Assessing Pro-Poor Tourism Principles in Practice:
Ethnic Tourism in Northern Thailand and Lao PDR

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ABSTRACT

Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT) is promoted by certain international organizations as an approach to tourism that benefits poor people and contributes to the United Nations' Millennium Development Goals for global poverty eradication. It is premised on a set of principles that have yet to be adequately tested on the ground for their attainability. Emerging critiques suggest that PPT is based more on rhetoric than reality.

In a case study of ethnic tourism in northern Thailand and Lao PDR, I assessed the feasibility of putting PPT principles into practice. Assessment was defined as identifying, primarily through interviews, challenges to achieving the principles in the study region. I documented 13 major challenges and extrapolated implications for PPT as a global strategy. My results indicate that PPT is more of a livelihood supplement than a poverty solution, and that significant hurdles must be overcome before large-scale poverty elimination through ethnic tourism can be realized.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBT</td>
<td>Community-based tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GMS</td>
<td>Greater Mekong Subregion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GTZ</td>
<td>German government technical assistance agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao PDR</td>
<td>Lao People’s Democratic Republic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LDC</td>
<td>Least Developed Country</td>
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<tr>
<td>LNTA</td>
<td>Lao National Tourism Administration</td>
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<tr>
<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-governmental organizations</td>
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<tr>
<td>NHEP</td>
<td>Nam Ha Ecotourism Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPT</td>
<td>Pro-Poor Tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPTP</td>
<td>Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>SNV</td>
<td>Netherlands Development Organization</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ST-EP</td>
<td>Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>United Kingdom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UNESCAP</td>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific</td>
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<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization</td>
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<td>UNWTO</td>
<td>United Nations World Tourism Organization</td>
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<td>US</td>
<td>United States</td>
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CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION

Tourism is reputedly the world’s largest service sector industry and employer, and one of the fastest growing segments of the global economy. International tourist arrivals rose steadily from 25 million in 1950 to a record of 842 million in 2006, generating US$680 billion in international tourism receipts (WTO 2007), contributing 10.4% of global gross domestic product, and employing an estimated 231 million people (WTTC n.d.). Given its impact on the global economy, tourism is increasingly being heralded for its potential to address one of the most pressing global issues of our time—poverty. The rapid growth and importance of tourism in developing and Least Developed Country (LDC) economies, where the majority of the world’s poor live, is the primary rationale for harnessing tourism as a tool to fight poverty. Additional arguments for tourism’s pro-poor growth potential include its wide scope for participation and linkages, labour-intensiveness, relative gender balance, reliance on poor people’s assets (i.e., culture and nature), and the fact that it delivers consumers/tourists (i.e., international markets) directly to the product/destination, opening up formal, informal and small-scale business and employment opportunities and bringing infrastructure and off-farm diversification options to rural, remote, marginalized areas with few other development options (Deloitte and Touche et al. 1999a; PPTP 2004c, 2004d, 2004e, 2004f, 2004g; Roe et al. 2004a; WTO 2002b; 2004d, 2006b). Cultural tourism—which includes ethnic tourism, or contact with ethnic minorities and their cultures (Smith 2003)—is among the fastest growing tourism segments worldwide, presenting developing countries with one of the few comparative advantages they have in the global economy (De Villiers 2001; WTO 2004d, 2005a; Yunis 2005).
Theoretical approaches to tourism as a vehicle for development have gone through various permutations since the 1950s, but it is only since the late 1990s that poverty elimination has come to the fore as a motive force for tourism (Scheyvens 2007). The anti-poverty tourism trend coincided with the growing global consensus on poverty as the paramount development challenge (Mowforth and Munt 2003; Scheyvens 2007), considering that almost half of the world’s six billion people were still living on less than US$2 per day and one-fifth on less than US$1 per day at the turn of the millennium (World Bank 2001, 3). The adoption in 2000 of Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) to tackle poverty on multiple fronts and to halve the number of people living in extreme poverty (less than US$1 per day) by 2015 (UN Millennium Project 2006) provided a “unique selling point” for those advocating tourism as a powerful new contributor to poverty eradication (Mowforth and Munt 2003, 271).

Pro-Poor Tourism (PPT)—an approach to tourism development and management that generates net benefits for poor people (PPTP n.d., What)—was introduced in the late 1990s through policy documents and reports sponsored primarily by the United Kingdom (UK) Department for International Development to explore the potential of tourism to eliminate poverty (Goodwin 2002). The Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership (PPTP)—a collaborative research initiative between Harold Goodwin of the International Centre for Responsible Tourism, Carolyn Ashley of the Overseas Development Institute, and Dilys Roe of the International Institute for Environment and Development—formed in 1999 out of its UK-sponsored work on PPT and sustainable livelihoods in Southern Africa (Goodwin 2002; 2005; Scheyvens 2007). The PPTP commissioned and synthesized a set of six case studies in different countries to formulate implementation strategies and good practice lessons, which was instrumental in framing the discourse on PPT. Impacts were varied, but they concluded
that PPT strategies can have a positive impact on the poor and "tilt' the sector towards the poor, even if only at the margin" (Ashley et al. 2001a, 44). The PPTP continues to generate papers and reports on PPT, mostly available on its website (PPTP n.d., PPT).

The United Nations World Tourism Organization (UNWTO)—a specialized UN agency and global forum for tourism policy and practical expertise on behalf of its 150 member countries and more than 300 affiliated travel and tourism industry members, formerly called the World Tourism Organization (WTO) (WTO n.d., About)—took up the PPT agenda in 2002 with the launching of its first publication on tourism and poverty alleviation (WTO 2002b) and the Sustainable Tourism-Eliminating Poverty (ST-EP) initiative in conjunction with the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development at the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (PPTP 2005; Sofield et al. 2004). ST-EP aims "to refocus and incentivise Sustainable Tourism—social, economic and ecological—to make it a primary tool for Eliminating Poverty in the world's poorest countries, particularly the LDCs: bringing development and jobs to people who are living on less than a dollar a day" (WTO 2002b, 15). UNWTO is actively promoting ST-EP to policy makers and has produced several documents and seminar reports on tourism and poverty alleviation (WTO 2002a, 2002b, 2004d, 2005a, 2005c, 2006a). In addition, it has identified 150 projects in 19 countries around the world to receive support through the newly established ST-EP Foundation and ST-EP Trust Fund, mostly in Africa, but also in some Asian countries like the Lao People's Democratic Republic (the Lao PDR) (WTO n.d., ST-EP; WTO 2006b).

Thus, two major proponents of tourism as a vehicle for global poverty elimination have emerged in the last decade: 1) the UK-based PPTP, and 2) UNWTO. They urge the private sector, governments, international institutions, donor agencies, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), and other tourism stakeholders to adopt a PPT approach on the
conviction that tourism can make a significant contribution to the UN MDGs, particularly the priority to halve extreme poverty by 2015. The international community first endorsed the link between tourism and poverty eradication in 1999 at a meeting of the UN Commission on Sustainable Development, motivated largely by the UK’s pioneering work in this area (Goodwin 2002, 2005; Scheyvens 2007). The Commission’s decision on tourism and sustainable development urged governments to “maximize the potential of tourism for eradicating poverty by developing appropriate strategies in cooperation with all major groups, indigenous and local communities” (UN 1999). A year later, the UN Programme of Action for the Least Developed Countries adopted tourism as a priority sector for the first time, asserting that “international tourism is one of the few economic sectors through which LDCs have managed to increase their participation in the global economy” and that “[i]t can be an engine of employment creation, poverty eradication, ensuring gender equality, and protection of the natural and cultural heritage” (UN 2001, 34). In 2005, a UN Declaration on Harnessing Tourism for the Millennium Development Goals was signed at the initiative of UNWTO, calling for the integration of tourism into national development plans and poverty reduction strategies in recognition of the contributions that tourism can make “to poverty alleviation, environmental conservation and creation of employment opportunities for women, indigenous communities and young people” (WTO 2005b, 1). A technical seminar and Ministerial conference on cultural tourism and poverty alleviation in 2004, organized by UNWTO, also culminated in the signing of the Hue Declaration on Cultural Tourism and Poverty Alleviation by 11 Ministers of Tourism from the Asia-Pacific region (WTO 2004a, 2004b).

In addition to the signing of several UN declarations, there is a burgeoning interest on the part of numerous international organizations in linking tourism and poverty
reduction. These organizations include the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO); the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development; the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP); the United Nations Environment Programme; and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP); multilateral banks and institutions, such as the Asian Development Bank (ADB); international donors and development agencies, among them the Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), also the initial founder and funder of the ST-EP Trust Fund; New Zealand’s International Aid & Development Agency; and the German government technical assistance agency (GTZ); industry associations like the Pacific Asia Travel Association; research centres like the Asian Institute of Technology in Bangkok; Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Tourism in Australia; George Washington University in the United States; and London Metropolitan University in the UK; and international NGOs like the World Conservation Union (Harrison and Schipani 2007; Scheyvens 2007).

A decade into the PPT campaign, however, the concept remains ill-defined with little concurrence on its meaning or practice; both are still based more on potentiality than actuality (Ashley and Goodwin 2007; PPTP 2005, 2007). The push for its international adoption stems primarily from PPT’s presumed potential to reduce global poverty. The evidence to date is sparse when it comes to substantiating claims that tourism can lift poor countries and peoples out of poverty (Ashley and Goodwin 2007; PPTP 2005, 2007). Instead, the bulk of the PPT literature has, until recently, consisted of reports, working papers, micro-level case studies, conference proceedings and other documents (largely unpublished, but available online) focused on establishing best practice and persuading stakeholders that tourism is a viable means of reducing poverty and should, therefore, be
adopted and implemented wherever appropriate. Some potential constraints have been acknowledged, but the limitations of PPT tend to be downplayed in the PPT literature when the primary emphasis is on legitimizing tourism as a tool for poverty alleviation (Mowforth and Munt 2003).

Theoretical debates and critiques of the relationship between tourism and poverty reduction have only recently emerged in the academic and non-academic literature, with the first serious compilation of scholarly commentaries appearing in a 2007 special issue of Current Issues in Tourism (Hall and Cooper 2007). Critics question the extent to which a global industry that is driven by a neoliberal economic growth-biased paradigm, dominated by private sector interests, and structured in such a way that it benefits wealthy nations and people over poor ones can be transformed to redress structural inequalities, power imbalances, uneven development, ownership and consumption, and severe poverty in any real way (Chok et al. 2007; Hall 2007; Hall and Brown 2006; Johnston 2006; Mowforth and Munt 2003; Pleumarom 2007; Scheyvens 2007; Schilcher 2007; Solomon 2005). Macroeconomic growth statistics are frequently cited to legitimize tourism’s role in poverty mitigation (Pleumarom 2007). Yet, tourism expansion is not “synonymous with poverty reduction, in fact, in some cases it entrenches existing inequalities” (Scheyvens and Momsen 2008, 22) and inequality obstructs poverty reduction potential (Schilcher 2007). In order for PPT to truly be pro-poor, equity must be given policy priority over growth, and mechanisms put in place to disproportionately benefit the poor (especially the poorest) over the non-poor (Chok et al. 2007; Schilcher 2007). Without such redistributive policies and practices, PPT will fail not only to have a genuine impact on poverty, but it will exacerbate extreme poverty and inequality (Chok et al. 2007; Schilcher 2007).
PPT champions steer away from questioning the validity of PPT and instead focus on ways of making tourism more pro-poor, arguing that even a small shift in such a massive industry could potentially improve the livelihoods of millions of poor people (Ashley et al. 2001a; Goodwin 2002). “[I]f it were possible to retain more of the profits of tourism within the host country, and to ensure that more of the benefits reach poor groups, there should be considerable potential for tourism-based poverty reduction. This is the basis of pro-poor tourism” (Roe et al. 2004b, 147). Because tourism is already a reality for many poor people around the world, “[a]ttention now needs to be paid to finding and testing effective mechanisms for turning principles into practice and delivering benefits on the ground” (Roe et al. 2003, 20).

In summary, there is significant debate surrounding PPT and more specifically, its intended consequences:

- Can PPT significantly contribute to the global goal of poverty reduction?
- Can ‘ideal’ PPT principles be put into ‘real’ practice?

My research contributes to this critical discussion by examining the feasibility of successfully translating PPT principles into practice. Rather than search for “how to” strategies, as is the norm in much of the ‘grey’ literature on PPT, I take a step back and assess the likelihood of operationalizing PPT principles by seeking to document whether they will constructively work on the ground.

According to PPT proponents, principles define PPT. “Ultimately, PPT consists of a set of principles rather than a distinct form of tourism” (Cattarinich 2001, 5), and “[i]t is the principles of Pro-Poor Tourism that are important – not the term” (PPTP 2005, 1). To my knowledge, no prior study has assessed PPT on the basis of principles, in spite of their stated
importance as the foundation of PPT. "Assessing" in this study was achieved by identifying challenges that arise in the process of applying the principles in the field.

Specifically, I assessed the feasibility of operationalizing PPT principles in a case study of ethnic tourism in northern Thailand and Lao PDR. I sought to identify challenges associated with putting these principles into practice. The research question addressed in this thesis is: Relative to ethnic tourism in northern Thailand and Lao PDR, what challenges affect putting PPT principles into practice, and what are their implications for the ability of PPT to achieve poverty elimination? Ethnic tourism is the focus of my research on PPT because ethnic minorities are amongst the poorest and most marginalized populations in the world and their cultures are regarded as valuable resources for PPT development.

This study is an exploratory one using qualitative, case study methodology based primarily on interviews. In my research, I did not seek alternative methodologies to implement PPT principles. Instead, I sought to scrutinize assumptions about PPT's poverty elimination potential by deconstructing the underpinning principles of PPT and exploring constraints to putting those PPT principles into practice in the Thailand-Lao PDR case study region. In so doing, I respond to those scholars who call for more critical analysis of PPT and its pitfalls (rather than simply concentrating on its potential) and the likelihood that it can go beyond isolated examples of reducing poverty (e.g., Hall 2007; Mowforth and Munt 2003; Scheyvens 2007). In the case study, I sought to identify and codify challenges to actualizing PPT principles relative to ethnic tourism initiatives in Thailand and the Lao PDR. To do so most effectively, I examined a wide range of initiatives in the region and drew upon the perceptions, experiences and practical realities of multiple stakeholders.

I followed five quasi-sequential steps to answer the research question stated above. The first step was to distill from the PPT literature the key principles to be applied and
tested in the field. Step two was to develop interview questions reflecting the PPT principles identified in step one. In step three, individuals, organizations, and projects involved or concerned with increasing tourism benefits to poor, ethnic minority communities in Thailand and the Lao PDR were identified through a mix of internet research, literature and document searches, and snowball sampling. Most of the projects were called ecotourism, community-based tourism (CBT) or voluntourism, and did not explicitly use PPT terminology. Individuals from a range of projects and stakeholder groups were selected in order to gather a variety of perspectives.

In step four, 73 informal, face-to-face interviews were conducted with representatives from 37 organizations (international organizations and development agencies, local NGOs, government departments, tour companies and industry associations, universities and research institutes) and 10 ethnic minority villages. Interview data were supplemented by field visits, direct observations, and secondary data collection. Upon completion of this step, data were codified by principle. The final step was to separate out and organize a set of challenges affecting the execution of PPT principles. In the process of undertaking this research project, I identified 13 significant challenges (or categories of challenges).

