

ASSESSMENT OF THE POTENTIAL TOURISM OF KAMPUAN, RANONG PROVINCE

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INTRODUCTION

Under the Post-Tsunami Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Program supported by USAID Regional Development Mission/Asia (RDM/A) this tourism potential assessment study is being conducted. According to the result of a comprehensive Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) carried out by the Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), one issue that local communities in Kampuan sub-district expressed was their interest in a small scale tourism development which can be seen as an important tool to diversify the local economy and generate extra income for local people. This report is intended to assess the tourism potential of Kampuan sub-district and its five local villages identified in the overall project and the possibility of developing community-based tourism in these villages.

Community-based tourism can help reduce poverty by:

- Generating income-earning opportunities for the local community
- Increasing employment opportunities from tourism activities
- Encouraging the self-reliance of the community through technical assistance in tourism product development such as agriculture, handicrafts and local products.

The size of the study area was determined by the Post-Tsunami Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Program in the area called ‘Kampuan’ Sub-district located in Suksamran Minor District, Ranong province. The primary source of income for the local people is fishery. Kampuan is composed of seven villages of which five (Tsunami affected villages) are included in this project:

- Village #1 Baan Talay Nok (population: 260)
- Village #2 Baan Nua (population: 1,372)
- Village #3 Baan Kampuan (population: 1,236)
- Village #4 Baan Phukhaothong (population: 1,177)
- Village #7 Baan Had Yao (population: 515)

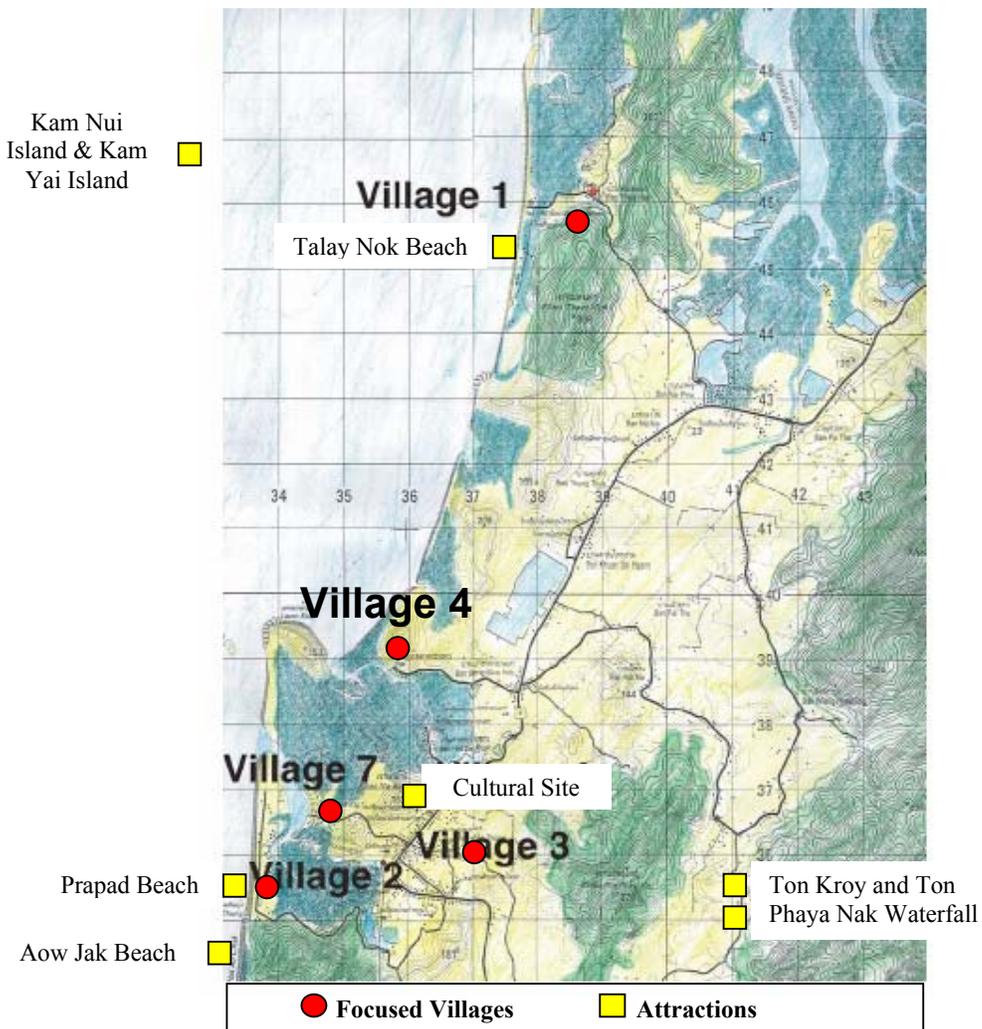
Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

