

Klong Khwang

Tourism Development Plan



**Prepared by the
Canadian Universities Consortium
Urban Environmental Management
Training & Technology Transfer Program
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With the People of Klong Khwang

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INTRODUCTION

Process

This plan has been developed in a cooperative manner with the people from the village of Klong Khwang and the Training and Technology Transfer Program of the Canadian Universities Consortium Urban Environment Management Project at the Asian Institute of Technology. The plan is not the result of the traditional client/consultant relationship where the consultant prepares a plan and then presents it to the community. While the TTTP team has worked closely with the community, it is the community with its most capable leadership that determined the nature of the tourism development that the residents should seek to achieve. The TTTP team has provided input and technical advice and has also helped to document the tourism planning and development process. Thai design professionals have been used in the physical design process.

The Tourism Authority of Thailand has been a significant participant in the planning process. Staff has been involved in many aspects of the overall planning and development work that is reflected in this plan.

Objectives

The community identified a series of objectives as the planning process developed. The residents clearly identified the need for a tourism plan that they could use for their own purposes as well as to obtain funding. They were concerned that the essential elements of their community could be presented to the tourists in a professional manner. They were also concerned that the way of life and integrity of the community could be protected. It became clear that the community sought tourism as a way of supplementing their income and not as a replacement for their traditional way of life which is agriculturally based.

Nature of the Development Plan

This development plan should be seen as a document that helps to find the future development of the community. It is recognized by all stakeholders that the plan will have to be reviewed on a regular basis. The document is brief in order to make it accessible to as wide an audience as is possible.

SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

The community of Klong Khwang is located in the Province of Nakhon Ratchasima in the Northeast region of Thailand. It is located about a one-hour drive west of the Province's capital city, Korat. The village belongs to the Sema Tambon (sub-district), which consists of 13 villages, and the Amphoe (district) of Sung Noen, which has a population of 75,000. Klong Khwang itself has over 100 households.

Klong Khwang is located at the end of a paved road, near other similar small villages, and is surrounded by picturesque rice fields. The village is laid out along unpaved streets and narrow walkways. There is no piped water system but there are a number of large rainwater catchment containers in the village. Sewage is drained into nearby klongs and ponds.

Klong Khwang has a village headman (poo yai baan) who is elected by villagers. The community is situated in an ancient area, approximately 2000 years old, and is considered one of the first settlements in Nakhon Ratchasima. It is a traditional northeastern village with wooden houses built on stilts.

Klong Khwang is advertised in TAT brochures, on TV, in a calendar, and as part of the "Visit Korat" promotional scheme. While tourist surveys have never been conducted in the village, there are estimates of approximately 40-60 visitors per day during festival weekends. In addition, Klong Khwang receives small tour groups (approximately 10 people each) that book in advance with the TAT. In the case of international tourist groups, TAT usually assists the village by providing English-speaking guides. The two main groups of visitors are Buddhists (who come to pay their respects to the reclining Buddha) and those interested in archeology. Presently, the tourism related tourism income generation of Klong Khwang village is from the contribution of tourists to the temple that amounts to around 10,000 Baht/ month. Approximately 70% of tourist earnings going towards temple maintenance and 30% toward other activities. Korat received 2.7 million visitors in 1998 with less than 1% visiting Klong Khwang.

DEVELOPMENT SCENARIOS

After a great deal of discussion between the community and the TTTP team there appeared to be three possible routes for the community to follow.

Minimal Tourism Development

This option essentially is the status quo position that sees the community accepting tourists without any physical changes to the community or the organized involvement of local people. This scenario sees minimal financial investment as well as little financial return. On the other hand there is minimal disruption to the physical and social fabric of the community.

Moderate Tourism Development

This option recognizes that there is support for tourism development in the community. It accepts that the social fabric of the community is a fragile one that would see only moderate levels of visitation as acceptable. It recognizes that there will be a certain level of change within the community and supports the development of the ancient city. There would be small-scale interpretive programs for the local people to provide relevant information to the tourists and a concerted effort would be made to develop a handicraft industry. In addition, this option also includes the construction and operation of a restaurant catering to the tourists. The community would offer the visitor an organized insight into its life and traditions through demonstrations and tours. In this scenario the predominant tourism group would be domestic with a small number of foreign visitors.