This chapter provided a brief overview of the literature on PPT. It underlined the gap between ideal principles and real practice, from which the research question to explore implementation challenges unfolds. The following chapter contains an explanation of the methodology used in my case study. Chapter 3 discusses PPT in greater detail and identifies the PPT principles used as the basis for my research (step one of my methodology). The case study region is also introduced in Chapter 3. Chapter 4 summarizes the challenges that most influence PPT principles in the target region and the
degree to which they compromise the ability of PPT to achieve the goal of poverty eradication. Chapter 5 concludes with implications of the research for putting PPT principles into practice at the international level.
CHAPTER 2 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For my research, I first developed a methodology for assessing PPT, based on its principles, and then applied it to the Thailand-Lao case study. The heart of my methodology was to identify on-the-ground challenges to realizing five key PPT principles (further explained in Chapter 3) in northern Thailand and Lao PDR. The essential steps were to: (1) codify PPT principles; (2) use qualitative research techniques to gather a wide range of data on perspectives and practical experiences related to PPT and its principles; (3) collate the data according to the PPT principles; and (4) extract and identify impediments to putting the expressed PPT ideals (i.e., PPT principles) into practice. Thus, “assessing PPT” in this study means identifying challenges to realization of the five PPT principles.

Principles were selected as the basis for critiquing PPT because they form a core component of PPT. Identifying challenges was the means by which principles were assessed in order to explore the gap between the ideals and practical realities of PPT. No systematic method for testing principles was found in the PPT or related literature. Therefore, I constructed my own elementary methodology that consisted of synthesizing a single set of principles to, first of all, more clearly define PPT and, secondly, to provide a foundation for assessing and critiquing PPT.

In section 2.1, I outline the qualitative data gathering techniques employed. This includes a discussion of my three primary data-gathering methods (interviewing, observation, and secondary data), a description of my sampling and selection procedures, and an account of the field work conducted. In section 2.2, some of the difficulties and limitations encountered in the research are discussed.
2.1 Qualitative Data Gathering Techniques

The methodology I developed is inductive and qualitative, with an emphasis on interviewee perceptions. Qualitative approaches are beneficial when a phenomenon is too new for standardized instruments, as in the case of PPT. In addition, it is beneficial for discovering meaning in particular situations through flexible means, especially for learning from people’s experiences (Patton 2002). Identifying challenges to practicing PPT principles is a task that requires gathering people’s impressions and perspectives; hence, I chose qualitative over quantitative methodology. A drawback is that qualitative research can rarely be replicated or generalized and it tends to be less objective than quantitative research (Neuman 2004; Patton 1987).

Case Study:

Case study methodology is advantageous when exploring and seeking to understand a current, complex subject in real world circumstances where events cannot be controlled or manipulated (Yin 2003). This methodology was, therefore, chosen for studying the complex, new phenomenon of PPT in the real-life context of tourism to ethnic minority communities in Thailand and the Lao PDR. Case study methodology also has the advantage of being able to incorporate multiple methods and data sources, such as interviews, direct observation and documentary information (Yin 2003). I used three main data gathering techniques in my case study research: (1) informal, open-ended interviews; (2) observation; and (3) secondary data collection. Each is described below. Observation and secondary data were used to supplement interview research, which remained the central focus.
Interviews:

Interviews are a primary source of information for conducting case study research dealing with people, and often take the form of “guided conversations rather than structured queries” (Yin 2003, 80). Qualitative, unstructured interviewing provides the flexibility required for field research (Babbie 2004). It is useful for gathering rich data on intricate social realities (Jennings 2001), allowing people to express themselves in their own words and situations, getting senior officials to respond, following unexpected areas of inquiry, and probing issues more deeply (Taschereau 1998). Informal, open-ended interviewing with members of different stakeholder groups and tourism projects was the primary method used in my research. Interviews are especially helpful in situations where language barriers are present (Taschereau 1998), as was the case in Thailand and the Lao PDR. Interviewing a large number of people, even if it is in less depth, can be useful for exploring the complexities of a new phenomenon (Patton 2002), such as PPT. Furthermore, including multiple data sources is one means of mitigating the shortcomings of interviews—e.g., subjectivity, bias, recall error, and inexpressiveness (Patton 2002; Yin 1994, 2003). This study, therefore, sought to interview as many people as possible from different projects and stakeholder groups.

Based on the five PPT principles identified in Chapter 3, a rough interview guide with sample questions was developed for conducting interviews in the field. See Appendix 2 for a basic sketch of questions asked. Interviewees were asked to reflect on the PPT implications of their own tourism initiatives as well as the broader tourism industry, so the challenges profiled in Chapter 4 encompass both. Questions about the poor were often asked interchangeably with questions about ethnic minorities, both because the literature supports the idea that ethnic minorities are amongst the poorest populations and because many
projects in the study worked to improve the livelihoods of ethnic minority people in general, without intentionally targeting poor people or disaggregating between those who were poor and less poor. An attempt was made to maintain some consistency in the topics covered during interviews—i.e., local definitions of poverty, strategies targeted to the poorest members of communities, the degree to which the poorest people were involved and received benefits, economic and cultural impacts on ethnic minorities, perceptions of PPT and making tourism more pro-poor. However, different lines of inquiry were followed with different stakeholders and the areas of focus and probing varied depending on the interviewee, situation and context. In addition, a considerable amount of rephrasing and clarification was necessary because of language and cultural differences.

Observation:

Observation—watching, listening, and paying attention to local conditions, surroundings, and behaviours—is an important aspect of gathering information during field research (Neuman 2004). Field visits provide an opportunity to collect additional evidence by directly observing the social and environmental circumstances of the subject matter (Yin 2003). Participant-observation, where the researcher participates in the activities under study, is another type of observation that provides an insider perspective and unique insights into the situation that might otherwise not be obtained (Yin 2003). Observation (including participant-observation) augmented interviews in my field research and consisted primarily of site visits to 27 ethnic minority villages (10 in the Lao PDR and 17 in Thailand), including tours to some villages as a tourist. It also involved casual, spontaneous conversations with tourists, guides, drivers and others in the course of my travels. Observation was used primarily to engender overall (subjective) impressions, guide the way field research was conducted, provide clues for areas to probe in interviews, and help verify interview data by
witnessing what was happening on the ground. Systematic observation notes were not taken, however, so observation data were not specifically analyzed or reported on in the findings.

Secondary Data Collection:

Secondary data originate from sources other than the primary researcher and include government and other public documents, statistical information, archival records, and formal studies and administrative reports produced for government, business and non-profit sectors (Jennings 2001). Collecting documentary information during case study research is important for reinforcing and confirming evidence from other sources (Yin 2003). Secondary data collection involving internet research, literature search and document review was, therefore, used to supplement interview research in this study. Documents, reports, print materials and statistics were collected from online and in-country sources (e.g., from tourism projects, government departments, local libraries, museums and research institutes). In addition, a review of the academic literature was conducted on ethnic tourism in Thailand and the Lao PDR, some of which appears in section 3.4 of Chapter 3.

2.1.1 Sampling and Selection

Nonrandom snowball sampling was the primary method of sampling used in this study, whereby individuals, organizations and projects were continually identified through referrals from other people interviewed, as well as through internet and documentary research. Purposive sampling was also used to identify projects with a pro-poor orientation and, in certain villages, to select poor villagers (identified as such in the local context) with whom to conduct interviews. Projects and organizations were selected on the basis of their involvement or concern with increasing the benefits of tourism to poor ethnic minority communities. As a new concept, few examples of so-called PPT initiatives currently exist so,
in most instances, interviewees were involved with other forms of tourism like ecotourism, CBT and voluntourism. This selection was in line with an assumption made in some earlier studies (Cattarinich 2001; Deloitte and Touche et al. 1999a) that projects and forms of tourism concerned with improving economic, social, cultural, and environmental impacts would be more oriented to PPT.

In order to gather a variety of perspectives, and to assess the PPT involvement of multiple stakeholders, people were interviewed from as many projects and stakeholder groups as possible. Stakeholder groups included UN agencies, multilateral/regional institutions, international donors and development agencies, local and international NGOs, industry associations, government departments and tourism authorities, tourism companies, academic departments, research institutes, and ethnic minority villages. A total of 37 organizations were included, 27 of which were directly involved with implementing ecotourism, CBT, PPT, or voluntourism projects. See Appendix 3 for a listing of the different organizations and projects represented in the study, organized by stakeholder category and country.

Some organizations span more than one category and country but are listed only once. Notably absent from the stakeholder groups were tourists and large, multinational, mainstream tour operators/companies. Tourists were not selected because the study was focused on projects, organizations and villages located in the region. For the most part, the companies selected through snowball sampling were locally-based and/or part of ‘alternative’, niche markets like ecotourism or voluntourism. It is also important to note that, even when individuals from particular stakeholder groups were included in this study, their views were not necessarily representative of the larger group. The industry associations consulted perhaps represented a more mainstream perspective but, overall, there appeared to
be a degree of convergence in the viewpoints expressed by companies, international organizations, and NGOs directly involved with implementing tourism projects.

Face-to-face interviewing was preferred, so location was a selection factor—i.e., interviewees and field sites had to be in close enough proximity to travel there in person, and physically accessible within the allocated time frame and season. For the most part, English-speaking interviewees were selected (unless an interpreter was available), although English levels varied greatly. Whenever feasible, English speaking interviewees were contacted in advance by email and/or telephone to request and arrange interviews, but many interviews were arranged on the spot. Field visits to selected villages were organized through project representatives. An interpreter was required for all villager interviews and was generally arranged by the project working in that village. Usually, the interpreters were tour guides or other project staff with varying levels of English. All interviewees gave verbal consent to be interviewed. Verbal consent was used because of language differences, literacy issues and the oral traditions of many ethnic minority cultures, some having no traditional written language. English speakers were also provided with an information sheet on the research project.

2.1.2 Field Research Conducted

A total of 73 interviews, for which verbal consent was obtained, were conducted in the Lao PDR (29 interviews) and Thailand (44 interviews). Approximately one-third of these interviews took place with villagers from 10 different ethnic minority villages (4 in the Lao PDR; 6 in Thailand), representing Akha, Khamu, Karen, Hmong, and Lisu cultures. About one-fifth of the villagers interviewed represented very poor families as identified in the local context. See Table 1 for a breakdown of the number of interviews conducted with different organizations by stakeholder group and country. Of the total number of interviews, 38 (9 in
the Lao PDR; 29 in Thailand) were pre-arranged by phone and/or email and 35 (20 in the Lao
PDR; 15 in Thailand) were arranged spontaneously. Detailed handwritten notes were taken at
the time of 62 interviews, notes were jotted down soon after 11 interviews, and 43 were tape
recorded in addition to taking handwritten notes. Handwritten notes and tape recordings were
later transcribed electronically. Because not all of the interviews were tape recorded, and a
number of them were translated, some of the quotations in Chapter 4 were approximated. An
additional 45 casual, but directed, conversations (14 in the Lao PDR; 31 in Thailand) were
held with a variety of people, although consent was not obtained for the majority of them and
note-taking was minimal. In total, 118 interviews and focused conversations were held but, in
fact, a much larger number of people were interviewed because more than one person was
present at many of the interviews, especially in the communal context of villages. Interviews
ranged in length from 0.5 hours to 2.5 hours, with an average of about 1.5 hours. Village
visits ranged from a few hours to overnight stays. In a few instances, several days were spent
with project staff, visiting different villages and interspersing conversations throughout.
Interviews were held in widely divergent circumstances and locations, including people’s
homes, vehicles, offices, restaurants, coffee shops, social gatherings, treks and other travel
activities, flexing to interviewee preferences and local conditions as needed.

Field research took place over a period of three months, from July to October 2006.
About two-thirds of the time was spent in Thailand, clustered around the geographic centres
of Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, and Bangkok. Bangkok (which is not in the north) was included
because most of the regional and international organizations are based there. The remaining
one-third of the time was spent in the Lao PDR, clustered around the geographic centres of
Luang Namtha, Muang Sing, Luang Prabang, and Vientiane. The time spent in each location
ranged from several days to several weeks. Figure 1 situates Thailand and the Lao PDR in the
Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) with a box roughly outlining the case study region in the north of both countries.

Table 1: Number of Organizations and Interviews by Country and Stakeholder Group

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Thailand</th>
<th>Lao PDR</th>
<th>Thailand &amp; Laos</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td># Organi-</td>
<td># Inte-</td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>zations</td>
<td>views</td>
<td># Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local NGOs and locally-based international NGOs</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International development organizations / donors supporting projects</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional intergovernmental and industry associations</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tour companies</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government offices</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities / research institutes</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villages</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

TOTALS | 31 | 44 | 16 | 29 | 47 | 73 |
Figure 1: Map of the Greater Mekong Subregion

Source: ADB 2005a, 13
2.2 Limitations

Conducting field research required substantial flexibility to adapt to local conditions and restraints associated with climate, culture, geography, logistics, scheduling, time, and budget. My fieldwork coincided with the rainy season, making travel and village access more difficult. Carrying out research in a different culture and context, and my own gender, ethnicity and Western background, undoubtedly affected the research. Language barriers presented a real challenge and occasionally having to work through interpreters likely caused additional biases. The brief amount of time spent in each location and with each respondent influenced trust levels and the kind of information they felt comfortable divulging to a complete stranger in such a short period of time. It also restricted a deeper understanding of the local context and specific projects and circumstances.

Evaluating PPT was difficult because most of the projects in the region did not self-identify as PPT. Therefore, inferences often had to be drawn from other socially-oriented tourism projects that could have been categorized as PPT-like activities. Due to the diversity of stakeholders, projects, tourism-related activities, villages, ethnic groups, and situations included in this study, strict comparisons cannot be made. The lack of uniformity among interviews also posed challenges for identification and comparison of relevant trends. Furthermore, although the total number of interviews conducted was quite large, the small sample sizes of most individual stakeholder groups by country were usually too small to see patterns emerge. Rather than disaggregating and reporting on individual stakeholder groups and countries in every instance, interview responses were considered as a whole. Stakeholder group and country comparisons were only noted when there appeared to be differences. Interviews elicited people's direct experiences with implementing their own projects, as well
as their observations of tourism in the region and what they thought of the concepts in a more abstract sense. Findings are, therefore, broad, general, and subjective.

The case study process itself is nonobjective and case study findings contain biases (Jennings 2001). Interviews are potentially limited by personal bias, recall error, distortion, emotions, politics, self-interest, lack of awareness, inarticulateness, reactivity between interviewee and interviewer, and the inability to replicate and extrapolate data (Jennings 2001; Patton 2002; Yin 1994). Direct observations and participant-observation are also subject to selectivity, bias and potential role conflict (Yin 2003). Even documentary evidence is subject to reporting biases, unreliability, inaccuracies and incompleteness (Jennings 2001; Yin 2003). The next chapter provides an overview of PPT, ethnic tourism, ethnic minorities, and poverty in Thailand and the Lao PDR.
CHAPTER 3 – OVERVIEW OF PRO-POOR TOURISM AND CASE STUDY AREA

This chapter has three main purposes: (1) to provide an overview of PPT; (2) to extract a set of PPT principles from the PPT literature that can be assessed in real world situations—in the case of my research, that can be assessed in a case study of ethnic tourism in northern Thailand and Lao PDR; and (3) to introduce background information on the case study region.

3.1 What is PPT?

PPT is defined by the Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership (PPTP) as tourism that generates increased net benefits (i.e., benefits greater than costs) for poor people (PPTP 2004a). Economic benefits are important, but must be considered alongside a holistic range of livelihood impacts, including cultural, social and environmental costs and benefits. PPT is not a specific product or niche market of tourism, but an approach to tourism development and management that specifically takes into account the needs and opportunities of the poor, links poor people with tourism businesses, and reforms tourism so that benefits are more widely shared by the poor. PPT is driven by principles rather than being a specific type of tourism (Cattarinich 2001; PPTP 2005).

The term “Pro-Poor Tourism” was coined in a 1999 report commissioned by the UK Department for International Development to assess the potential for tourism to reduce poverty and to review the activities of international development agencies in this regard (Deloitte and Touche et al. 1999a; PPTP 2005). “Pro-poor” reflects broader development language that distinguishes between general economic growth and pro-poor growth. Pro-poor growth strives to balance growth with equity, disproportionately benefiting the poor over the
non-poor, reducing inequality, and providing the means for them to exit poverty (Deloitte and Touche et al. 1999a; Jamieson et al. 2004). PPT is, therefore, about reorienting tourism to open up opportunities specifically for the poor, rather than expanding the size of the sector and assuming benefits will eventually ‘trickle down’ to the poor (PPTP 2005). Figure 2 contrasts the predominant tourism development model, which views economic liberalization and free markets as the most appropriate mechanism for spreading benefits to all, with a PPT approach that explicitly targets and involves the poor and marginalized in each phase of the process.