- To identify the communities level of interest and capacity to engage in small-scale tourism development.
- To review existing and potential attractions within the Kampuan sub-district and surrounding areas.
- To assess and identify the communities’ tourism potential as it related to the Laemson National Park.
- To prepare tourism priority action recommendations where appropriate.

Kampuan sub-district can be accessed by road which is currently in a good condition. It is approximately 200 km. away from Phuket International Airport and 65 km. away from Ranong Domestic Airport. It is convenient for people to travel within the sub-district by car. It is a little difficult for those using public transportation since it requires using another mode of transportation e.g. motorcycles or local small vans into the attractions or villages.

The Ranong tourist map indicates Kam Island (Mu Koh Kam) as the only attraction in Kampuan subdistrict, Suksamran minor district. But in fact Kampuan has a few other attractions as shown in Map 2. Nearby major attractions are Laem Son National Park and Khlong Naka Wildlife Sanctuary. Laem Son National Park is open for tourism activity while Khlong Naka Wildlife Sanctuary requires permission for visitation. Laem Son National Park is one of the major attractions in Ranong covering areas of Kampuan sub-district and others. Visitors to the National Park are mostly from Thailand on a one-day trip. Accommodation and food & beverage services are available at the park for visitors.



Map 2: Locations of Villages and Attractions

Attractions in Kampuan

- **Prapad Beach**

The beach was hit by the tsunami in 2004. Before the disaster a number of local tourists visited this beach and a few of the local restaurants and small guesthouses/bungalows. However since the tsunami there are no longer small accommodations, local restaurants and hardly any tourists visiting Prapad beach except for those involved in tsunami-related activities. Prapad beach is still in the recovery process e.g. cleaning up the beach, palm and coconut tree plantation. It is easy to visit Prapad beach since there is directional signage from the main road to local roads that are in good condition.



- **Talay Nok Beach**

Talay Nok Beach is 7 meters long and can be accessed by road. Like Prapad beach there are no longer any small accommodations, local restaurants and hardly any tourists come to this beach since the tsunami. Currently it is in the recovery process e.g. cleaning up the beach, local plantation and providing some rest areas where visitors can picnic. This beach was used to practice evacuation drills not long ago and there are a number of signs “Entering Tsunami Hazard Zone” from the entrance to the beach. Having this kind of signage around does not encourage tourism activities.



- **Aow Jak Beach**

This is another beach located in village #2 that is good for leisure and fishing activity. However there is no road access at present.

- **Toan Kroy Waterfall**

It is an attraction where local people come on weekends, with no directional signage from the main road. Existing visitors are from within the area or nearby. There is local road access to the site but there is no parking for vehicles. Local government is now developing the area with shops, restaurants and public restrooms to accommodate tourists. There will be a need for effective site management since the

commercial area is located right next to the waterfall. Without proper management there could be adverse impacts on the natural resources and environment in the future e.g. solid waste problems, air and/or water pollution.



- **Toan Phaya Nak Waterfall**
The only way to visit this waterfall, which is located up on the hill, is to walk from Toan Kroy waterfall for approximately 4 km. It is good for people who like hiking/adventure activity. However in order to go up to Toan Phaya Nak waterfall, which belongs to Klong Naka Wildlife Sanctuary, visitors need permission first and must be accompanied by an official.
- **Kum Yai Island**
This island is 24 km. away from village #1. Visitors can rent a boat to the island provided by local people. There are no tourism facilities on the island. Most of the people visiting this island go for fishing activities.
- **Kum Nui Island**
This island is 20 km. away from village #1. Visitors can rent a boat to the island provided by local people. There are no tourism facilities on the island. Like Kum Yai Island, most of the people who visit this island go for fishing activities.
- **Cultural Site (Phou Khao Thong)**
There is an area close to the Office of Tambon Administrative Organization which is identified by the Fine Arts Department (FAD) as an important cultural site which has some historic remains/jewelry underground. FAD is planning to register this site as a national historic area and conduct excavation activity in 2006. This can be seen as an important attraction for Kampuan in the near future.

