and exchange knowledge with visitors. Through these education experiences, there is increasing environmental and cultural awareness among stakeholders; and
- Local participation and empowerment of host communities include:
  a) Involvement of the local
residents at all stages of the development process. This applies to both direct and indirect participants and beneficiaries. Participation should occur in the processes of decision-making, planning, implementation, auditing, evaluation, and problem resolution.

b) Cooperation between stakeholders such as public and private sectors and local residents.

Further, Sitikarn (2008) identify the weakness of CBT operation is in the context of marketing due to lack of skills and knowledge among local residents to operate and market their destination so that most benefits are obtained by outside-private entrepreneurs rather than the community. Therefore, it is essential to combines the philosophy of CBT with the commercial presence of SMTEs for the successful operation of CBT. The concept emphasizes on aspects of human resource development, finance, operation of tourism products and services, marketing and tourists’

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**Figure 2:** Model of Small-Medium Tourism Enterprise of CBT. 
**Source:** Sitikarn (2008).
demand, as demonstrated in Figure 2.

However, it is important to note that in some context of local circumstances, the objectives of CBT do not always emphasize natural resource conservation and linkages with economic development. Cultural conservation, community and/or gender empowerment, poverty alleviation, and income generation, are also primary purposes in many cases. In any intervention and planning effort, it is essential to have consensus and clarity about the objectives and activities including monitoring and evaluation.

Public Participation as a Means of Achieving Sustainable Tourism

Levels of participation by stakeholders and the number and types of stakeholders’ participation are considered critical to the success of CBT. Much of the attention in CBT focuses on actions, incentives, natural and cultural resources benefits and communities that live in and around the destination since they have frequently been neglected in the decision-making process. Often the result has been a lack of ownership which in turn affects the sustainability of conservation and development efforts. If the local people have participated in the design of activities, invested resources are under implementation, and are able to obtain reasonable returns, then the likelihood of longterm conservation and economic benefits increases. If the distribution of benefits is such that most participants are employers of whom provide an unreliable and poor source of income, the linkage between tourism and the need to conserve resources is potentially weaker, and the long term benefits would be more questionable. Not surprisingly, in CBT considerable resources are usually invested in engaging people in bottom-up, small scale tourism developments that can contribute to CBT objectives. The key elements in the process of participation are the involvement of people in the decision-making process of implementing programs, their sharing in the benefits of development programs, and their involvement in evaluating the programs (Cohen and Upnoff, 1977; Timothy, 1999). Thus, recognizing the value of local knowledge and environmental management practice is crucial for the achievement of local participation (Berger, 1996; Boyd and Ward, 1993). This is to ensure that the benefits include income generation, the enhancement of the local residents’ quality of life and economic returns that can be used to maintain and manage the tourism resources. Furthermore, the local community would participate in supervising the tourism development of the area and ensuring that it is sustainable. However, Sproule and Suhandi (1998, pp.215-235) argue that though there is increasing recognition of the need of communities
to be involved in general, there is less agreement about exactly who should participate and what extent.

Pretty (1995) classified the types of involvement into seven levels of participation which range from 1) manipulative participation; 2) passive participation; 3) participation by consultation; 4) participation for material incentives; 5) functional participation; 6) interactive participation; and 7) self-mobilization.

One of the major concerns is about the capability of the local people in tourism planning and operation. The question is how to involve the locals in all stage of development. Sitikarn (2008) suggests that successful local participation process could be identified as shown in the following Figure 3.

Full participation of the local community in the development process can be interpreted differently. However, it is important that the locals must involve in the decision making process since they are the ones who receive direct benefits from the initiative. Therefore, they should have an opportunity to express their concerns and the project plan should be implemented based on their contributions. Following this, the project plan requires evaluation and monitoring to minimize potential problems. However, there is still lack of required knowledge and skills among the locals. Therefore, supports from the experts or relevant authori-

Figure 3: People Participation Model.
ties are essential for the initiative development. The supports can be in the form of training, workshops, and study trip. Further, the economic benefits among the locals should to be addressed critically. For example, it is important to recognize communities earning from their natural resources in order to improve their quality of life through the development initiatives. It is assumed that when the locals receive benefits, they are more likely to support conservation as well as promoting cooperation among the members. These could be a path to sustainability.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to answer the research objectives. Synthesize of the findings based on the core components of tourism industry, namely, attraction, activity, access, amenity, accommodation and ancillary services.