Larger Scale Tourism Development

This option would see tourism as a year around activity possibly with specific people in the community responsible for the management and interpretation of the community's resources. A large-scale interpretive program for the community would be focused more on international tourists. There would be serious consideration of home stays. In this scenario there would continue to be an emphasis on domestic tourists but there would be an important percentage of foreign visitors in the total visitor flow. It is obvious that this scenario would be more disruptive to the community but would also provide for higher economic returns.

THE DEVELOPMENT PLAN

The community has chosen to proceed with the moderate tourism development scenario. It is felt that this would provide for the least disruption to the community while providing for much-needed income at various times of the year. It would also require a much lower level of involvement on the part of all residents and a smaller financial investment. The scenario recognizes the fragility of the community, its limited carrying capacity, restricted budgets, the economic return the community desires and the need to protect the agricultural base of the community. This is not to say that tourism is seen as an unimportant activity but rather that it forms part of the community's overall development objectives.

The economic results of tourism will be shared between the need to provide funding for the upkeep of the Wat and support for community improvement.

1. The Nature of the Tourism Product & Market

Klong Khwang has three important tourism assets. These assets are:

- the largest reclining stone Buddha in Thailand
- the wheel
- an archaeological site of an ancient city.

The ancient city has become better known to the public during the period of archaeological excavation. The site does not belong to Klong Khwang village but rather to the Sub-District Management Organization.

In addition to these attractions the village, in terms of its design and construction, helps to present a picture of traditional Thai physical form and way of life. This unique combination helps to define a tourism product that would be of interest to both residents of Thailand as well as foreign visitors. It was from this premise that the development work proceeded.

2. Income Generation Opportunities

To complement these major attractions the community is considering a number of income generating opportunities.

Running a Restaurant

The officially constituted women's group is willing to run such an enterprise. They would sell traditional food such as Korat fried noodles or Papaya salad with sticky rice and fried chicken. The profit from this restaurant would go to community projects.

Handicraft Development

There are women and old people in the village who are interested in making handicrafts as a source of extra income. They need help in developing the right products at acceptable standards. It is recommended that the village headman contact TAT Training Division, for assistance.

Promoting Local Agricultural Products.

There is interest to promote locally produced agricultural products and fruits such as mushrooms, rice or some desserts.

Walking Tours and Demonstrations

The community has agreed to arrange walking tours in their village for tourists to present traditional life style as well as demonstrations of such activities such as weaving. This initiative will require assistance in training guides as well as developing the messages. There would be a small charge for tours and demonstrations.

3. Klong Khwang as Part of a Tourism Circuit

This plan assumes that Klong Khwang is part of a tourism circuit with Korat as the entry point and Phimai as another attraction. Presently, the local TAT is planning to develop a tourism circuit for several places in Song Noen district including Klong Khwang village and the ancient city. The TAT has developed sample tour routes and is going to promote these through travel agencies as well as the media. The community should start working closely with local TAT on tourism promotion and management.

4. Marketing Plan and Promotion Strategy

The community's visitation level objectives do not require a significant marketing initiative or ambitious promotional efforts. It is recommended that the TAT work with the community in identifying specific target groups and initially raising the community's profile in Korat. This will help to ensure that at various times of the year there are sufficient tourism numbers to both justify investment in the community as well as provide for reasonable financial returns.

The tourism brochure and postcards that have been developed by the TTTP team are one way of helping to begin to increase the profile of the community. It is important to note that until there has been sufficient experience in tourism that promotion strategies should take into account the capacity of the community to deal with tourism numbers. There is still a significant potential for the community to market itself to high-end foreign tourists.

5. Physical Plan

The physical plan for the community has a number of dimensions. The work that has commenced on the ancient city should proceed with caution for the integrity of the archaeological resources. This will require that the community work with the Department of Fine Arts and the TTTP in developing a plan that provides access to the visitor in a culturally sensitive manner. There is no doubt that the ancient city site requires security. Certainly during visiting times there will be a need for a physical presence to both protect the site as well as interpret it to the public. There will be the need to provide for parking.