Private Sector Tourism Services

Currently there are no tourism facilities/services e.g. hotels, small guesthouses, public transportation to the attraction, information/visitor center in the area/villages to accommodate tourists. Visitors can stay at the Laemson National Park or hotels in Muang district in Ranong or travel to Kuraburi in Phang Nga province which is 30 km. away from Kampuan sub district. There are few small local restaurants in the area.

Present Tourism Situation in Kampuan

Prior to the tsunami disaster there were small scale tourism related activities in Kampuan sub-district which generated some additional income for the villagers. Villagers used to get involve in tourism-related activities/services such as small bungalows, local restaurants, long tail boat service. However after the tsunami there is almost no tourism activity in Kampuan

due to the fear of visitors to travel to the beach area and of villagers to work in tourism-related business around the beach area. In addition to these reasons, the long rainy season lasting for 8 months (May-Dec) is seen as another limitation for this area.

Currently there is very little tourist information about the attractions in Kampuan and almost no directional signage to those attractions along the main road. Most visitors who visit this area are local people from the area or from nearby districts who already know about the site.

There is no tourism development plan in place either for Kampuan sub-district or Suksamran minor district. However, a tourism oriented plan of action of the Tambon Administrative Organization of Kampuan will provide signage for local attractions and access to some sites.

- **Village 1**

Village 1 is located closed to Talay Nok beach and prior to the tsunami disaster, local people were involved in tourism-related businesses on a small scale, which is no longer exists. The 'Wild Animal Rescue Foundation of Thailand (WARF)' has been involved in a number of community activities for the last 4 years and has established the 'Eco-tourism Club of Baan Thalay Nok' with around 30-40 local people.

In 2005 WARF with the assistance of REST (Responsible Ecological Social Tours Project) and North Andaman Tsunami Relief (NATR) are working together to look at the potential for community-based tourism in this village. The project is funded by the ILO (International Labour Organization) as part of the Post-Tsunami Livelihood Recovery in the Tourism Sector Programme. By the end of this year NATR and others will provide the community with English education, guide training, environmental education and logistical support followed by a pilot tourist trip to test ecotourism activities such as skin diving, Mangrove tours, camping, Kum Island tour, homestays and fishing.

- **Village 2**

Village #2 has an advantage because of its location near Prapad beach which is a known attraction since it is identified as part of Laemson National Park. However given that it is still in the recovery process from the tsunami disaster, it is essential that the area recover quickly in order to attract visitors back to the site and to encourage local people to get involved in tourism activities again.

Some villagers are involved in accommodating small groups of Thai people for fishing activities. There is a private company from Surat Thani province that brings people who are interested in fishing to this village during the weekend. While this is usually a single day activity, on some occasions the community does provide meals and overnight accommodation at their own houses for a limited number of visitors (4 – 5 people).

- **Village 3, 4 and 7**

Villagers of these three villages have not had any participation in tourism activity. Like village #2 these villages sometimes generate additional income by providing boat service and accommodation at their houses to people who come for fishing. Home stay service can be an addition to the fishing tours. Guidelines on how to operate homestays should be provided to the villages.

These five villages have been producing a variety of local products e.g. food, agricultural products etc. Normally these products are sold to local villagers. One possible way that local people can benefit from promoting tourism in Kampuan sub-district is to sell these products to the visitors. This will create a need for space to sell these products together and

not in separate shops in each village. This can be seen as a shopping stop included in the tourism circuit of the area or province to attract visitors. However the community will need support in quality control of local products and packaging, marketing, creating partnerships with tourism-related facilities and other attractions to help develop and promote Kampuan products and services.