To achieve the objectives of the study, in addition to documentary analysis, the methodologies adopted for data collection were: semi-structured interviews; focus groups with local residents and other stakeholders; participant observation; and self-completion visitor surveys Moreover, an assessment criterion was established to assess and evaluate the situation and potential of CBT in the case study communities.

Content analysis was employed to the qualitative data. SWOT analysis and Gap analysis were used in identifying CBT situation as a benchmark of the theoretical concept of CBT. Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) was used to analyze the data from questionnaire survey, where the samples were selected by accidental random sampling. The frequency tables were used to report data.

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

1. **The Potential of CBT Development**

   Based on the findings, tourism in the two destinations is quite different. As shown in Table 3, in Luoang Namtha, CBT operation seems to conform to CBT concepts in terms of conservation, local income generation, educational experiences, involvement of the local residents in stage of implementation and cooperation between stakeholders such as the government sector, private sector and local residents.

   Luoang Namtha has high potential in CBT development in terms of attractions, which comprises of both natural and cultural resources. Most of the tourist activities and facilities are allocated in Luoang Namtha and Muang Sing. The weakness is the basic infrastructure, especially access to Nalae and amenity factors in most of the tourist destinations.
Table 3: Gap Analysis between Benchmark of Theoretical Concept of CBT and Its Practice in Luoang Namtha and Chiang Khong Destinations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>LNT</th>
<th>CH-K</th>
<th>Components of CBT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>Conservation and preservation of natural environment, social and cultural characteristics of the local community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Local employment and income generation and distribution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Educational experiences and appreciation about natural environment and local culture.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>✓</td>
<td>Involvement of the local residents in stage of decision-making.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Involvement of the local residents in stage of planning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>Involvement of the local residents in stage of implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Involvement of the local residents in stage of auditing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Involvement of the local residents in stage of evaluation and problem resolution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Empowerment of host communities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>✓</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cooperation between stakeholders such as the government sector, private sector and local residents.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: LNT = Luoang Namtha Destination  CH-K = Chiang Khong Destination

There are high potentials in the CBT development due to the richness of tourism resources and the state tourism development policies, which have embraced tourism development centering on the country’s natural and cultural attractions as part of its strategy and hence reduce poverty and contribute to the country’s socio-economic development (Allcock, 2004). However, it still lack of local participation in decision making and planning of the development processes as these decisions are made by the state authority and other stakeholders and not the local residents. Furthermore, the study revealed the lack of knowledge and skills in tourism operation and services among the local people and other stakeholders. Thus, the development of tourism requires financial supports and human resource development in tourism from outsiders.
Table 4: Potentials of CBT Development in Luoang Namtha and Chiang Khong Destination.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Luoang Namtha</th>
<th>Chiang Khong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S  W  O  T</td>
<td>S  W  O  T</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luoang Namtha</td>
<td>35 3 6 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muang</td>
<td>17 9 6 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muang</td>
<td>22 8 6 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nalae</td>
<td>12 18 6 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ViangPuka</td>
<td>13 11 7 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>99 49 31 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boon Rueang</td>
<td>11 20 2 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Khrueng</td>
<td>9 16 1 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sathan</td>
<td>5 10 8 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Huai So</td>
<td>3 17 5 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Si Don Chai</td>
<td>12 19 6 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rimkhong</td>
<td>22 13 4 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wiang</td>
<td>20 14 4 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>82 109 30 40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CBT in Chiang Khong has not well implemented in accordance to the concepts of CBT (Table 3) where activities are developed and operated primarily by local community members, and contributed with their consent and support. Further, CBT is recognized as the contributor to the growth of employment opportunities, a reasonable share of the revenues particularly for women, young people and aboriginals and conservation of natural and socio-cultural resources.

Table 4 shows the potential of CBT development in Chiang Khong is considered low as CBT in Chiang Khong is still in the beginning stage of the development process and the tourist number is small. The main attractions are allocated in only Rim Khong and Wiang Sub-districts, where most of the local people and stakeholders are familiar and have positive attitude toward tourism. The weakness is the basic tourist infrastructure including development of access, amenity, accommodation and ancillary services. The participation of the local people and human resource development especially in context of tourism management and operation are critical to the success of CBT development in the province.

