

Tourism Related Activities and Floating Garden in Inle Lake, Myanmar

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Abstract : Myanmar started its new political movement in 2011, opening up to trade, encouraging foreign investment, deepening its financial sectors. The tourism is one of the key sectors to make reform process from the perspective of green economy and green growth. The Inle Lake, second largest lake, famous for broad diversity of cultural and natural assets, become one of the country's main tourism destination. In the study area, local livelihoods are based on a combination of farming (mainly floating garden) wage labor, tourism, and small business. But the Inle lake water body or water surface area decreased by 96.44 km² within 20 years, from 67.98 km² in 1990 to 56.63 km² in 2010. Floating garden cultivation (hydro phonic farm) is a distinguished characteristic of Inle Lake. Two adjacent villages (A and B) were selected to compare the relationship between tourism access and agricultural production. Ground truthing, focus group discussion, and in-depth questionnaires with floating gardeners were carried out. In A village, 57% of the respondents relied tourism as their major income sources, while almost all the households in B village relied floating gardens as major livelihood. Both satellite image interpretation and community studies highlighted that around 80% of the floating garden become fallow after severe drought in 2010 and easy income access to tourism related activities. The villagers can get 20-30 US\$ for round trip guiding to major tourist attraction places. Even though tourism is the major livelihood options for the A village, the poorest households (less than 1500 US\$ per year) are those who didn't own transportation property for tourism related activities. In B village, more than 70% of the households relied floating gardens as their major income sources and less participated in tourism related activities because they don't have motorboat stand connected to the major tourist attraction areas. Access to tourism related activities (having boat stand where they can guide tourists by boat and sell local products and souvenirs) have much impacted on changes in local people livelihood options. However, tourism may have impacts that are beneficial for one group of a society, but which are negative for another. Income inequality and negative impacts can only be managed effectively if they have been identified, measured and evaluated. The severe drought in 2010, instability of lake water level, high expenses for agriculture assisted the local people to participate in easy access tourism related activities.

Keywords : diminishing, floating garden, livelihood, tourism-related income

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