Figure 2: Two Tourism Development Models

[Diagram showing two models of tourism development: Existing Tourism System and Pro-Poor Tourism.]

Source: UNESCAP 2003, 4

Chok et al. (2007) suggest that the pro-poor aspect of PPT is largely rhetoric in that UNWTO takes a status quo approach to unfettered growth and markets, and the PPTP merely tinkers at the margins with minor, pragmatic modifications to economic/tourism growth and market mechanisms. The distinctions between PPT and ST-EP are not always clear. Both promote tourism as a tool for global poverty eradication in connection with the MDGs and UNWTO documents draw upon the earlier work of the PPTP (WTO 2001; WTO 2002b).
There has also been some dispute over the use of PPT versus ST-EP terminology (PPTP 2005; Sofield et al. 2004) and other terms periodically crop up as well; for example, Sustainable Tourism Actively Reducing Poverty or STARP (Sofield 2003), anti-poverty tourism or APT (Zhao and Ritchie 2007), poverty tourism (Scheyvens 2001), and poorism (e.g., Lancaster 2007). Despite criticisms of PPT terminology (e.g., Meyer 2003), the term continues to be widely used. For my research, the term is applied somewhat loosely to encompass ST-EP and other approaches linking tourism with poverty alleviation, while recognizing potential differences between approaches.

The PPTP claims that PPT is fundamentally different from earlier approaches to tourism because of its explicit focus on the goal of poverty elimination and benefiting poor people. While acknowledging that there are some overlaps with niche segments like sustainable tourism, ecotourism, and CBT, the PPTP asserts that they have different foci, purposes and methods. PPT is distinct because it focuses on designing tourism that is appropriate for developing countries and poverty conditions, takes into account a range of livelihood impacts on the poor, prioritizes the socio-economic needs of the poor over conservationist/protectionist stances, and goes beyond the level of community to open up opportunities for the poor on a broad scale at all layers of operation (Ashley et al. 2000; Ashley et al. 2001a, 2001b; Ashley and Haysom 2006; Cattarinich 2001; Deloitte and Touche et al. 1999a, 1999b; Goodwin 2000; Roe 2006; Roe and Urquhart 2004; Roe et al. 2004b). While attempting to distinguish PPT from other types of tourism, the PPTP also declares that a PPT approach is applicable to all types of tourism and must be administered across the board in order to meet the global challenge of eradicating poverty.

The PPT literature accentuates practical implementation strategies for a variety of stakeholders (e.g., national and local governments, private sector enterprises, industry
associations, intra-regional bodies, destination management organizations, NGOs, community organizations, international organizations, donors and aid agencies, academic researchers, poor people, consumers/tourists) at different levels (e.g., individual enterprise, local destination, national, regional, and international) (Ashley and Roe 2002; Goodwin 2006; Roe and Urquhart 2004; WTO 2002b, 2004d). The PPTP groups PPT strategies into three main categories: (1) increasing economic benefits—e.g., employment, local enterprise opportunities, collective income sources; (2) improving non-financial livelihood impacts—e.g., capacity building, improving social and cultural impacts, reducing environmental degradation and competition for natural resources, increasing access to tourist infrastructure and services; and (3) enhancing policy, process, participation, and partnerships (PPTP 2004b). These strategies are aimed at maximizing benefits and minimizing costs for poor people, but may also benefit the non-poor (Ashley 2002), and are multi-pronged to address poverty in its multiple forms (Goodwin 2006). UNWTO proposes a somewhat different list of mechanisms for benefiting the poor, directly or indirectly: (1) employment of the poor in tourism enterprises; (2) supply of goods and services to tourism enterprises by the poor or by enterprises employing the poor; (3) direct sales of products and services by the poor to tourists (informal economy); (4) establishment and operation of tourism enterprises by the poor (formal economy); (5) tax or levy on tourism income/profits with proceeds benefiting the poor; (6) voluntary giving and support by tourism enterprises and tourists; and (7) investment in tourism infrastructure also benefiting the local poor (WTO 2002b; 2004d; 2005a, 2005c, 2006a, n.d., Tourism; Yunis 2004, 2005). UNWTO’s recommended strategies have a heavier emphasis on the economic sphere than those of the PPTP, again representing possible differences in approaches to tourism as a tool for poverty relief.
Lack of clarity about the lexicon, concept and application of PPT remains an issue. The PPTP attempted to address this confusion in its 2005 Annual Register by recapitulating a set of PPT principles (see Table A1-1 in Appendix 1) to differentiate its pro-poor approach from other approaches linking tourism and poverty and “to provide a basis against which different initiatives could be compared” (PPTP 2005, 1). This set of principles, which differed somewhat from earlier PPTP variants (see Table A1-2 in Appendix 1), was also intended to establish “the minimum requirements for tourism to be pro-poor” (PPTP 2005, 6). UNWTO adopted and began recommending its own set of “overarching principles” (see Table A1-3 in Appendix 1) to be considered when pursuing poverty reduction through tourism, with the release of its second publication on tourism and poverty alleviation, Recommendations for Action in 2004 (WTO 2004d). It has reiterated these principles in subsequent documents (Yunis 2004; WTO 2006b) and adapted them for cultural tourism (Yunis 2005). According to UNWTO, “[t]hese principles reflect the international poverty agenda, the nature and incidence of poverty and its relationship with tourism, and experience with tourism to date in developing countries and LDCs” (WTO 2004d, 15).

Thus, three main expressions of principles for addressing poverty through tourism have evolved since the origins of PPT in 1999: two by the PPTP and one by UNWTO. In spite of the claims that PPT is founded on principles, a singular, consistent set of principles has yet to be recognized, agreed upon and subscribed to by the various PPT actors. Different combinations of principles have been presented at different times, by different advocates, and little attention has been paid to the application, analysis and evaluation of PPT based on these principles.
3.2 **PPT Principles**

In this section, I delineate five core PPT principles. These principles were derived by analyzing and comparing three sets of principles proposed by both PPTP and UNWTO, as mentioned above (see Appendix 1). I synthesized the three sets into a single set of five (categories of) principles for application in this study (Table 2).

**Table 2: Key PPT Principles Selected for this Study**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Prioritizes and targets the poor as primary beneficiaries.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PPTP and UNWTO principles that apply to this principle:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “The target beneficiaries of pro-poor tourism are always poor and marginalized” (Roe 2006, 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “They are economically poor, lacking opportunities and services like health and education—although not necessarily the poorest of the poor” (PPTP 2005, 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “These beneficiaries must be targeted in advance to demonstrate clear improvements” (Roe 2006, 2).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>2. Empowers the poor to gain full participation and control in all aspects of tourism planning, development and management.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>PPTP and UNTWO principles that apply to this principle:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Pro-poor tourism should empower poor people and actively engage them in the management of tourism destinations” (Roe 2006, 2).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Tourism is most likely to benefit the poor when they are actively engaged in the multi-stakeholder processes that attempt to govern it in destinations. Empowerment and control are major benefits for the poor” (PPTP 2005, 1).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Poor people must participate in tourism decisions if their livelihood priorities are to be reflected in the way tourism is developed” (Ashley et al. 2000, 6).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Create conditions which empower and enable the poor to have access to information and to influence and take decisions” (WTO 2004d, 15; 2006b, 3).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• “Provide [the poor] suitable training to continue and strengthen their involvement in cultural tourism activities” (Yunis 2005, 25).</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| • “Human rights: Remove all forms of discrimination against people working or seeking to work in tourism and eliminate any exploitation, particularly against women and children” (WTO 2004d, 15). “Indeed, in many communities women are the guarantors for traditional continuity and must be included in the decision-making process regarding cultural tourism activities. The corollary is also valid; tourism development must consider the right to self-determination and cultural sovereignty of
indigenous communities, including their protected, sensitive and sacred sites as well as their traditional knowledge” (Yunis 2005, 24).

3. Equitably redistributes tourism industry benefits in favour of the poor.

**PPTP and UNTWO principles that apply to this principle:**

- “Pro-poor tourism should change the distribution of tourism benefits in favour of poor people” (Roe 2006, 2).
- “Ensure that tourism development strategies focus on more equitable distribution of wealth and services—growth alone is not enough” (WTO 2004d, 15).
- “Pro-poor tourism involves doing business differently to benefit poor people” (Roe 2006, 2).
- “The tourism industry is primarily a private sector, market driven activity. PPT initiatives involve the private sector in reducing poverty through business activity rather than alleviating it through philanthropy. Philanthropy is desirable but businesses need to develop ways of engaging with poor producers of goods and services, to create linkages and reduce leakages from the local economy, so as to maximize local economic development” (PPTP 2005, 1).
- “Poor producers often lack access to tourism markets—the whole industry and tourists. Pro-poor tourism initiatives must increase market access, otherwise they will fail” (Roe 2006, 2).
- “Commercial realism: ways to enhance impacts on the poor within the constraints of commercial viability need to be sought” (Ashley et al. 2000, 6).
- “Involve businesses in development initiatives and be commercially realistic” (Deloitte & Touche et al. 1999b, 4).
- “Viability: Maintain sound financial discipline and assess viability of all actions taken” (WTO 2004d, 15; 2006b, 3).
- “Retention: Reduce leakages from the local economy and build linkages within it, focusing on the supply chain” (WTO 2004d, 15; 2006b, 3).
- “Promoting PPT requires some analysis of the distribution of both benefits and costs—and how to influence it” (Ashley et al. 2000, 6).
- “Do not expect all the poor to benefit equally, particularly the poorest 20 per cent. Some will lose” (Deloitte & Touche et al. 1999b, 4).

4. Generates net benefits for poor people and ensures that tourism development based on their natural and cultural assets is to their advantage.

**PPTP and UNTWO principles that apply to this principle:**

- “An initiative can only be described as pro-poor where it is possible to demonstrate a net benefit for particular individuals or groups – the beneficiaries of the initiative. The beneficiaries need to be identified in advance; only in this way can a pro-poor impact be demonstrated, although there may also be some additional, initially unidentified, livelihood benefits” (PPTP 2005, 1).
• “There can be multiple benefits to the poor from tourism, as well as multiple costs. All these need to be taken into account and assessed in terms of how they affect the livelihoods of the poor. Costs (including reduced access to natural resources and increased exposure to risk) should be minimized while benefits (including jobs, enterprise opportunities, improved access to infrastructure and services) are maximized” (PPTP 2005, 1).

• “A holistic livelihoods approach: the range of livelihood concerns of the poor—economic, social, and environmental, short-term and long-term—need to be recognised. Focusing simply on cash and jobs is inadequate” (Ashley et al. 2000, 6).

• “Focus on expanding benefits, not just minimising costs to the poor” (Deloitte & Touche et al. 1999b, 4).

• “Monitoring: Develop simple indicators and systems to measure the impact of tourism on poverty” (WTO 2004d, 15; 2006b, 3), “as well as the impacts of tourism on the cultural assets and values. It regards, among others, increases in revenues, employment statistics, possible physical deterioration of assets (caused by tourists or not), the dependence of communities living close to the sites on the tourism resources, their loss of control over cultural properties, leakages, etc.” (Yunis 2005, 25).

• “Flexibility—blue-print approaches are unlikely to maximise benefits to the poor. The pace or scale of development may need to be adapted; appropriate strategies and positive impacts will take time to develop; situations are widely divergent” (Ashley et al. 2000, 6).

• “The poor are often culturally rich and have developed a series of livelihood strategies adapted to their environment. This cultural and natural heritage is a tourism asset. PPT should not be used to secure access for mainstream companies to the cultural or natural heritage assets of the poor with inequitable returns to the ‘owners’ of the habitat and culture” (PPTP 2005, 1).

• “[C]ultural assets have to be protected, since they provide [local populations] with additional income and job opportunities” (Yunis 2005, 24).

5. Mainstreams a pro-poor approach into policy and practice with wide application across multiple stakeholders, sectors, and levels for maximum impact on poverty.

PPTP and UNTWO principles that apply to this principle:

• “PPT will contribute little to the eradication of poverty unless it is mainstreamed. A poverty reduction focus needs to be part of the government master planning process and the way tourism businesses do their business” (PPTP 2005, 1).

• “Mainstreaming: Ensuring that sustainable development of all segments of tourism, including the cultural one, is included in general poverty elimination programmes. And, conversely, including poverty elimination measures within overall strategies for the sustainable development of all segments of tourism. In parallel, programmes linking culture and poverty have to be envisaged” (Yunis 2005, 24).

• “Partnerships: develop partnerships between international, government, non-governmental and private sector bodies, with a common aim of poverty alleviation
through tourism” (WTO 2004d, 15; 2006b, 3).
- “[PPT] is not a specific product: any kind of tourism can be made pro-poor and at any level (an enterprise, a destination or a country). It is not a niche market like ecotourism or community-based tourism nor is it limited to these sectors” (PPT Partnership 2005, 1).
- “Pro-poor tourism principles apply to any tourism segment, though specific strategies will vary between, for example, mass tourism and wildlife tourism” (Deloitte & Touche et al. 1999b, 4).
- “Integration: adopt an integrated approach with other sectors and avoid over-dependence on tourism” (WTO 2004d, 15; 2006b, 3).
- “Pro-poor strategies need to be complemented by the development of wider infrastructure. A balanced approach is critical—if competitive products, transport systems or marketing do not exist, the industry will decline and so will any pro-poor strategy (Deloitte & Touche et al. 1999b, 4).
- “Learning—as much is untested, learning from experience is essential” (Ashley et al. 2000, 6). “Draw on lessons from other sectors (such as small enterprise, good governance, and poverty analysis) and apply these to tourism” (Deloitte & Touche et al. 1999b, 4).
- “Acting locally: Focus action at a local/destination level, within the context of supportive national policies” (WTO 2004d, 15; 2006b, 3).
- “Commitment: Plan action and the application of resources for the long term” (WTO 2004d, 15; 2006b, 3).

A brief description of each principle follows.

3.2.1 Prioritizes and targets the poor

The central tenet and “key distinctive feature of PPT is that it puts poor people and poverty at the centre” (Ashley et al. 2001a, 50; Roe and Urquhart 2001, 5). The number one principle is, therefore, that PPT prioritizes and targets the poor. As target beneficiaries, the poor and marginalized need to be identified in advance so that interventions can be directed to them, baseline data collected, impacts measured, and outcomes evaluated (Goodwin 2006; PPTP 2005; Roe 2006). From a poverty elimination perspective, targeting all the way down to the level of poor individuals and households within communities is what is important for moving beyond multiplier and trickle down effects—i.e., not just retaining profits within the
host country or the local economy, but investing specifically in the goods, services and assets of poor people within the destination (Ashley et al. 2000; Roe et al. 2004b).

3.2.2 Empowers the poor

An essential principle of PPT is to increase poor people’s participation, control and decision-making power in all stages of tourism policy setting, planning, development and management (Ashley et al. 2000; Goodwin 2000; Jamieson et al. 2004; PPTP 2005; UNESCAP 2003). Poor people must be actively engaged as legitimate stakeholders and partners in the multi-stakeholder, partnership-building processes that govern PPT in destinations (PPTP 2005). Human rights must be upheld, and discrimination and exploitation avoided (WTO 2004d). Local rights and tenure over tourism assets need to be strengthened (Goodwin 2000). The traditional knowledge, sacred sites, cultural sovereignty, and self-determination of Indigenous peoples must be respected and protected (Yunis 2005).