In sum, the situation of CBT in both destinations comparing the actual performances of CBT with its theoretical requirements is apparent that the potentials of CBT development in Luoang Namtha are higher than Chiang Khong (Table 4).
2. Key Factors Influencing on Community Based Tourism Promotion

The findings revealed that the key success to CBT varies among the provinces and depends on the local circumstances. In Luoang Namtha, the existing CBT model is the best model to suit the situation. However, it is too early to determine whether the development of CBT will be a success in Chiang Khong. The key success factors can be identified as follows:

1) Government policy on tourism development

Tourism in Lao PDR is determined by the national government in cooperation with other stakeholders but lack of involvement of the local residents. The natural resources and the local way of lives and their identity are promoted as the main attraction whereas the majority of members in host community are excluded from the economic benefits obtained. In contrast, Chiang Khong lacks CBT policy development. The government currently focuses on infrastructure development.

2) Promotion of public participation in both tourism operation and receiving economic benefits and collaboration among stakeholders.

3) Marketing of CBT. The promotion must be conducted to attract both inbound and outbound tourists.

4) Products development and its impacts on monitoring.

This is to ensure the sustainability of the destination, avoiding negative impacts on natural resources and local culture. The tourism products including tourist activities must be developed based on what already exists in the host community and cause no negative impacts on the host.

5) Sustainable management and operation that address conservation and economic distribution issues.

It is important to recognize that without conservation of natural and cultural resources, growth of tourism will decline in a short time and as per se ‘no tourist no money’.

6) Human resource development, especially in tourism operation and marketing skills. This is because most of the host destinations are from the agricultural sector. They are neither familiar nor knowledgeable with tourism. Therefore, it is essential to train and educate the locals and involved stakeholders how to operate tourism in a sustainable manner.

7) Tourist infrastructure development

This is considered to be one of the main components of the tourism industry as it plays an essential role in supporting products that influence tourists’ decision to visit the destination.
8) Budget
Most development requires financial support especially in terms of tourist infrastructure development, marketing, and human resource development, and so on.

3. How Cooperation in Cross Border CBT Management can be formulated in the Case Study Destinations?

Based on the findings, cooperation on cross border CBT management in the two destinations can be formulated in the form of networking. Co-marketing under the theme of ‘Two Countries-One Destination’ is essential. As the destinations are different in every aspect, the networks can formulate the traveling routes that join the destinations of the two countries where tourists can enjoy tourist activities in both countries. Furthermore, cooperation on human resource development is necessary. Thailand has more experienced in tourism management and operation, can provide training in tourism to stakeholders in Lao PDR. Thus, collaboration among stakeholders between the two countries should be promoted.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study revealed the lack of policy and human development in CBT issues. However, researches in tourism development are strengthening on how to maximize the benefits from the success of economic corridor, for example, the R3a. In responding to economic corridors which aim to spur economic development and cooperation in the GMS, CBT development along the corridors should be highly recognized as one of opportunities that bring sustainable development and poverty reduction in the GMS. To promote CBT, it is important that the policy must be formulated based on the local situation and address public participation and empowerment issues. It is also essential to improve rural and urban infrastructure, upgrade human resources in terms of tourism management and operation.

Furthermore, the government of each country should cooperate and promote tourism in the GMS through networking as a means to reduce poverty and mitigate environment degradation in the region. The locals in Luoang Namtha have no power in resource management but they must understand both costs and benefits in developing tourism so that they will somehow help to prevent any negative impacts that may occur. Land used policy must be formulated in addition to tourist number limitation. Carrying capacity of host destination must be highly considered in order to avoid any negative impact on the host. Income distribution can be judged according to the country circumstances as well as promotion of tourism education among stakeholders. In Chiang Khong, the local authority ‘Tambon
Administrative Organization’ plays an important role in resource management. They have budget and can use CBT as an instrument for resources conservation and economic development. However, currently they do nothing about CBT as they do not have the knowledge and understanding about tourism and its operation. Therefore, the development of the local authority in CBT development is critical.

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