Village Perspective on Tourism

Generally the community views tourism as an opportunity for additional income and employment, and providing a better quality of life. However, they have no idea of what to do and where to start. Several villagers mentioned “ecotourism” and some suggested homestays, hiking and cultural walking trails in the community as possible activities to develop. Since homestay has a small market segment, how to trap this particular market is an issue that the community will have to think about. It is also important to provide necessary information especially on possible negative impacts of homestay service to the community in order for them to make an informed decision. There must always be the opportunity for the village to decide not to pursue tourism activities in their community.

It is important to note that without a proper plan tourism can lead to changes in local value systems, individual behavior, traditional ceremonies, and social structure. Interviews show that the community does not think much about the negative impacts of tourism on the natural environment and their social structures. In order to avoid or minimize these impacts, the community can restrict the number of visitors and access to particular areas within the village, might consider building other accommodation/houses specially design for visitors sited in the village, or work together on establishing small guesthouses in Kampuan.

Community Involvement in Laemson National Park

Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation, responsible for all the national parks in Thailand, has identified community involvement and community benefit from park management as one of the important elements to be emphasized in which it will be encouraged through a number of possible activities as follows:

- Support the use of local labor i.e. for boat rental for island tour, local transportation services.
- Support the use of local products i.e. local cloth, food, handicraft products for visitor center’s decoration.
- Provide opportunity for small business e.g. local retail/souvenir shop/local restaurant run by community group or community cooperative in the park area.
- Encourage local community in providing guiding service, local performance, and demonstration of traditional life/music.
- Create the links between the national park and other nearby local attractions.
- Establish the networking between the national park and other nearby accommodation service providers.

Given the community involvement policy of the national parks, there is a possibility for Kampuan communities to get involved in tourism activities going on at the Laemson National Park. And that there will be a need to closely working with the park officials in order to identify specific activities/services that Kampuan communities can work with the park.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the assessment presented above it is clear that Kampuan sub-district has little tourism potential as a single destination given that its attractions do not have a strong competitive advantage compared to other nearby attractions. In addition, there is little tourism infrastructure and facilities to accommodate tourists in the area i.e. accommodation, restaurants, local transportation, information about the attractions etc. Based on this reality the next step in the development process must be to assess market conditions and tourism possibilities within the larger regional setting.

In order to achieve the USAID objective of diversifying local economic activity in Kampuan and through the use of revolving funds for tourism SMEs, two main recommendations are proposed.

- That a complete market assessment study be carried out looking at not only the target area but the larger regional setting.
- Based on the market study develop a tourism strategy for Kampuan and its region.

It must be stressed that no loans or investment be made until these two activities have been completed.

Marketing Assessment Study

Although the community shows an interest in participating in tourism, it is important for the Post-Tsunami Sustainable Coastal Livelihoods Program to ensure that there is a market for any products/tourism related small and medium sized businesses that Kampuan villagers will develop in the future. It is not acceptable to follow the concept “build and they will come”. This approach is neither acceptable use of the US taxpayers dollars nor responsible for the residents of the communities. They have suffered serious setbacks and do not need to invest money and effort in an initiative that may fail due to poor planning and assessment.

The market study will identify what the market demands and the potential for particular products/services and should consider the following:

- The nature and quality of the existing visitor experience in terms of, products and services.
- Identification of possible products and services based on the resources as well as location of the communities.
- The identification of appropriate target market segments.
- An analysis of the competitive environment of the region.

This assessment will have to focus on what potential customers want, need and will demand. For example, if the community wishes to develop ecotourism or homestay, two questions must be addressed (i) Who will purchase that product/service and (ii) Will demand be sufficient to justify the investment or the funds that USAID will provide for local villagers. This activity is important to ensure the viability of tourism activities/services that Kampuan villagers will develop in the future.

Development of a Tourism Strategy

Based on the market study an action oriented strategy can be developed that:

- Determines how Kampuan can become part of the bigger area in order to increase opportunities for income generation/employment for local villagers.
- Determines ways that people can participate in tourism related activities with attractions either in Kampuan or in other areas, and with private tourism facilities (e.g. hotels, guesthouses, local restaurants) in other areas of the province.