3.2.3 Equitably redistributes tourism industry benefits in favour of the poor

PPT reorients the tourism industry so that poor people reap more of the rewards. It balances growth with equity by redirecting profits to poor people and retaining them in the local economy. Rather than relying on philanthropy, PPT involves a different way of doing business that creates opportunities for poor producers/providers and builds linkages between them, markets and tourism businesses (PPTP 2005; Roe 2006). The differential distribution of costs and benefits to different groups of poor people needs to be analyzed and strategies put in place to redress imbalances (Ashley et al. 2000).
3.2.4 *Generates net benefits for the poor*

PPT is defined on the basis of the net benefits it brings to poor people and its key criterion is being able to demonstrate that the gains for poor people are greater than the losses (Goodwin 2005; PPTP n.d., *What;* Roe et al. 2004b; Roe 2006). The rich cultural and natural heritage assets of financially poor people present opportunities for PPT product development (Roe and Urquhart 2004; Yunis 2005), but should only be utilized when it is advantageous to the poor people who possess those assets (PPTP 2005). Tourism can have multiple negative and positive impacts on the livelihoods of the poor and it can also increase poverty for some while reducing it for others, so a holistic range of impacts must be taken into account and strategies employed to ensure that benefits are maximized and costs are minimized (Ashley et al. 2000; Deloitte & Touche et al. 1999b; PPTP 2005). Poverty is a complex, multi-faceted phenomenon that goes beyond a shortage of income and must be addressed in its various forms and dimensions (Jamieson et al. 2004; Goodwin 2006; PPTP 2004h; UNESCAP 2005; WTO 2004d). Strategies to enhance non-financial benefits (e.g., participation, access to land and other assets) are just as important as boosting finances (Roe and Urquhart 2004). Simple indicators should be developed to measure and monitor tourism’s impacts on poverty, including cultural impacts (WTO 2004d; 2006b; Yunis 2005). Assessing impacts down to the level of households and individuals is critical for determining direct impacts on poverty (PPTP 2007; Roe et al. 2004a).

3.2.5 *Mainstreams a pro-poor approach into policy and practice*

A “paradigm shift” in the way that tourism is conceived of, formulated into policy, planned, and practiced is required for there to be any major impact on poverty (Jamieson et al. 2004, 26). PPT must be integrated into the entire tourism system, core business
operations, government master planning, sector-wide policies, poverty reduction and rural
development projects, donor aid, development policy and practice, and consumer choices
(Ashley et al. 2001b; Ashley and Haysom 2006; Deloitte and Touche et al. 1999a; Roe et al.
2004b). Incorporating PPT into niche markets like ecotourism and CBT is useful and
necessary, but insufficient, requiring that mainstream tourism also be designed and evaluated
from the perspective of poverty reduction and impacts on the poor (Ashley et al. 2000;
Ashley and Haysom 2006; Goodwin 2000). PPT necessitates the execution of multiple
strategies from the macro to micro level, cross-sector collaboration, supportive policy
frameworks and programs that go beyond tourism (e.g., land tenure), and a balanced
approach with infrastructure development and other sectors so as to avoid over-dependence
on tourism (Roe and Urquhart 2004; WTO 2004d, 2006b). All stakeholders need to adopt a
pro-poor approach, committing the necessary long-term resources, and developing
partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector for the purpose of
eliminating poverty through tourism (WTO 2004d, 2006b). A pro-poor way of doing
business must become the norm for maximum impact on poverty, shifting from a top-down
to a bottom-up approach (Goodwin 2002; Goodwin 2005; UNESCAP 2005; WTO 2002b).

3.3 Summary of PPT Principles

The first part of this chapter presented an overview of PPT, followed by identification
and discussion of five core principles extracted from the PPT literature. Table 3 summarizes
the key principles. The next chapter explores whether these five principles can be realized in
practice in Thailand and the Lao PDR. First, however, the case study region is introduced in
the following section.
Table 3: The Five Core PPT Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
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<tr>
<td>1. Prioritizes and targets the poor as primary beneficiaries.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2. Empowers the poor to gain full participation and control in all aspects of tourism planning, development and management.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Equitably redistributes tourism industry benefits in favour of the poor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Generates net benefits for poor people and ensures that tourism development based on their natural and cultural assets is to their advantage.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Mainstreams a pro-poor approach into policy and practice with wide application across multiple stakeholders, sectors, and levels for maximum impact on poverty.</td>
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3.4 Background on Case Study Region

Thailand was initially selected as a case study area because of the opportunity to conduct thesis research, based out of Chiang Mai, during a three-month “Students for Development” internship financed by the Canadian International Development Agency. Chiang Mai was suitable because of its location in northern Thailand, where tourism to ethnic minority villages is a prominent feature. Northern Lao PDR was chosen as a secondary area of study because of its proximity to northern Thailand (making it possible to travel there to conduct interviews and field research), its status as one of the poorest and least developed countries in the region, the prevalence of large numbers of ethnic minority groups that are increasingly the object of tourism (some ethnic minority groups are shared with Thailand), and the presence of tourism projects that include poverty reduction as a stated goal. The scope of the study was narrowed to ethnic tourism because ethnic minority populations are deemed to be poorer than other populations (ADB 2001) and they have been identified as a target group for further tourism and PPT development in the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy, which includes Thailand and the Lao PDR (ADB 2005c). Additionally, their
distinct cultures are a focus of tourism in the region, providing an opportunity to explore
the dynamic interplay between economic and cultural factors in relation to ethnic tourism and
PPT. The following section describes PPT in the region, the development situation for ethnic
minorities in Thailand and the Lao PDR, and tourism, ethnic tourism and PPT in Thailand
and the Lao PDR.

3.4.1 PPT in the Southeast Asian region

Capitalizing on the abundant cultural attractions in Asia, where two-thirds of the
world’s poor live (WTO 2004b), is viewed by international institutions as an important
means of achieving the foremost MDG of eradicating extreme poverty (ADB 2005b;
UNESCAP 2003; WTO 2004b, 2004c, 2005a; Yunis 2005). Tangible and living cultural
attractions have contributed to strong tourism growth in Asian countries (Yunis 2005) and
ethnic tourism—tours, treks, overnight stays, and visits to ethnic villages—has become
popular in emerging destinations like Southeast Asia (Smith 2003). The Asia-Pacific region
is the fastest growing and second-most visited international tourism destination in the world
(ADB 2005b). Southeast Asia has shown the swiftest growth of developing country tourism
destinations in the last decade, most prominently in the LDCs of Cambodia, the Lao PDR and
Myanmar (PPT Partnership 2004; Roe et al. 2004a).

All three of the fastest growing LDC destinations are housed within the GMS, which
comprises six countries sharing the Mekong River in the northern part of Southeast Asia—
the Lao PDR, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Vietnam, and two provinces of the People’s
Republic of China (ADB 2005b). This region encompasses some of the world’s richest
biodiversity, a high percentage of forest cover, four Natural and ten Cultural World Heritage
Sites (with several more in the approval stages), a wide array of natural attractions,
multifarious tangible and intangible cultural attractions, and outstanding ethnic diversity (ADB 2005b). Poverty is also a significant feature of the region’s largely rural population, with about 20% of the population living below the poverty line, 75% living on per capita annual incomes of US$260-$2,000, and many lacking access to basic healthcare and education (ADB 2005b, 14). Poverty is heavily concentrated in rural, remote, mountainous, border regions, where many of the biodiversity reserves are located (ADB 2005b).

The ADB is a major player when it comes to PPT in the GMS (Harrison and Schipani 2007). It led the development and supports the implementation of the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy, which has a PPT component that aims to distribute benefits more equitably and lift 1.0-1.2 million people out of severe poverty by 2015, paying “special attention to women, ethnic persons, the disabled, and other groups” (ADB 2005c, xi). With regard to ethnic minorities, it pronounces:

Many of the subregion’s ethnic communities that represent its living cultural heritage live in remote areas. These people are frequently the poorest of the poor rural populations. They have the lowest levels of education and often do not speak the national language well. Ethnic communities, especially ethnic minority women, are vulnerable and at high risk of experiencing negative impacts of unsustainable tourism development. Hence, tourism needs to be planned and managed carefully to take into consideration ethnic communities in its development. (ADB 2005c, 14)

A strategy designed to protect and conserve this heritage must: ensure that ethnic groups are involved in tourism planning at villages designated to become part of “ethnic tourism”; areas of cultural or religious significance to ethnic minorities should be defined in a participatory way and clear regulations should be established on tourism access; and minorities should be consulted directly for feedback on tourism impacts and establishment of limits of acceptable change. (ADB 2005b, 113-114)

The objectives of the PPT component of the strategy include providing income opportunities for poor people, empowering local communities to determine their own directions for tourism development, understanding and addressing the impacts of tourism on ethnic minorities in
order to manage cultural resources in a sustainable and minimal impact manner, and increasing security in relation to food sufficiency, health, land tenure, crime, and the rights of women, children, ethnic minorities and other disadvantaged groups (ADB 2005b, 2005c). It aims to move beyond a focus on individual projects at the community level by establishing broader linkages; taking a more integrated, cross-sector approach; garnering the commitment of all stakeholders; mainstreaming PPT into tourism and poverty alleviation plans, programs and policies of all GMS countries; and changing the way tourism is developed on a bigger scale for greater poverty impact, wider distribution, and sustainability (ADB 2005b). Thus, the ADB's stated objectives reflect most of the PPT principles identified in the previous chapter.

An ADB report identified some PPT initiatives already underway in the region, such as the donor-assisted Nam Ha Ecotourism Project (NHEP) in the Lao PDR, co-sponsored by UNESCO and the Lao National Tourism Administration (LNTA), and the Thai government's One Tambon One Product (OTOP) initiative (ADB 2005a, 2005b), both of which were included in this study. Thailand has recently acknowledged the poverty alleviation potential of tourism (Kaosa-ard 2006b), but is not recognized for making PPT progress to the extent that the Lao PDR is. The PPT efforts of the Lao PDR are considered to be the "most advanced in the GMS" (ADB 2005a, 97). The Lao national government integrates poverty and tourism policies, plans and strategies, based on successful experiences with projects like the NHEP, and there is significant donor support for sustainable PPT (ADB 2005a, 2005b). The NHEP, which is in a poor, remote, ethnically diverse National Protected Area of Luang Namtha province bordering Myanmar and China, is regarded as a model for ecotourism and community-based PPT throughout Southeast Asia (Harrison and Schipani 2007). It also won a UNDP award for its contribution to poverty alleviation (ADB 2005a; LNTA n.d.). Based on
the success of the NHEP, ADB is supporting the development of pro-poor, CBT in the Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam through the Mekong Tourism Development Project, which aims to “reduce poverty through increasing economic growth and employment opportunities, increasing foreign exchange earnings, and promoting the conservation of the natural and cultural heritage” (Harrison and Schipani 2007, 204; citing ADB).

3.4.2 Poverty, development and ethnic minorities in Thailand and the Lao PDR

Note on Terminology:

Terminology surrounding ethnic minorities is problematic and highly sensitive. A variety of terms can be found in the literature, including hill tribes, ethnic minorities, highland ethnic minorities, highland ethnic groups, highland people, highlanders, mountain people, montagnards, hill dwellers, hill minorities, tribes, Indigenous people, and Indigenous and tribal people. The term “hill tribe” is used most commonly in Thailand, whereas the term “Indigenous” is very politically sensitive. The terms “ethnic group” or “ethnic people” are used more often in official phraseology in the Lao PDR, whereas the term “Indigenous” has been deemed by government officials to be too ambiguous with pejorative overtones from its French colonial history (ILO 2000). The term “ethnic minorities” appears to be used most commonly in the documents of international organizations. While no term is optimal, and different terms may be used at different times in this thesis, I opt overall for the term “ethnic minorities” as a potentially more neutral term. Terms such as cultural tourism, Indigenous tourism, and ethnic tourism are often used interchangeably in the literature with limited consensus on what each one means. For the purpose of this thesis, “ethnic tourism” is chosen to be consistent with the term “ethnic minorities” and the language generally used in the documents of international organizations.
Thailand:

Thailand is categorized as a lower-middle-income developing country (World Bank n.d.) with a Gross National Income (GNI) per capita (Atlas method) of US$3,050 (World Bank 2006) and a medium level of human development (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board and UN 2004; UNDP 2006). Thailand has already met and even surpassed many of its MDG targets, most notably reducing poverty rates by almost half from 21% in 2000 to 11% in 2004 (World Bank 2006) and by two-thirds from 1990 to 2002 (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board and UN 2004, 1, 4). Social and geographical inequalities persist, however, with 86% of Thailand's poor living in rural areas (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board and UN 2004, 13), concentrated in the north, the northeast and the far south (UN 2006). Ethnic minorities, especially those in the remote highlands of the north, are a sub-group of the "ultra poor" category with per capita incomes below 80% of the poverty line, lower health status and education, and exclusion from economic opportunities and government assistance programs (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board and UN 2004; Technical Service Club 2004).

Thailand has been the focus of the greatest number of published studies on highland ethnic minorities in Southeast Asia, even though it has the smallest number and proportion of highland ethnic minorities in the region (McKinnon and Michaud 2000). It has also been the subject of considerable research on ethnic tourism, otherwise known as hill tribe tourism (e.g., Bartsch 2000; Binkhorst and van der Duim 1995; Cohen 1979, 1989, 1996a, 1996b, 1996c, 1996d; Conran 2006; Dearden 1989, 1991, 1993, 1996; Dearden and Harron 1992, 1994; Leepreecha 1997, 2005; Marois and Hinch 2006; Michaud 1995a, 1995b, 1997; Toyota 1996; Yoko 2006). The majority of Thailand’s ethnic minority groups inhabit the highlands.
and forested hill ranges of northern and northwestern Thailand with the highest concentrations in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai, Tak, and Mae Hong Son provinces (Technical Service Club 2004). Nine major ethnic minority groups (Karen, Hmong, Lahu, Akha, Mien, H’tin, Lisu, Lua, and Khamu), falling into three linguistic categories, have been officially recognized (Technical Service Club 2004) and comprise about 1% of the total Thai population of just under 64 million (World Bank 2006). Each ethnic group has distinct languages, histories, cultural and spiritual beliefs, styles of dress, housing types, geographical distribution, agricultural practices, socio-economic patterns, village structures, and familial systems (Binkhorst and van der Duim 1995; Dearden 1989; Technical Service Club 2004). Most groups are traditionally animists and pantheists and, for the most part, are quite egalitarian (Technical Service Club 2004). Highland ethnic minorities in Thailand come from populations in the regions of southwest China bordering with Myanmar, the Lao PDR and Vietnam, mainly migrating as refugees or through shifting cultivation agricultural practices in search of new land (Michaud 1995b). Although certain ethnic groups are sometimes considered indigenous to the Thai nation state, others migrated to Thailand in the last century (Technical Service Club 2004). Ethnic minorities in Thailand are generally viewed as recent immigrants and are considered a source of problems for the Thai government (Dearden and Harron 1992). They have low political status, with less than one-third possessing Thai citizenship and land tenure (Marois and Hinch 2006), essentially rendering them stateless and unable to access public services or to exercise the rights and privileges of ordinary citizens (Lewis and Lewis 1984).

The Thai term for upland minority people is *chaw khaw*, or hill tribes, and is associated with illiteracy, undeveloped subsistence economies, unsophisticated societies, and living in the mountains (Gillogly 2004). This term came into official usage starting in 1959.
with the formation of the National Committee for the Hill Tribes and the creation of government policy that deemed hill tribes to be an impediment to socio-economic progress and “a threat to the Thai nation” (Yoko 2006, 391). The hill tribe region came under government control after World War II. Since then, government policy has been trying to address the “hill tribe problem” of national and border security, environmental degradation (attributed to the shifting cultivation practices of many ethnic minorities), the international drug problem (primarily opium, as cultivated by some minorities), and low standard of living (Cohen 1979, 1989; Dearden 1989; Dearden and Harron 1992; Marois and Hinch 2006; Michaud 1995a; Technical Service Club 2004; Toyota 1996; Wood 1997). Policies and programs (e.g., resettlement, sedentarization, border control, economic development, cash crops and crop substitution, government institutions at village level, mandatory Thai language education, Buddhist conversion, mass media, and bans on tree cutting, hunting, and opium cultivation) increasingly sought to integrate highland minorities into national Thai society and the market economy (Binkhorst and van der Duim 1995; Cohen 1989, 1996d; Leepreecha 2005; Michaud 1995b; Technical Service Club 2004), causing them to lose their autonomy and subsume a marginal and insecure position in society (Cohen 1989, 1996d). Other outside forces opening up the region, and contributing to acculturation and material and cultural impoverishment, included road development, commercial exploitation of natural resources, bilateral and multilateral aid programs, Christian missionaries, population pressures pushing lowlanders and highlanders into each other’s territories, and trekking tourism (Binkhorst and van der Duim 1995; Cohen 1989, 1996d; Dearden 1991).

