

Local Identities to Global in the Centre of Isan, Thailand: Promoting Local Development and Community Participation

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Abstract : Originating from a multifaceted research project beginning with the opening of the Green Market at Ban Laow sub-district, Kosum Phisai, Mahasarakham with the support of Kosum Phisai Governor. The project involves key stakeholders related to villagers who have become involved with linking local identity to a more global identity to help ameliorate falling agricultural incomes and casualised work. There have been fifteen formal meetings involving local government stakeholders that took place at the local university, local schools, a public meeting at Ban-Don-Toom and Village meeting shelters. These events hosted 176 local stakeholders consisting of the District Governor, 7 Chairpersons/Heads of the District Development Council, a Health Promotion group, District retired government staff, 4 sub-district local government members, the City Development Council, 2 representatives from Mahasarakham Provincial Culture Council, 4 principles of all local schools, 11 village heads, 15 scholars form local and national universities, 132 villagers and 4 staff from public relation units. The goal of the project was to initiate a variety of local projects including promotion of Local healthy food, farm/homestay accommodation, local uniqueness, Travel guides (in book form and guide youths) and the proposed development of community tourism with the aim to utilise local people and activities to tap into the growing alternative tourism market. This paper aims to document the progress thus far, and the challenges presented working with local communities that have lacked expertise in linking to the global economy to derive economic benefits for their communities.

Keywords : Community-based tourism, community participation, local identity, mahasarakham province

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