- Provides appropriate scale and direction for tourism activities/businesses that match with the local needs, take into consideration cultural and environmental sensitivity, and match with the possible market for the area.
- Ensures that tourism-related SMEs that USAID supports are viable in the long-run.

Figure 1 illustrates the necessary elements for a tourism strategy in Kampuan.

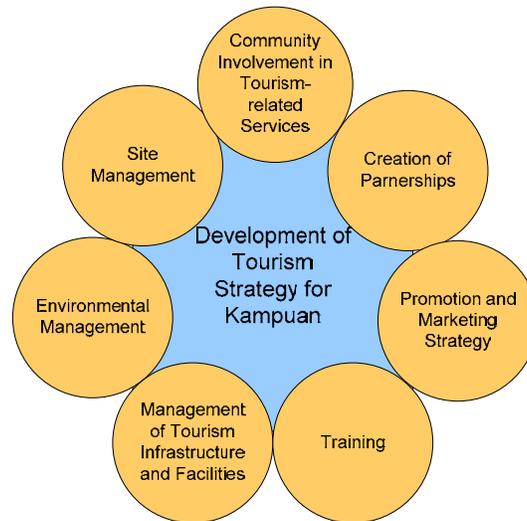


Figure 1: Elements of Tourism Strategy

Based on the market study the strategy should consider the following possible products and services:

- Village circuits and tours
- Performances
- Homestays
- Small inns/ guesthouses
- Handicrafts
- Cooking classes
- Sale of agricultural goods
- Guiding businesses
- Bicycle rental
- Equipment rental e.g. fishing tools
- Small retail stores
- Local transportation service providers i.e. small vans connecting Kampuan to other attractions

It is important to note that each community must have the opportunity of assessing the costs and benefits of tourism-related activities and determining its future as it relates to tourism as a form of economic and community development. There should never be an assumption that tourism is right for all communities and there are clear cases where tourism may be inappropriate due to the social and cultural conditions of a community or from an environmental perspective.

In order for the local community to be involved in village-based tourism activities/businesses, it is essential that the villages have access to various kinds of technical assistance as illustrated in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Technical Support Required for Developing Village-based Products/Services

Economic Feasibility Assistance

The economic feasibility of each proposal must be assessed in order to determine if the tourism-related businesses that community wants to develop are viable. For example, in the case of a homestay program, the community should consider:

- how much money to spend in improving their houses for a homestay program
- how long it will take to begin to recover the investment made
- what the expected occupancy rate would be with special consideration that the area has a long rainy season period
- what level of accommodation will be appropriate for the community.

Small Business Advice

There is a clear need for technical expertise to provide capacity building and help in the development of business plans.

Product Development

There is a need to working directly with individuals or community groups in the development of tourism products that directly benefit local villagers. Specific actions include:

- Developing promotional plans and programs e.g. provision of information on community activities.
- Upgrading the quality of local products through a certification program managed by government or a non governmental entity.

How to Retain Income in the Community

Many locally-run businesses often use materials, products and services bought from other provinces or other regions of the country. That income is lost to the community and is known as leakage. The challenge is to lessen the leakage by providing locally produced goods and services and to use local materials that can be found/bought/planted from within the area. This has not only economic benefits but also helps to ensure a unique visitor experience.

Training

Capacity building activities must be oriented in such a way as to facilitate community members' capabilities to independently manage tourism activities, and plan for their future development. Training for each specific product and services that the local community plans to develop should be provided e.g. how to manage tourism-related business, what is required for providing tourism-related services (homestay, ecotourism, local restaurants, guides), safety for boat services, hygiene standards for local food and accommodation, how to deal with tourists and how to maintain their way of life, culture and housing etc.

Marketing and Promotion

Overall marketing and promotion assistance and advice must be provided to local villagers. Examples of specific strategies that should be put into place to ensure the sustainable marketing of each village are:

- Work with relevant agencies such as TAT, National Parks and provincial and district offices.
- Establish partnerships with the tourism private sector.

Interpretation

Kampuan sub-district has attractions which could be important for tourism if they were effectively presented. Therefore, interpretation for attractions, villages, traditional life style, festivals and local products should be developed.

Monitoring System

Understanding how well the community is doing and what impacts occurred as a result of tourism-related activities, a monitoring system will be required.