The Lao PDR:

The Lao PDR was established in 1975 after being embroiled in the Indochina War and decades of civil war. It is categorized as a low-income (World Bank n.d.), Landlocked
and Least Developed Country, placing it amongst the poorest countries in the world (UN n.d.; WTO 2004d). In 2004/2005, 28.7% of the Lao PDR’s 5.6 million population lived below US$1/day (World Bank 2007, 1), 32% below the national poverty line (UN n.d.), and its per capita income was US$491 in 2005 (Committee for Planning and Investment NSC and UNDP 2006, 2). Its medium-low level of human development is lower than neighbouring countries (UNDP 2006) and some of its MDG indicators (e.g., life expectancy, primary school enrollment, child mortality) are amongst the lowest in the region (World Bank 2007). The Lao PDR is the world’s third largest producer of illicit opium, which has traditionally been grown by some ethnic minorities in poverty-stricken areas of the north. The country has one of the highest opium addiction rates in the world (Government of the Lao PDR and the UN 2004; UNDP 2001). The Lao PDR is the most forested country in Southeast Asia (Committee for Planning and Investment NSC and UNDP 2006) and has one of the best designed protected area networks in the world with 20 National Protected Areas, but forests are declining and the shifting cultivation practiced by many ethnic minority groups, requiring periodic migration, has become a major governmental concern (Committee for Planning and Investment NSC and UNDP 2006; ILO 2000). The nation’s top three priorities, established by the Seventh Party Congress, and outlined in the National Growth & Poverty Eradication Strategy for 2005-2015, are to eliminate mass poverty, opium production, and shifting cultivation (ADB 2005a; Government of the Lao PDR and the UN 2004).

While overall poverty rates and social development indices have been improving, inequality is intensifying, making poverty worse, and increasing disparities across the country (UNDP 2007), indicating that economic growth in the Lao PDR has been more “pro-rich” than pro-poor (Government of the Lao PDR and the UN 2004; UNDP 2001, 39). Rapid industrialization and modernization associated with a shift from a centrally-planned economy
to a free market system since 1986 has resulted in inequitable distribution of economic benefits and social costs with growing gaps along rural-urban, gender, class, and ethnic lines (ADB 2005b). Poverty remains highly concentrated in rural, remote, mountainous areas, particularly the north, which are predominantly inhabited by ethnic minorities (Government of the Lao PDR and the UN 2004; UNDP 2001; World Bank 2007). The vast majority of people living below the poverty line are ethnic minorities (UNDP 2001) who also have lower rates of literacy, education, and healthcare (Government of the Lao PDR and the UN 2004; UNDP 2001). More than 80% of the Lao PDR’s population lives in small, dispersed, remote villages without access to basic infrastructure and services, and depends on agriculture and non-timber forest products for subsistence (Government of the Lao PDR and the UN 2004). Luang Namtha province (where some field research was conducted) is one of the most ethnically diverse provinces in the Lao PDR, housing 20 different ethnic groups (Oula 2006). It is also one of the two most isolated provinces, where only one-third of the villages can be reached in the rainy season, less than one-tenth of the villages have access to electricity, almost half of the villages are more than six kilometers away from a main road, and over half of the population lives in poverty (Committee for Planning and Investment NSC and UNDP 2006).

The Lao PDR is perhaps the most ethno-linguistically diverse nation in the world for a country of its small size (ILO 2000). Its high proportion of ethnic minorities (70% of the total population) and low population density of about 20 persons per square km is what distinguishes it from neighbouring countries (ILO 2000, 3; UNDP 2001, 58). Although over 230 ethnic groups have been identified (ILO 2000, 7; UNDP 2001, 57), under the national classification system, there are 49 different groups that fall into four ethno-linguistic families, each with its own branches and sub-groups (UNDP 2001, 57-58). Each ethnic group has
distinct cultural values, spiritual beliefs, languages, livelihood systems, and attitudes toward
development (Binkhorst and van der Duim 1995; Government of the Lao PDR and the UN

3.4.3 Tourism in Thailand and the Lao PDR

Thailand:

Thailand is among the world's top developing country tourism destinations (Roe et al.
2004a). It is also one of the most touristically mature countries (Cohen 1996c), receiving
over 11 million international tourists in 2004 (ADB 2005b, 27) and US$7.45 billion in total
tourism receipts in 2003 (ADB 2005b, 30). As the most developed country in Southeast Asia
(Cohen 1996c), Thailand is the dominant player and major hub in the GMS, receiving 69% of
all international tourist arrivals and 75% of total expenditures (ADB 2005c, 9). Thailand was
the first of the Mekong region countries to highlight tourism as an agent for development
(i.e., modernization and income generation) around the 1960s, whereas its neighbouring
countries did not do so until the 1990s (Kaosa-ard 2006b). Originally an isolated tourism
destination, concentrated in the vicinity of Bangkok, tourism progressively expanded into
peripheral areas, facilitated by extensive road infrastructure, starting with regional hubs such
as Chiang Mai in the north, and then extending into border areas like the Golden Triangle
(bordering with Myanmar and the Lao PDR), eventually infiltrating every major region of the
country in the tourists' quest for authentic cultures and experiences (Cohen 1989, 1996c).

Until the 1990s, Thailand was the only country in the region where it was possible for
tourists to visit highland ethnic minority villages (Binkhorst and van der Duim 1995), but the
regionalization of tourism occurring around the same time opened up new avenues for
tourists to travel to neighbouring countries, like the Lao PDR, to witness cultures deemed to
be less ‘spoiled’ by processes of acculturation and modernization than those in Thailand (Cohen 1996c).

Hill tribe tourism emerged as early as the 1960s (Dearden 1993) as small-scale commercial trekking outside of Thai government planning (Cohen 1979, 1989; Toyota 1996; Wood 1997) catering to low-budget, ‘alternative’ youth travelers (Binkhorst and van der Duim 1995), almost exclusively from Western countries (Dearden and Harron 1992), in search of the primitive and exotic (Cohen 1989). With Chiang Mai as the original hub, it grew exponentially over the next few decades (Marois and Hinch 2006), peaking in the late 1980s (Toyota 1996) to reach “mass tourism” proportions of a “non-conventional kind” (Cohen 1996c, 15). Approximately 200,000 trekkers per year (Conran 2006, 276) cover all parts of northern Thailand, having extended into smaller centres like Chiang Rai, Mae Hong Son, and Pai (Dearden 1996; Marois and Hinch 2006). Hill tribe tourism has involved two main types of tours since its beginnings: (1) guided jungle treks (hill tribe trekking) with overnight stays in villages; and (2) shorter, transported village visits and sightseeing tours including towns and more accessible villages (Dearden 1991; Marois and Hinch 2006), to which additional adventure activities like elephant riding and rafting were later added (Cohen 1996c). In addition to trekking tourism and village visits, ethnic handicraft sales, ecotourism and most recently, CBT, have also been important forms of ethnic tourism in the region (Leepreecha 2005). New services, facilities, modes of transportation, accommodations, resorts, and attractions have also been added in recent years, with increasing commercialization, scale and outside ownership, in response to high demand and new clientele (Binkhorst and van der Duim 1995; Cohen 1996c).

Hill tribe tourism was initiated from outside, mostly by Thais, and was organized for the purpose of capitalizing on the cultural attraction, not to benefit the villagers (Cohen
Highland ethnic minority involvement and participation is essentially absent, even as tour operators continue to develop new areas (Binkhorst and van der Duim 1995; Monzon 1992), and they have little say in the organization, direction, pace, pattern, scale, development, and promotion of tourism (Cohen 1996a, 1996d; Dearden and Harron 1994; Toyota 1996). Images of their cultures are projected to the outside world by government and the private sector in a manner that is beyond their control and often contrary to their daily realities (Cohen 1996a, 1996d; Toyota 1996). The government implicitly uses images of highland ethnic minorities’ cultural diversity to promote Thailand as an exotic destination while simultaneously attempting to assimilate them (Cohen 2001; Leepreecha 2005). Local people have little bargaining power because they cannot risk losing what little income they receive from tourism. They are often taken advantage of by business people (Monzon 1992) and may be afraid to refuse performances of dances, ceremonies and traditional practices, even if doing so would defile their sacredness (Leepreecha 2005). Villagers are often mystified as to why tourists visit and sometimes think tourists want to come see people who are poor (Conran 2006). Tourists are almost exclusively from Western countries, putting them in a position of power over local villagers who end up catering to their desires (Conran 2006; Monzon 1992). Guides, who are usually Thai-speaking, also wield considerable power as the ‘culture brokers’ who select, mediate and interpret the experience of ethnic minority culture for tourists (Cohen 1979; Leepreecha 2005; Toyota 1996).

Jobs and income are the most significant positive outcomes of tourism (Binkhorst and van der Duim 1995; Leepreecha 1997; Monzon 1992). Income through trekking tourism comes from five main sources: (1) accommodation (e.g., homestay, simple guesthouses), (2) handicrafts, (3) transportation (e.g., elephants, rafting), (4) miscellaneous services (e.g.,
portering, massage, dance performances, charging for photographs, opium and marijuana sales, beverage and candy sales), and (5) begging (Binkhorst and van der Duim 1995; Dearden 1991). Begging usually occurs when there is no other way to extricate benefits from tourists (Cohen 1996d). In some instances, tourism provides the highest source of income available in villages (Monzon 1992) and, by local standards, relatively small amounts of money can go a long way and raise household incomes above the village average (Michaud 1995a). At its peak, Dearden (1991) estimated a gross revenue of about US$2 million going into highland ethnic minority villages from all activities associated with trekking, a significant injection of cash into traditional subsistence economies.

The Lao PDR:

The Lao PDR is second on the list of the 20 most rapidly growing developing country tourism destinations, having an average growth rate of 36% (WTO 2004d, 8), rising significantly from its beginnings with 14,400 international arrivals in 1990 to 1,095,315 international arrivals (287,765 international tourists and 807,550 regional tourists) in 2005 (LNTA 2005). Tourism generates a revenue of nearly US$147 million, making it the number one foreign exchange and export earner (Harrison and Schipani 2007, 202; LNTA 2005). The Lao PDR opened its doors cautiously to international tourists as late as 1989 (Hall and Ringer 2000), whereas foreign tourism in Thailand originated as early as the 1930s (Binkhorst and van der Duim 1995).

The Lao PDR underscored tourism as a priority for development (i.e., foreign exchange) in 1995 and, within the next decade, had recognized its poverty alleviation potential. The Lao government aims to lift its country out of LDC status by 2020 (ADB 2005b; UN n.d.) and tourism has been identified as a priority export and growth sector for achieving this goal (ADB 2005a, 2005b). Pro-poor tourism is featured in the government’s
National Tourism Strategy and Action Plan (2006-2015) as well as the National Ecotourism Strategy (Schipani and Oula 2006). The Tourism National Development Strategy for 2005-2015 also aims to spread the benefits of tourism more equitably to remote and ethnic minority communities (ADB 2005a). The LNTA National Ecotourism Strategy and Action Plan 2005-2010 views community-based ecotourism as a tool for poverty alleviation, economic growth, employment creation, and cultural and natural resource conservation, particularly in rural areas. The government generally favours smaller scale, higher value CBT and ecotourism that balances economic development with cultural and environmental preservation in an attempt to avoid the pitfalls of unfettered tourism growth experienced by its more touristed neighbours (Hall and Ringer 2000). Nearly half of all tourism earnings in the Lao PDR come from nature- and culture-based tourism (LNTA n.d.). Culture and nature tourism are believed to be pro-poor, whereby villagers provide local products and services (Schipani and Oula 2006).

The perceived success of the NHEP has shaped tourism policy and subsequent tourism developments, and is also considered to be a model for future ADB pro-poor CBT projects (Harrison and Schipani 2007). Nevertheless, Oula (2006) found that ecotourism incomes (from guiding, accommodation, food, and handicraft sales) generated in two of the 26 villages in the Nam Ha National Protected Area were heavily skewed in favour of the wealthiest households, with high income inequality between the poorest and richest groups. Poorest households received a higher proportion of overall income from ecotourism, but the wealthiest families received more total income from tourism. Therefore, while ecotourism brought an important (and sometimes the only) source of income to the poorest households, it also widened the gap between the richest and poorest households, likely because the better off families had extra labour and products to sell and more skills to do so, and the most
influential families were more inclined to get involved. Villagers were satisfied with tourism overall, however. Few untoward cultural impacts were noted and, on a positive note, the younger generation was showing an interest in learning traditional handicrafts.

The main stakeholders instituting tourism in the Lao PDR are the ADB, UNESCO, SNV, and the Lao government, largely through the LNTA which has been upgraded to the Ministerial level (Harrison and Schipani 2007). ADB and SNV, in particular, have taken the lead in rural, pro-poor CBT (Harrison and Schipani 2007). New Zealand’s International Aid & Development Agency has emerged as the largest donor of PPT in the Lao PDR (Harrison and Schipani 2007). Other players include GTZ and its private sector partner, Exotissimo, DED (the German Development Service), and the European Union, but their projects are smaller scale and in the developmental phases. International donors are, therefore, the main drivers of tourism in the Lao PDR and “are concentrating on what has come to be known as pro-poor, community-based tourism” (Harrison and Schipani 2007, 208). Harrison and Schipani (2007), however, raise the issue of donor leakage and expenditures exceeding returns, and question the assumption that donor-led PPT is inherently more pro-poor than private sector-led PPT, especially when the latter is of the small-scale, locally-owned type emerging in the Lao PDR.

3.5 Summary of Case Study Region

Both northern Thailand and Lao PDR are locations of significant ethnic tourism. Ethnic tourism is an important area for PPT research because ethnic minorities are amongst the poorest populations in the region, they have been identified as a target group for PPT development in the GMS Tourism Sector Strategy, and their living cultures have been slated for PPT product development. In addition, both Thailand and the Lao PDR have been and are
continuing to implement initiatives that link tourism with poverty reduction. The Lao PDR even appears to be taking steps to mainstream a PPT approach but it is in the early stages. In summary, the region of northern Thailand and Lao PDR is an excellent site for testing the feasibility of putting the five PPT principles into practice. The next chapter summarizes the case study findings on key challenges associated with realizing these principles.
CHAPTER 4 – CASE STUDY FINDINGS: CHALLENGES TO PPT

This chapter lays out the salient challenges discovered in the course of my research that were found to hinder the implementation of PPT principles in the case of ethnic tourism in northern Thailand and Lao PDR. Summary sections describing key challenges are exemplified with a sampling of corresponding quotations. They are organized according to the five core PPT principles.