The main aspects of the physical plan are illustrated in Figure 1. Specific aspects include:

Information Kiosk:

The plan recognizes the need for an information kiosk located in a prominent position to provide the visitor with information, such as history of the reclining Buddha, the wheel and the village itself, and interpretation of the archaeological remains found in Klong Khwang. It is suggested that this kiosk be built of traditional materials.

Signage

It is important to have appropriate signage to help guide the tourist.

Infrastructure

The community must ensure that it has sufficient toilets and drinking water for visitors. For larger events security and medical services may be required.

Entry to Community

The entry to the community should continue to be improved. Figure 2 provides an illustration of the final product.

Resting Area

The area near the Wat should be improved to provide a resting and meeting place for tourists and community residents as illustrated in Figure 3.

6. Development Controls

As has been discussed part of the tourism product is the traditional village character. There is a recognition that as incomes rise and tastes change the physical form of the community may also change. There is no doubt that if this change occurs in a manner that significantly alters the character of the community a portion of the tourism appeal of Klong Khwang will be lost. This is strictly a matter for the community to resolve and if it is felt that maintaining the existing character is an important community objective some form of development control will have to be put into place. If the community chooses to adopt such controls the TTTP team will help to devise a process and series of guidelines for community consideration.

Figure 4 demonstrates how the original materials can be used to maintain the traditional fabric of the community.

7. Management

Given the option chosen, it is felt that the existing village administration is well placed to maintain the ongoing management of the tourism aspects of the village.

8. Resource Implications

One of the advantages of this development scenario is the minimal investment that must be made by the community in infrastructure and building development. There will be costs associated with such things as signage, toilets, tourism booth and promotion. It would seem to be prudent to ensure that the costs can be met with projected revenues over a five-year period and that promotional activities are in keeping with the desired level of tourism visitation.

9. Economic Impact

There can be no expectation of significant economic returns to the community in this particular development scenario. The domestic tourism base as well as the limited potential for organized tourism activity implies a moderate but important source of funding for village projects. The community does not want to collect the money from entry fees, flowers and toilet service. However, souvenir and handicraft sales, restaurant income, and walking tours will generate income.

10. Developing Guiding Capacity

If the community wants to increase the percentage of foreign tourists, it should build up the language capacity of some of the community and to encourage them also to take some tourism courses that TAT could arrange. Given sufficient tourism this activity could create part time employment. The assistance from TAT or cultural council is essential for enhancing the guiding capacity of the community.

11. Capital Budget

In order to carry out the plan for tourism promotion of Klong Khwang village, financial support is essential. There are a number of things that the community should do for improving the village to be more attractive. Cost estimation for all activities are as follows.

| Items | Descriptions | Cost |
|-------------------------------|--|----------------|
| 1 large sign at the main road | Aluminum plate with 2 steel columns. (150x120 cm) | 3,000 |
| 3 medium signs | Aluminum plate and steel column (60x40 cm) | 1,800 |
| 6 small signs in the village | Wood and steel column (40x10 cm) | 2,500 |
| Small information center | 15 sq. m ² , single story building | 130,000 |
| Plants | Flowers, Clay | 5,000 |
| Toilet improvement | | 8,000 |
| Parking lot | Columns with the net | 7,700 |
| TOTAL (Baht) | | 158,000 |

12. Operating Budget

| Items | Descriptions | Cost |
|---------------------|--------------|---------------|
| Brochure | | 5,000 |
| Postcard | | 10,000 |
| Marketing research | | 30,000 |
| Media Promotion | | 10,000 |
| TOTAL (Baht) | | 55,000 |

13. Monitoring

The purpose of monitoring tourism development is simply to make certain that tourism activities are meeting sustainable development goals. As tourism grows within the community it will have particular impacts and changes which cannot necessarily be foreseen. The Klong Khwang community with the assistance of TAT and local district officials must monitor the impacts on the economic, physical, environment and social and cultural issues every year. This type of information will enable the community to determine its ongoing interest and participation in tourism in Klong Khwang.

