

## Abstract – CBT Forum in Bangkok

### **GAPS AND CHALLENGES WITHIN THE CONCEPT OF COMMUNITY-BASED TOURISM (CBT)**

Worldwide community-based tourism (CBT) projects have become extremely popular among international donor organisations in the past ten years. In Latin America, numerous so-called ecolodges have been established without giving the village communities a clear picture about the threats and challenges that may arise when managing tourism accommodations.

As a consequence, very often what started off as a promising project involving enthusiastic local people turned into a sad story after few years. This is due to various reasons, including local and international consultants' ignorance of issues such as the challenges of communication (language/internet) in the communities, a widespread misconception of CBT, and a lack of attractive product development and successful and well-thought marketing strategies.

Nicole Häusler not only explains the reasons for these failures but also broadens the focus of her presentation to address little-discussed aspects of CBT such as income distribution within CBT and organisational culture versus community culture.

To become successful, CBT projects require well-managed business cooperation with a local and/or national tour operator. In many of these cases, the private sector owners have a Western background or belong to the ethnic majority group of the countries, while the involved communities often belong to religious or ethnic minority groups.

Local culture has long been recognised as a critically important factor in shaping management styles in different countries. For that reason, the success of such business cooperation does not depend only on economic factors. Indeed, another essential precondition for success is that the cultures of the involved businesses coalesce.

Communities, like businesses, are based on complex social systems with existing livelihood strategies that, in some ways, may even be incompatible with the organisational structure of the private enterprises. One must also consider the fact that tourism and hospitality are service and entertainment industries, which means that those who work in these fields, from chambermaids to top management, are trained in hospitality and business affairs, not in working with communities. The paper discusses these aspects and provides recommendations for further activities.

*Key terms: Reasons for failures of community-based tourism; Blind spots: Product and Marketing Development, Fair income distribution, Role of organisational culture and community culture*

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