A chapter on challenges and constraints must be prefaced by acknowledging the commitment and effort on the part of the individuals, organizations and projects included in this study to bring greater benefits to ethnic minority villagers. Most of the strategies recommended by the PPTP and UNWTO (outlined in Section 3.1 of Chapter 3) were being employed to varying degrees through these initiatives. For example, most projects strove to: (1) enhance local consultation, capacity-building, participation, and management; (2) reduce leakage, provide local employment, and create income earning opportunities for villagers by paying them to supply local goods and services for tour groups, often instituting household rotation systems for more equal provision of these services; (3) expand community assets by allocating a portion of tourism proceeds (e.g., from a community guesthouse, entrance fee, or trekking fee) to a village fund, sharing tourist infrastructure with villagers, supporting community projects, and encouraging tourists to donate time, money and materials to the community; and (4) minimize negative impacts on culture and environment by educating tourists and villagers, establishing codes of conduct, regulating tourist numbers and activities, monitoring impacts, and so forth. Several public-private partnerships between tour companies and villages (usually supported and mediated by NGOs/donors) were getting underway in both countries and were viewed by some interviewees to be one of the most
promising models for PPT, a win-win situation for everyone involved, and a means of producing more money for local communities over a longer period of time than government programs and short-term donor projects. Contracts with established price mechanisms between companies and villagers for payment of agreed upon products and services were also being utilized in the Lao PDR, which some interviewees indicated was essential for ensuring benefits to villages and giving them more power to negotiate. Lao government policy initiatives (and the leadership of specific tourism officials) to maximize local benefits and control the negative impacts of tourism were also considered to be having a positive influence on tourism development across the country.

In spite of positive dimensions, challenges remain to putting PPT principles into practice in the case study region. This is the focus of the discussion that follows.

4.1 Prioritizes and Targets the Poor

PPT is distinguished by its aim to lift poor people out of poverty, making prioritization and targeting of the poor the number one PPT principle. Interviewees were asked what poverty meant in their local context and if they directed their initiatives to the poorest members of communities. Case study findings revealed that: (1) poverty is variable and not easily defined; and (2) targeting the poorest of the poor is difficult.

4.1.1 Variable and contestable definitions of poverty

Many interviewees asserted that poverty was difficult to define. Some stipulated that the operationalization of PPT is contingent upon clarifying what poor means, and also necessitates understanding the meaning of poverty for poor people themselves.

"PPT means specifically benefiting the poor. They try to benefit poor people but how do you define poor?" (Tour company, Thailand)
"If we just look at the statement or sentence that is employed—how tourism will eliminate poverty or something like that—I think this is a big word that we have to think about because when we’re talking about poor, there’s different kinds and different factors that affects poor or make poor. If they would like to use tourism as a tool for PPT, they have to go back to ask poor people. If not, the idea will be in the same rut but a new branding.” (NGO, Thailand)

Poverty was defined in a variety of different ways in Thailand and the Lao PDR. Four major dimensions emerged: (1) unable to meet basic needs, such as food, shelter, clothing, education, and health; (2) Western constructions of poverty; (3) marginalization; and (4) individual responsibility for poverty.

Unable to meet basic needs:

The vast majority of respondents deemed food insufficiency (i.e., not having enough rice to eat) to be the number one indicator of poverty.

“Poverty is a simple word in Lao. It says not having enough rice.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“If they’re poor, they don’t have enough rice to eat all year around.” (NGO, Thailand)

Related to lack of food was not having adequate land, animals, access to natural resources, and labour. Housing, followed by education, and then health were also mentioned quite frequently as indicators of poverty in both Thailand and the Lao PDR, and clothing was also specified in the Lao PDR.

Poverty was rarely defined primarily on the basis of income, although income was quite often mentioned in conjunction with other indicators of poverty. Many interviewees recognized that income is the primary international indicator of poverty, and one that multilateral organizations like the ADB use in the region, but viewed income indicators as being too narrow and inappropriate in the local context. For the most part, respondents felt
that being able to subsist off the land was a much better indicator of not being poor than having income.

"The $1/day indicator may not be applicable to all countries." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"Having food to eat and sell is a more meaningful indicator than just income." (NGO, Thailand)

"Many villages are not in the cash economy. A better indicator of poverty is not having enough food to eat." (International organization, the Lao PDR)

Western constructions of poverty:

A small number of interviewees, particularly some Thai NGOs and academics, questioned the concept and meaning of poverty altogether. They professed that a Western income standard is often imposed and does not adequately take into account concepts like happiness, relationships, community, culture, spirituality, and living off the land. Additionally, some interviewees (mostly Thai NGOs and a few villagers in Thailand and the Lao PDR) made reference to poverty as a feeling or a state of mind that develops in relation to some kind of outside exposure or stimulus, such as globalization or feeling poor in comparison to relatively materially wealthy tourists.

"It is a difficult question to define poverty. East and West define it differently but now people in the East are trying to think like those in the West because of globalization. Poverty is a state of mind. It cannot be defined by the World Bank or ADB. Before the ADB and World Bank came, people were happy. They had land, etc. Now people are more unhappy with not having material goods, white skin, etc. There is lots of dissatisfaction. We cannot just say what is poverty and who is poor. The idea of poverty introduced by the Banks is unfair. People have become victims of development. Development keeps running after them. People could have lived longer and more happily without development." (NGO, Thailand)

"The standard to judge the poor of the rich people of the Western countries may not be welcome or relevant here. For example, people here, they can plant rice, they can have food to eat, they can weave their own clothes, they can live like that. A small income just enough for their living, we don’t think that just cash means poor or rich. Money doesn’t mean a happy life. I don’t care about rich or poor. I talk about happy or unhappy." (Research institute, Thailand)
"Here, people may not have much money but if they have enough food and a house, they are happy." (NGO, Thailand)

"If poverty is not based on money, but on culture, maybe they are not poor because they can survive off the land in the mountains." (NGO, Thailand)

"Before, they didn't think they were poor because they grew and ate their own rice, chicken, etc. Now, tourists need good things (e.g., toilet, blankets, food) and they feel poor. Now sometimes they don't eat their own chicken because they're afraid it's not clean." (NGO, Thailand)

"We feel poor compared to tourists because we can't afford to travel anywhere. But we still like tourists coming to the village." (Villager, Thailand)

"If somebody wants to copy from tourists, we cannot do, because we are not white people. We want to be like tourists but we don't have much money." (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

Marginalization:

Descriptions of poverty and marginalization induced by insensitive government policies and development programs were relatively common in relation to ethnic minorities, especially amongst NGOs in Thailand. Poverty in this context was regularly defined in terms of lack of rights, opportunity, access, voice, power, influence, negotiation strength, and connections. Those who used this categorization of poverty were most likely to deem ethnic minorities as being poor. In addition, certain ethnic groups were said to be poorer and more exploited than others in both countries. Lack of citizenship and land tenure were significant issues for ethnic minorities in Thailand, in particular. Interviewees in both countries spoke about government relocation policies and development programs aimed at changing ethnic minorities' traditional agricultural practices, removing them from the land and thereby subjecting them to poverty. In the past, ethnic minorities had their needs met through a subsistence economy. Life depended on the land, not money. As a result of government policies restricting their access to land and natural resources (e.g., resettlement, national
parks, forest reserves, forestry and opium bans), highland ethnic minorities were deprived of their traditional sources of livelihood and could no longer sustain themselves. This relocation forced them into poverty, as well as the global consumer economy, where they had insufficient means to support themselves, along with a greater need for cash.

"Poverty is lack of opportunity. For example, they should have a chance to study at a higher level but, without Thai citizenship, they can’t get higher education or a scholarship. Their basic rights are denied.” (NGO, Thailand)

"Poverty is marginalization, not having access to power, the mainstream economy, or services like education and health, and lack of food security...Ethnic minorities...have few advocates at higher levels of government and are poorly understood by the ruling mainstream, who only know them by stereotype and don’t understand their culture. They are taken advantage of (for example, forced to sell below market prices) and feel powerless to take control when people come to the forest and take things.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"Indigenous people have been deprived of their land, which is a source of poverty. Most Indigenous people don’t have land rights or an adequate means to survive in the new economy. They are not treated equally. There are more restrictions put on them. If they don’t have land, they end up as cheap labour in the city. If they have land, they’re independent.” (NGO, Thailand)

"The hill tribes have no right to own land and no money to do business. Without money, you can’t start anything.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Overall, hill tribes have a difficult go. They have no land rights and there is discrimination. Relative affluence in Thailand opened another set of problems for Thailand. The big emphasis on infrastructure (e.g., roads) opens up highlands to exploitation, export-based agriculture, and free trade agreements hammering some people. Lack of citizenship is a big problem. It affects access to state services, makes them vulnerable to exploitation, and land tenure affects almost all of them. In national parks and reserve forest, there is a greater presence of authority and less opportunity to use forest resources. There is growing encroachment from the lowlands, exploiting more resources, and increasing poverty.” (NGO, Thailand)

Individual responsibility for poverty:

There was a fairly strong local perception in both countries (especially amongst government representatives and villagers in the Lao PDR) that individual behaviours—specifically, laziness, drug addiction and misusing money—lead to poverty and keep people
in poverty. In this context, it was often argued that poor people cannot be helped because they are too lazy to help themselves or they will simply misspend the money they make rather than using it to improve their situation.

"The magic to make people overcome poverty barrier, to make people rich, is to make them not lazy. If they continue being lazy, we cannot alleviate the poverty. Not every people lazy, but that is one reason. And if you're not lazy, at least if you don't have funds, you don't have education, if you are not lazy, you can do some farming or something like that. You may not be rich, but you will be sufficient and have enough food." (Government office, the Lao PDR)

"Drugs make people poor because they spend their money on the drugs and they become lazy." (NGO, Thailand)

"My family is poor, but not poorest, because I work alone. I don’t have partners to come help me but I work hard. But the others who are the poorest, they have many people but they don’t do work. They just stay at home. They are lazy." (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

"Some poorest families still don’t know how to use that money. They just use that money for drinking or smoking and then their life is still difficult or the same thing." (Villager, the Lao PDR)

"Many people are getting money (even $1/day) but they don’t know how to spend the money. They don’t have plan. They spend the money on socializing but after that, they continue to be poor." (Government office, the Lao PDR)

4.1.2 Insufficient direct targeting of the poor and poorest

Poverty targeting, where it occurred, tended to be general and indirect. For the most part, the projects represented in this study did not target districts, villages, households or individuals on the basis of poverty, or at least not solely on the basis of poverty. Other factors like village access, location, features of interest to tourists, local resources and cooperation played a bigger role in selection. When poverty was a selection factor, as it was in a few instances, it was usually at the village level or higher. Generating benefits to villages was typically equated with benefits to the poor. At the regional level, PPT was associated with
economic growth and job creation, which some acknowledged was more of a trickle down approach than a directly targeted intervention.

“What we’re trying to do is to promote healthy growth in the member countries, sustainable growth...It’s very difficult to have a substantial impact directly on poverty. It’s a second tier or third tier process through the opportunities for employment and development that take place in the tourism sector. There’s this trickle down rather than a trickle up approach which can benefit the poorest parts of the community.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“We pick villages not only for the potential to alleviate poverty but also on their tourism value. Some villages are quite poor and some aren’t. We didn’t do an income study to include certain families. We figure most people in the villages are poor.” (International organization, Lao PDR)

“The term community (or village in Laos) is used as a proxy for reaching poor people.” (International organization, Lao PDR)

“There are 1/100 villages that you can do this in. They’ve got to have [tourism] potential...They’ve either got to have reasonable access from the city or from one of the normal tour routes around the north, good local level leadership, a good headman who is strong enough to lead the community to help you help him.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“Certain criteria must be present, such as convenience, accessibility, and location.” (NGO, Thailand)

Only one case was found where targeting took place below the village level to the level of poorest households within the village. A rotational strategy giving the poorest people in the village more chances to cook for tourists (and to thereby make more money) was implemented in 1 of 17 project villages in the Lao PDR because of a growing gap between the poorest and better off people in the village. Villagers were grouped into poorest, middle and better off families by the village leadership and different numbers of turns were allocated on that basis. The strategy was only implemented for about 6 months before being disbanded because of internal village politics. The specific reasons for the breakdown of the system were difficult to determine but the poor people in that village still expressed a desire to have more opportunities to participate and make more money.
“In [this] village, we saw that it was necessary to do [more turns for the poorest people] because they have quite a big gap between people who are poor and rich...After we discussed with them, they thought they should open up more opportunities for the poor.” (Government office, the Lao PDR)

“It’s good if tourism gives a chance for poorest families to improve their life nearer the better off families; maybe not the same, but not far away from better off.” (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

“Poor people want to have more chances to work in tourism.” (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

Starting with the poorest of the poor was generally viewed as being unfeasible, unrealistic, too time-consuming, and resource-intensive, particularly by international organizations/donors and local NGOs. The poorest people were often deemed to be unready, uninterested, and lacking the necessary education, skills and resources to get started. There was also concern that targeting or mandating only the poorest people would upset village dynamics, be too overbearing, or too negative. As already mentioned, there was a sense that not everyone could be helped and that some poor people would misuse the money or not apply themselves enough to improve their poverty situation. The usual strategy employed, therefore, was to begin on a voluntary basis with the villagers who were interested, ready, and had some resources to get started. The underlying assumption was that the better off people who get involved with tourism first will set an example for the poorest people to get involved down the road, since tourism is dynamic and poverty reduction takes time.

“When we go to a village, anyone can participate and we don’t say only poor people can participate. We don’t force them to select certain people. We try to get them to choose the poorest people too but it’s not mandatory. We’re more clear on including women. There is a mandate to include a certain number of women. We could do a better job, maybe mandate a certain number of poor. It’s not like we don’t want to, but we don’t want to be too overbearing and tell them to abide by too many rules. Any one of these things distorts things. For example, if we just picked the poor people, it could make the others feel excluded or jealous.” (International organization, Lao PDR)
“We cannot tell them you are poor, you need help. The villagers decide themselves if they want to join.” (NGO, Thailand)

“The house that is more at-risk, or more poor, that is the house that is not ready to join. They don’t want to practice, they have no ideas, they’re not thinking long-term, and some houses have drug addicts. So the thing that we do, we encourage the people who already want to practice to be an example for the others.” (NGO, Thailand)

“We can’t do the whole village because it’s too difficult for us to manage. We don’t want to waste time to convince everyone. We want to start with those groups who are ready, interested, and then get them going so that other people can hopefully see they can do it by themselves.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Whether tourism should start in a very poor village at all is for me a question if they have to manage something...whether they have the initiative...I have my doubts, in a very remote area, because it’s quite complicated to manage this. They have not the skills, the experience. Even with training, how much training we can give them, we have limited time there. The villagers must be ready.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“Tourism and other projects can only benefit the middle to better off in the short term (a 5-year project, for example). In the long term, the poor may learn and become more involved.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“In my village, we can’t help poorest family. If they want to be better off, they need to work hard... I try to tell poor people to work harder, grow the vegetables, come cook, etc. but it doesn’t work...The problem is that they are lazy.” (Village leader, the Lao PDR)

“If it had meaning, PPT would concentrate on those excluded; those outside the clan, for example. Then it would be useful.” (Tour company, Thailand)

4.1.3 Recap of findings on prioritizing and targeting the poor

Poverty was defined in various ways in Thailand and the Lao PDR. A basic needs definition of poverty was by far the most commonly one used, with food sufficiency being the number one priority. Income played a role in meeting basic needs, but was viewed by most as being less important and relevant in the context of ethnic minority cultures. Marginalization of ethnic minorities was another critical aspect of poverty in the region. Individual factors like laziness were also believed to play a role.
For the most part, the projects included in this study targeted poverty in a general way, if at all. At a regional level, if tourism was fostering economic growth and job creation, it was believed to have an indirect impact on poverty. In some instances, poorer villages were chosen, using community as a proxy for the poor. In the one case where poor households within a village were targeted and given more chances to participate, the system fell apart within a relatively short period of time, although the exact reasons for it were somewhat unclear. Generally, respondents felt that targeting the poorest of the poor was not a very feasible, economical or efficient strategy.

4.2 Empowers the Poor

The second PPT principle is about empowering poor people and strengthening their participation in tourism decision-making, development and management processes. Interviewees in the case study region were asked about the degree of involvement by poor ethnic minority villagers and the reasons for their non-involvement. Poor ethnic minority villagers were found to be disempowered and disadvantaged on many fronts.