If a community develops indicators along with its community tourism plan it can then tell how the community is being affected. It is difficult to predict with any accuracy how tourism is going to affect a community and it is therefore important to measure what is happening in order that plans can be altered.

Below are the simple indicators that should be easily measured and collected for monitoring success and impacts.

| Issues | Monitoring Indicators |
|----------------|--|
| Economic | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of money the community obtains from tourism categorized by these following items:<ul style="list-style-type: none">• donations• food and drink• souvenir sales• sale of agricultural products• walking and demonstration tours• Jobs created by tourism activity |
| Physical | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Damage to the reclining Buddha.• Whether grass and foliage is getting trampled or ruined.• Damage on the roads/ parking lot caused by buses and other vehicles. |
| Environment | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Problems with solid waste.• Problems with wastewater.• Noise pollution from tourists/ buses.• Air pollution from buses/ vehicles. |
| Socio-cultural | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Changes to the behavior of the community.• Changes to the housing.• Changes to the dressing of people. |

FIGURES



Figure 1: Physical Plan

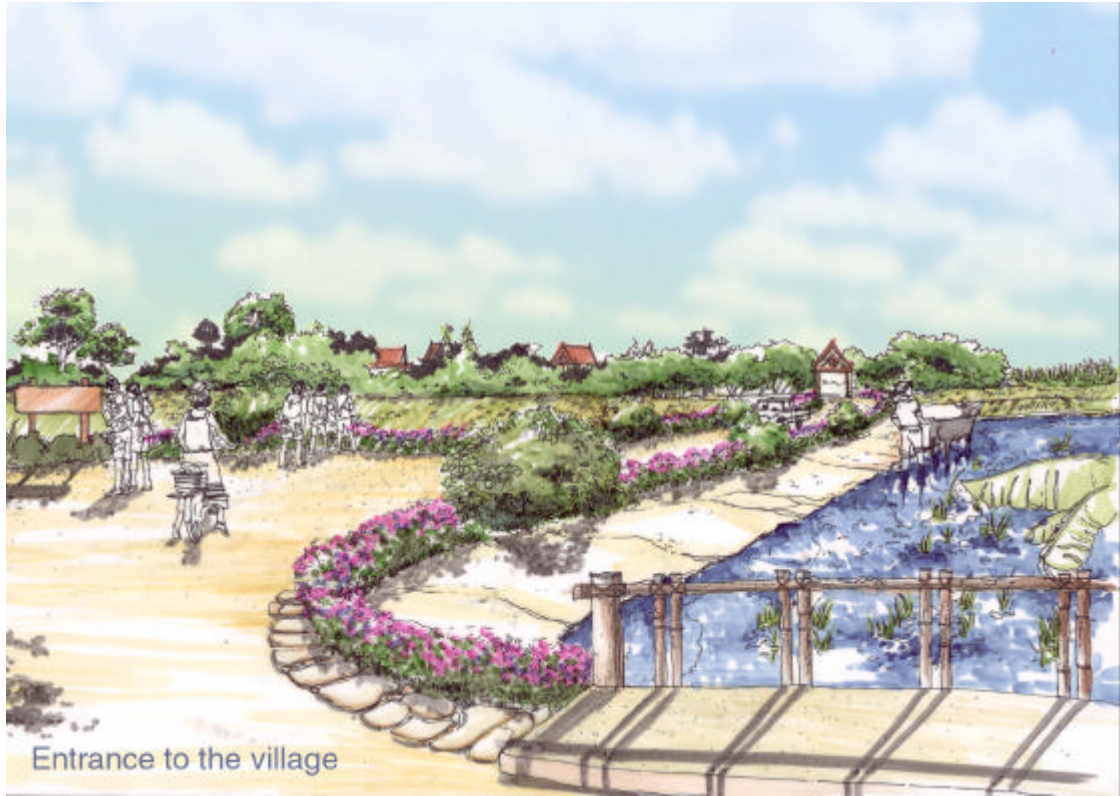


Figure 2: Village Entrance



Figure 3: Plaza



Figure 4: Traditional Materials & Form