4.2.1 Power differentials and marginalization of ethnic minorities

Most interviewees acknowledged that, all too often, ethnic minorities are left out of the tourism planning, development and management equation (especially in Thailand). They are often exploited within the tourism system (e.g., by tour companies, governments, certain types of guides and tourists) and taken advantage of by more powerful actors with more education, status and business savvy. Ethnic minorities are the key attraction and their images are used to sell tourism in the region, but they have little power to negotiate the terms and conditions under which tourism unfolds in their villages. They are the passive recipients of tourism more often than they are active initiators and participators. Many concerns were
raised (especially by certain NGOs and academics in Thailand) about the “human zoo” approach to ethnic tourism that objectifies ethnic minorities and, in some instances, is an outright violation of human rights. A small number of interviewees in Thailand surmised that some villages had even been denied essential services like a school or electricity because of tourism. The issue of power relations between different stakeholders at various levels was raised primarily by certain NGOs and academics but, when prompted, many stakeholders acknowledged they existed. The general consensus was that within the broader tourism system, ethnic minority villagers have the least power, while companies (along with governments) wield the most. Within villages, it is usually the village leader who makes decisions and the poorest people have the least say.

“There is a fundamental need for a shift in attitude on the part of everyone in the tourism industry, including CEOs, product directors, marketing, and tour leaders. They need to stop treating people as objects and treat them as people. Respect is central, respect for culture.” (NGO, Thailand)

“The problem is, [ethnic minorities] are not stakeholders. They’re the key attraction but they’re not stakeholders.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“Government, businessman, and village head decides.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Tourism is a policy strongly recommended by government because it’s one way to get money from outside. The government doesn’t sincerely think about villagers. Tribal people are human zoos more than they’re involved in tourism activities. The government has a tourism campaign that involves Indigenous people because they have diverse cultures, but the benefits mostly belong to the business sector and government. When tourists visit villages, they only spend a small amount of money for the community. Companies organize it, not communities. The benefit does not belong to the village. Benefit only belongs to the company.” (NGO, Thailand)

“The government uses ethnic images to promote tourism but little benefit goes to ethnic people” (Research institute, Thailand)

“TAT [Thailand Tourism Authority] decides to promote the area and the community just responds.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Everywhere it is very difficult to balance [power differences] and the travel industry will not empower, or will overpower, the villagers. So, it depends on ethics or the
understanding of the investor of the travel business people as well.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“The more you open the world, there’s a possibility that the business people, the business section, or greedy company will go there and get the resource out. That’s the way of tourism.” (NGO, Thailand)

“95% of tour companies take advantage, make no arrangements, just take tourists in, take photos, and leave. Outside contact with Thai middlemen in the past was not good.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“Tour companies have an arrogant attitude. They completely disregard that they are visiting villagers. These people are not animals. There’s a shoddy quality of tours with little interaction. People are reduced to begging.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Operators from Chiang Mai tend to prefer to go into a community that they can dominate, not one that is empowered.” (NGO, Thailand)

“The company tells villagers to be ready in traditional costumes, weaving and wait every time to meet tourists, all day, but they cannot guarantee they will bring tourists every day.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Everything belongs to the company. Sometimes we feel like we’re not treated fairly. The company just tells us how much they will pay. We cannot negotiate.” (Villager, Thailand)

“The poor do what the headman tells them to do. The headman is like a king.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

Even when outside stakeholders (e.g. NGOs, international development agencies, tour companies, government agencies) endeavoured to work with ethnic minority villagers in a participatory manner, they tended to be the main drivers of village tourism development, at least in the early stages. The tourism system is complex and unfamiliar to most ethnic minority villages (especially poor, remote ones) so that villagers are ill-equipped to handle tourism on their own. They are, therefore, largely dependent on assistance from outside organizations with more expertise and resources, placing limits on the degree to which they own and control their own tourism development processes. In addition, the more
sophisticated tourism becomes, the less opportunity there is for poor villagers to participate in a meaningful way.

"The villagers normally have very little understanding of tourism and how to do business. If they do it themselves, it’s hard for them to be successful because they don’t know the markets and they also don’t know how to operate or service. They need someone who has experience to help them. It means that the investor and the villagers have to work hand in hand. The target is that more bodies get benefits—a win-win situation. The investor gets profit from that investment and the villagers get more income and also they can preserve their traditional way of life.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

"The villagers cannot keep it up by themselves. They don’t have the skills for that. How could they market their tour? They would still need some advice, maybe they would have to be reminded that they have to keep their lodge clean. They’re villagers; they’re rice farmers.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

"I think the biggest thing the villagers need help with is marketing. There’s no way they can attract the tourists on their own. They have no access. They have no ability to manage bookings. They just can’t handle that. They don’t have the computer skills, the language skills and, to be honest, they have tremendous challenges just with bookkeeping, even very basic bookkeeping...[challenges] in education in all areas from language to hygiene, just understanding service.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"Villagers have lack of knowledge. I don’t think they would get this kind of idea on their own. The NGO has an important role to give them ideas, knowledge, and help them learn.” (Research institute, Thailand)

"Tourism business is not easy work...Tourism needs a service mind...Real hill people don’t know about this...They are not trained as a service person. They don’t know marketing strategy, public relations, how to survey customer needs.” (University/institute, Thailand)

"Tour agencies have no idea about Karen place and culture. We should have our own company, run by Karen people, our own elephants and workers. We would then lose together and benefit together. But we need money to start for an office, computer, website, personnel, resources, a place in the village, etc. We need to know how to market, promote tourists to visit. We have elephants (Thais don’t have elephants) and we are a hill tribe. We have everything they have, but money. We have everything but we cannot do it because nobody comes to help set it up. We need money, staff, set up office, management, communication, promotion.” (Villager, Thailand)

"I think maybe PPT works in the first step of the tourism lifecycle where tourists and local people understand each other and the local get totally benefits from tourists. But when it’s more developed, they can’t get involved in tourism development in that
area because they have low budget and then they have to sell the land to the tour operator, and it’s unfair.” (Research institute, Thailand)

4.2.2 Practical barriers to poor people’s participation

Poorer individuals face significant barriers to participating in tourism. Often, they were not involved at all (more so in Thailand), especially when no mechanisms were in place to encourage all village households to participate. Reasons for their non-involvement included disinterest, lack of means, having nothing to sell, being too busy working in agriculture or as labourers, preferring more stable sources of income, unreadiness, apprehension, and not being community-minded.

“The poorest cannot be involved in this business. They have low education, small farm or no land, and they provide labour.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“Plans are developed by innovators, who have high income, big farm and are educated. The poor are labourers for low pay. They have no chance to participate, to give ideas.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“Poor families don’t benefit. They have nothing to sell. They’re not involved.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“The poor people are not interested in tourism. They don’t have time. They work in the field. They don’t have money to get the fund to buy material to prepare handicrafts.” (Villager, Thailand)

“The poor are not interested in this business. Tour business is not regular income.” (Villager, Thailand)

“Poor people are poor in everything, their mind, health, etc. They are shy, afraid to get involved in all projects, including tourism.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“The poor don’t benefit because they are uneducated, they don’t speak English, and they don’t want to come to meetings, to be on a committee, to be on the group.” (Government office, Thailand)

“For poor, they are not interested in the community. They are not open-minded in community meetings. They don’t participate with other people in village. They are lazy.” (Villager, Thailand)
"The poor are not interested. They look from far away to see what’s happening, like a spy." (Government office, Thailand)

The typical ways that ethnic minority villagers participate and make money from ethnic tourism are providing overnight homestay in their houses, running community guesthouses, selling food and preparing meals for tourists, producing and selling handicrafts, providing entertainment and miscellaneous services for tourists (e.g., performing traditional music and dance, activities, massage), acting as guides, offering local transport and portering, and occasionally starting small businesses or gaining regular employment as paid staff in the village or with a nearby lodge. Rotational systems, whereby every household in a village had an opportunity to provide food, cooking, entertainment, and other services for tourists, appeared to be the most effective mechanism for enhancing access to tourism profits for the poorest families. Even when strategies were in place to equalize household participation, however, villager involvement was still uneven. Better off sections of communities tended to be more heavily involved, while participation of the poorest (and the resulting benefits) remained at a minimum.

"Sometimes when I have something to sell, it’s not my turn. When my turn comes, I don’t have anything to sell." (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

"I cannot get money from tourists now because it’s not my turn and there are not enough tourists. It is a long time to wait for my turn and not many tourists." (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

"The poor families will continue losing the opportunity to get the benefit like others unless they will improve their family status. For example, if we set the time for them to cook, because they are poor, they have to go to rice field to work every day. When your rotational system come, you are not home. We cannot wait for you to come back because tourists want to eat at a certain time. We will ask another family who has time to come and replace you. Next time, you will get the opportunity again, but if you lose it, you lose it twice, and then maybe the third time you come again. In fact, the poor family, at least then we set up the rotational system, but they will continue losing it because of the time also very constrained for them." (Government office, the Lao PDR)
Poorer villagers are disadvantaged on all accounts, as goods and service providers, employees, and business owners. When it comes to food provision, the poorest villagers are less likely to have extra food to sell because of food shortages associated with poverty and less land on which to grow food. They typically have fewer animals, which garner higher prices than non-timber forest products and vegetables. They are usually too busy trying to make ends meet in the field or forest, or in manual labour, and have little time or extra labour to provide tourist services as well. Poorer people are less likely to have the materials required to make and sell handicrafts, which is a major source of income for ethnic minorities. The poorest households are usually not of the size, quality and condition needed to provide homestay, which is another significant source of income.

"Some poor people have no food for selling." (Villager, the Lao PDR)

"It’s good that tourists come to the village. They can bring money. Only one way it’s not so good, that in my family, I don’t have things to sell for them." (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

"[The poor] are busy trying to do outside labour." (Villager, Thailand).

"The poor house is dirty and not comfortable for guests. They have big family with children." (Government office, Thailand)

"Any family can provide homestay but nicer homes are more likely to be the ones to provide accommodation. For example, there are face issues in the community. They may not want to put people up ‘in the slums’." (NGO, Thailand)

"The homestay program hasn’t estimated the involvement of the poor people yet. But, people who are very, very poor might not be able to handle it, but they might be involved in other areas or activities. Hill tribes are quite interested in doing homestay but their accommodation is not very good so it’s quite impossible to meet standards, so they can’t be very involved." (Government office, Thailand)

Most poor villagers do not have the skills required to gain employment in tourism, such as literacy and numeracy, national and international languages, management skills, customer service orientation, and as some claimed, the necessary work ethic.
“It’s easier to hire Thais. You need to make an effort to hire local.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“It is difficult to hire poor people because they often don’t understand about providing service.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“We employ about 30 or more people…but not all are from the villages because they have to speak English most of them.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“Education, even the basic level in terms of simple language, national language—forget about foreign languages—and responsibility. The poorer parts of the country, the poorest parts of the community in many countries, not everywhere, but in some countries, there is a fundamental issue. They have not, both in terms of physical assets, or even if it’s the right word for it, emotional assets, but social assets, and therefore their level of commitment and responsibility in an employment situation is sometimes less than more educated people, whether they make a commitment for long-term consistent provision of inputs to whatever their job task may be…There’s more of a manana [i.e., wait until later] sort of approach to the process.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

When it comes to starting tourism businesses, the poorest people are rarely in a position to have the startup funds required. Village funds were considered by many to be a good strategy for broadening the benefits of tourism to a larger number of people in the village and were used for a variety of purposes, including loan provision for micro-enterprise development. The extent to which the poorest people were able to access these funds was somewhat unclear, however. Some poor villagers were reportedly reluctant to borrow money for fear of not being able to repay the loans and going into further debt.

“The poor people have no money to build a business and then they can’t get involved with tourism.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“The poor…don’t have money to get the funds to buy materials to prepare handicrafts.” (Villager, Thailand)

“We want to own a shop like that person but we don’t have enough money. That person, her husband is a teacher, the director of the primary school, so gets a salary. But here we want to do also.” (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

“It would be good if tourism can give poor people some budget, some money to start a small business…If the village fund had a low interest rate, then I would be
interested to start a small shop, or I can buy more chickens, pigs, cows, or buffalos.” (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

“We tell them to come borrow money from village fund but they always say they cannot do it because they’re afraid the money will be lost and they can’t pay it back.” (Village leader, the Lao PDR)

“To work for someone else is easier than borrowing money.” (Villager, Thailand)

4.2.3 Recap of findings on empowering the poor

Ethnic minorities are disempowered within the tourism system and the poorest people are sidelined within communities, making it difficult for them to participate on equal footing with more powerful stakeholders or to gain control and ownership over their own tourism development and management processes. Poor people’s full participation in tourism is disadvantaged on many fronts. In general, they lack the means to produce and sell goods and services for tourists, the skills and education to be employed in tourism, and the funds and expertise to start up small businesses.

4.3 Equitably Redistributes Tourism Industry Benefits in Favour of the Poor

The third PPT principle aspires to change the nature of tourism development and operations, and redistribute benefits in such a way that poor people gain more. Case study interviewees were asked how benefits were distributed and the extent to which they thought the tourism industry could be restructured to transfer more benefits to poor people. Findings revealed that benefit distribution between different tourism stakeholders, between villages, and within villages was unequal and that tourism likely reinforces inequality. There are also significant barriers to restructuring the tourism industry in such a way that it tempers profits with social well-being.
4.3.1 Inequity and inequality exists at all levels

Unequal benefit distribution was found at all levels: (1) between villagers and the broader tourism system; (2) between villages; and (3) between households and individuals within villages. On a broader scale, especially in Thailand, there was general consensus that villagers benefit the least and tour companies and investors benefit the most. Government is another major beneficiary. Even NGO and international aid projects and workers were occasionally said to retain more of the funding and benefits than they delivered to local people. Power and participation (as outlined in the previous section) were strongly linked with the way benefits were distributed. Those who had the most power and were in a position to maximize their participation reaped the greatest rewards. Those with the least power and ability to participate (i.e., poorer people) captured the least rewards. Furthermore, villagers may not recognize issues of exploitation and/or lack the power and wherewithal to rise up against injustices, fearing they might lose what little income they currently have access to. Corruption at all levels (e.g., government officials, private sector, guides, village leaders) was also raised as a considerable barrier to equitable distribution, as the rich and powerful seek to manipulate and retain profits for their own benefit.

"If you talk about mass tourism, local people get the least benefit. The local people in many areas get negative impacts from tourism." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"Money will not return to the poor. Money only returns to who controls the resource." (Research institute, Thailand)

"In general, of the tourists, the middleman (mainly the business sector, the tourism business owners, or guides), and the villager, the villagers get few benefits...The middle people benefit the most." (Research institute, Thailand)

"I think the business sector are not concerned with the villagers. They just think about their own benefits, the benefits that they get. I think the tourist business is still leading the government sector. The government just follows the tourist development. The other groups, they get less." (Research institute, Thailand)
"For hill tribe people, they're the ones who contact to the tourists. I mean they are the tourist destination, but they get less. They get less and the owner of the travel shop, the tour operator, gets more." (Research Institute, Thailand)

"The hill tribes, the villagers get the least benefit. But I don't think that they will rise about this. I also ask them about this, 'Why don't you ask more?' And they say, 'Well, I'm afraid that these tour operators will bring the tourists to other villages because there are a lot of villages'. Twenty Baht for them is maybe a lot of money for villagers, valuable for them. They may get 200 or 300 Baht/night, which might be quite a lot for them, so they're afraid that these tour operators will bring tourists to other villages so they don't ask them to pay more." (Research Institute, Thailand)

"The company gets the most benefit. Villagers get some benefits, but not as much." (NGO, Thailand)

"Tourism is good because you can make money, but most money goes to the company." (Villager, Thailand)

"Tourism is commercial activity so, of course, those who are investing will get benefit." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"The way tourism usually unfolds without the presence of a development project, one or two people benefit, by providing homestay, for example, and most of the community gets sidelined. Outside guides rarely hire local villagers to go with them and they usually bring their own food, especially on more expensive tours. It's tough to get tour companies to pay money for local guides." (International organization, Lao PDR)

"Even where we're looking at some of the rural projects, they usually involve somebody that has some land or some property, or some facilities, and so I don't consider them to be people in poverty. They may be employing some people in poverty but (I don't like to use the word) it's a trickle down approach." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"The whole concept of fairness and equality is beginning to creep into this tourism system but it's only through actually analyzing the tourism value chain that we can see these people are actually supplying all the raw product but they're not really benefiting from it." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"Local people don't get profit. They lose profit. They are losing...They are losing their life." (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"With a project, there's somewhere a big bowl of money which is spread first of all to Western employees with really high salaries and special things like supplies and free cars, and then they also do something. They write proposals, they read proposals, they go into villages and do things." (Tour company, the Lao PDR)
“In Thailand, tourism is part of the government sector too. The government makes hundreds of millions of Baht, but if you ask them how they feed back to people in the village, they’re quiet.” (NGO, Thailand)

“The headman tends to pocket the money and people don’t know how it was spent.” (Villager, the Lao PDR)

“Companies charge tourists a lot but not a lot goes to local. And big companies have a link with the government so they have the customers every year. Big companies, some big companies, they don’t train the local people or train the tour guides. Tour guides sometimes get people to smoke opium or take drugs or sell sex. And it seems like government can’t do anything with them because they are a big company linked with political people. It’s about corruption. They have power.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Tourism developers clearly have power and corrupt politicians in the Third World make a lot of money out of it so it’s not in their interest to pass laws that limit the work of tourism developers.” (NGO, Thailand)

“It’s sad to say, but 99% of the government officials first and foremost try to find a way to pocket the money.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

Regarding intra-village distribution, it was not uncommon for interviewees (particularly villagers) directly involved with tourism projects to respond that everyone benefited from tourism, and that benefits were even shared equally, especially when rotation systems were in place. Further probing revealed differences, however, and the majority of interviewees admitted that some people benefit more than others. The general consensus was that those who have more get more. The poorest members of communities, and those who are not involved with tourism, benefit the least. Strategies like turn-taking helped to even things out, but even when poorest families were given more opportunities to participate, it did not necessarily result in them receiving a higher share of the proceeds. Supplying local goods and services helped to distribute benefits to the village level in the rural economy, but poor people within villages were still at a disadvantage when it came to providing those services and, therefore, gained less. Having more land, animals, capital, bigger houses, goods to sell, and entrepreneurial and sales abilities put people in a much better position to take advantage
of tourism. Those with influence (e.g., village leader, village committee), or having kinship
ties and connections to people in positions of power, also tended to benefit more. Tourism,
therefore, appeared to increase the gap between those better off and most involved with
tourism, and those less well off and minimally involved with tourism.

"On average, in areas that have not had assistance from a development project to
plan for tourism revenue distribution, more income goes to wealthier people and
sometimes tourism can increase the gap between the rich and the poor compared to
other activities. Tourism is a new thing and it takes certain skills." (International
organization, Lao PDR)

"In most communities, it doesn’t look like a lot of wealth is spread around. You only
see a handful of families participating except maybe craft sellers." (NGO, Thailand)

"Leaders in the community who work with companies get the most benefit. They have
capacity, money, status, and they control benefits." (NGO, Thailand)

"Who benefits more is the people who help themselves, who have animals, vegetables.
That is like the competition that is in the village." (International organization, the
Lao PDR)

"Those who work harder and participate more, benefit more." (Government office,
the Lao PDR)

"Some families get more because they have something to sell, like they have more
chickens, more ducks, and they open a small shop so they get more." (Villager, the
Lao PDR)

"If somebody has more to sell, like many kinds of vegetables, they can earn more. But
if somebody doesn’t have nothing, cannot get more." (Villager, the Lao PDR)

"If you have more money to put in, you get more benefit." (Villager, Thailand)

"Tourism helps bigger people. People who benefit most already have more money.
It’s not equal. The poor need more education." (Tour company, Thailand)

"[Tourism] is changing this internal village thing that everyone’s poor, everyone got
enough to eat...It’s increasing the gap because you see who’s working with tourism
and they can earn like $3/day if they carry your bag for tourism. If you would carry a
bag of rice to the market, you would not even make this much." (Tour company, the
Lao PDR)
"It depends on local management. If coordinate and manage well, benefits will be distributed to the community. If not, then the target group won't benefit equally." (Government office, Thailand)

What is fair and equitable?

The concept of fairness and equality was brought into question by a number of interviewees, especially in Thailand. They queried the percentage of benefits that should be distributed to different groups, and on what basis. Some interviewees objected to the unfair, fractional returns that ethnic minorities receive in return for being the objects of ethnic tourism and having their images used to sell it. Others argued that tour companies do most of the work, marketing, put in the biggest investment, and take the greatest risks, so they should get a higher proportion of the returns. Still others asserted that nothing is equal in society and those who work the hardest are entitled to reap the greatest rewards.

"It’s not what we’re seeing as being an equal partnership. You’ve got corporations there who put in all of the capital, all of the expertise, and take all of the risk. And so you would expect their reward to be in keeping with those factors.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

"Companies benefit the most, but they are also the ones doing the work. Villagers may say they only get 5% of the benefits but there is no way they could do it on their own without companies, marketing, and an international structure if it’s going to be successful. What’s fair? Like the whole aid game, there is leakage in companies. Companies say they do all the work and should get more money. It should be more equitable. But people usually feel like they’re being used.” (Tour company, Thailand)

"We work hard but only get a little money; yet, the company wouldn’t make money without us.” (Villager, Thailand)

"Thailand has lots of benefit from tourism using our people (pictures, etc.), but we maybe only get 1% of benefits/support...I think the government gets a lot of profit, but little benefit to local people.” (NGO, Thailand)

"About 50 years ago, tour guides or travel agents would take tourists to sleep in a villager’s house with one meal and would pay about 20 Baht per head per night. Now, we know the economy is much more developed in Thailand but there has been little increase in this amount, maybe 20 or 30, maybe 50 Baht. I think it’s unfair.” (Research institute, Thailand)
"For example, if you buy 1 ticket for $100, how much goes to the poor? 80% goes back to the tour operator, the company. If we take the reverse, how can we keep 80% of that $100 in rural area and send only 20% to company? If it can be used as a pro-poor tool, but impossible." (Research institute, Thailand)

"It is hard because even within a small community there are differences. Some they are better off than others...And if someone is more clever or works harder, then they can think of the way that they can get better benefits, which I think is acceptable, because it's hard to make everyone equal." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"Some people in the community have more access, more benefits than others, but we can't start with a perfect system. If evolves over time through learning and experience. Nothing is equal in terms of distribution." (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

4.3.2 Pro-profit, pro-tourist orientation of industry counter to pro-poor approach

Tour companies and other stakeholders were of the opinion that PPT would be difficult to implement because the private sector is set up to make a profit, not to provide social service to the poor. Getting involved in PPT is likely to curb profits in some way, especially in the short-term, and most companies choose short term profit over long term gain and sustainability. PPT takes time to establish. Few companies would be willing to invest the extra time and effort required to build the capacity of villagers and usually lack the expertise to work with communities in this way. It is easier to offer standard, mainstream products without the added complications of involving communities, much less poor villagers, especially if tourists are generally satisfied with the product they are receiving. There is limited incentive for companies to invest in socially-oriented projects and reclaiming such investments can be difficult. Therefore, most companies will not take the risk when the system does not support, encourage or enforce it. Intense competition in the industry usually leads to cost-cutting measures that counter the efforts of PPT to keep prices up in order to pay villagers adequately for their services. If pro-poor oriented companies raise their prices in order to pay more to villagers, they are likely to be undersold by their competitors.
Furthermore, a number of interviewees stressed that, as part of the capitalist system, tourism is preoccupied with profit and competition, not equitable distribution.

"Tourism is one activity of capitalism. They support each other. Tourism supports the idea of capitalism that you need competition. Those who are better get more. It doesn’t think about how to benefit equally." (NGO, Thailand)

“The point that we should not forget, the objective of mainstream tourism and those participating in mainstream tourism, which is to make profit.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“I can’t seem to get away from the actual structure of it because many corporations, if given a free hand, would repatriate most of the profits. So you need to have a mechanism in place that ensures that there is a gain to the local community. But it’s finding that balance, that it’s really all about that. What is it? It’s kind of different for every community, it’s kind of different for every corporate-community relationship. That’s why it’s such a difficult task. There’s no one-size-fits all in trying to understand this.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“General tourism doesn’t benefit hill tribe communities because most companies are for profit and not to help the community.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Many operators not so interested in PPT; just interested in selling to tourists. Many just give to the need of the tourist, give this, give that. What about you get your profit, but the people are still poor?” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“Other companies would not want to do what we’re doing with community-based ecotourism because the profit they can get is maximum 40%.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“I am not sure if all companies will sell community-based tourism product because they don’t have experience and because they used to get the money easily and much more. To sell CBT, you get less money, but of course it’s sustainable money. But sometimes they say they want more money now and they don’t care about the future.” (Government office, the Lao PDR).

“To set up a true community-based trekking tour or tourism thing, a business company cannot do this. They don’t have the time, the funds, or the knowledge.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“It takes lots of time. No company would provide this amount of time. It would be impossible for a general tour operator without an office here to invest the time. You need a local person, a local office.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)
"[Getting tourism businesses to benefit the poor] is not easy because we are talking about a commercial activity that will cost investment. I don't know if the investor will get a return on that.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“Very few companies are interested. But there are some. There are ones that are successful, there are ones that are not successful, there are some that are very successful but they get more benefits from the villagers than the villagers themselves get. Sometimes we have to accept something like this...If you have money, you just buy the land and you build it, finished. Many, many investors, they do like this. But then the locals get very small benefits or they get indirect benefits.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“Other businesses try to cut corners and save every cent. I'm small fries by comparison.” (Tour company, Thailand)

"Everyone competes here on price, not quality of product, so you have the cheapening effect which is destroying the industry.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“That is very hard for a private company to actually make a system that works, that everyone has profit on it...That's one problem that money cannot split in all to the families...Plus the profits are really small, you know, we're talking about a $1 or something per person maybe, and even though we might bring 2,000 people per year, that's $2,000, divided into 4 villages with each 300 people, you know, what's that? Then we have to charge like $40 for trekking. This is impossible. We have to follow market in some way.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“It takes a certain creative kind of mind to kind of break out of the mould, the standard operating procedure...But how do you equate that with more profit? And that's how the tour companies will view it.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“For a lot of tour companies, the economics of tourism is economies of scale. The bigger the tour group, the more money you make. So you have to rework your whole profit system, to be more small scale and have smaller profits, but you're able to do it over the long term. Companies have to learn that they don't always have to respond to market demand. You opt for long term gain over short term gain...You can still do volume but in order to deal with volume, you have to spread it out to more villages. Then, in fact, you're spreading out the benefits of tourism as well.” (Tour company, Lao PDR)

“The way you should look at costing product in your business is to, first of all, take the lowliest employee (the janitor or the dishwasher) and ask if they have enough to feed their family, enough to school them, to save something for their retirement, etc. and if their salary covers that...to think about the quality of life of the people who work there. Then you add everything else from there and build in your profit margin and that's the price of your product...They [government and business] can't see it. It's alien to their way of thinking. They think about how to make more profit.” (Tour company, Thailand)
Tourism tends to be pro-tourist rather than pro-poor. It is organized for the benefit of tourists (and the company), not villagers. Being able to sell a product and meet customer needs and expectations is the priority. Certain tour companies, in particular, pointed out that it is more difficult to provide a consistent, reliable, good quality, high standard product in poor villages. If they cannot guarantee customer satisfaction and safety, they will not be able to contract the products and services of poor villagers. Furthermore, designing programs to meet the needs of the poor was perceived to be unattractive and unsellable to tourists.

"Probably the reason tour operators wouldn’t like the word pro-poor is because, from their perspective, they’re pro-tourist. Their program has to meet the demands of the tourists. You know, so for them to design a program that meets the demands of the poor isn’t something that they can sell...You wouldn’t put it in your marketing.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"For a tour operator, one of the tricky parts of doing tourism in poor villages is guaranteeing having a consistent product. The tour operator is always going to be looking at the standards, quality and the quality of the experience the tourist has, also issues of safety and hygiene and all of that, issues of liability that they have. The tricky part in poor villages is having a consistent product, always being able to say that these villages are going to be dependable.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"What I realized is that we cannot provide a satisfaction guaranteed, money back experience. What we can guarantee is that tourists will have an authentic experience with the local people and that sometimes they might actually experience aspects of poverty that might be uncomfortable. Of course, your paying tourist doesn’t like to see that. That’s not the consumer culture that we come from.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"Tourism, for some reason or another, people think the tourist product is for the benefit of the tourist but, no, it has to benefit the local community. Otherwise, there’s no point in doing it. We should be getting benefits for the local community from the tourist product and we’re not seeing that.” (Tour company, Thailand)

"Promoting tourism opportunities in the poorest parts of communities...can sometimes be difficult to make attractive.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

"When the government said they support local people to preserve their culture, they promote some traditional, but they promote for tourists. They didn’t do for local people.” (NGO, Thailand)
4.3.3 Recap of findings on equitably redistributing tourism benefits

Reorienting the tourism system to achieve greater distribution for poor people is difficult when the industry is pro-tourist and pro-profit rather than pro-poor and pro-distribution. Meeting customer needs and making a profit takes precedence over the needs of the poor. Furthermore, tourism benefits tend to flow in favour of those who have more power and resources to capitalize on the opportunities available, thereby exacerbating inequality. At the same time, it is not easy to judge what is fair and equitable distribution, especially when the capitalist system upon which tourism is based encourages competition and survival of the strongest.

4.4 Generates Net Benefits for the Poor

PPT is premised on being able to demonstrate that the poor gain more from tourism than they lose, an important fourth principle of PPT. It also ensures that tourism development based on poor people’s assets (cultural assets, in this thesis) is to their advantage. Interviewees in this study were asked what the positive and negative impacts of tourism were for the poor and how they assessed and evaluated those impacts. The implications of basing PPT on culture were explored by focusing the study on ethnic tourism and asking interviewees about economic and cultural impacts on ethnic minorities. Findings revealed that measuring and comparing impacts is unwieldy. Different stakeholder perspectives on impacts and priorities add to the challenge of determining if the benefits outweigh the costs for the poor, and the strategies for getting there, especially when conservation goals are at possible odds with poverty alleviation goals.
4.4.1 Complexities of measuring and weighing diverse impacts

Measuring and monitoring impacts was identified as a challenge, especially by intergovernmental/regional organizations, international organizations/donors and internationally owned tour companies involved in evaluating tourism initiatives. Challenges included not having adequate indicators or data; needing a variety of difficult-to-gather qualitative and quantitative measures for direct, indirect, tangible, and intangible impacts on poverty; the transitory, ambiguous nature of poverty and complications of tracking before and after scenarios over time; interpreting and making sense of all the data collected and being able to apply it in a meaningful way; the size and scale of impacts required to be counted as poverty reduction; the complexity and diversity of the tourism system and tourism destinations; and other global forces impacting highland ethnic minorities and opening them up to the outside world.

"The problem is that we still don't have any particular data. First, we must start with developing indicators." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"I'd say tourism is alleviating poverty at the local level. I think the problem donors have with this is that it's very hard to quantify. It's not that it's hard to quantify. You have to exert a lot of effort to gather the data and to collate data and then to really study all the knockoff effects of it." (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"You can't always measure it purely in numbers whereby moving from $1/day to $2/day you must be twice as well off. It doesn't quite work that way. It's not a straight line relationship." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"In an analytical sense, even in these rural interventions, it's very difficult to show a direct relationship between the initiative and changes in the circumstances of what I consider to be poverty, which is the less than $1/day or $2/day. And I think it's very difficult to demonstrate this linkage directly. What we can do is demonstrate...a proxy for poorer parts of the community." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"The problem is, once these people get a job, they're no longer in the definition of poverty ($1/day) anyway. Being able to measure where they were and where they are is very difficult. These sorts of statistics are very difficult to obtain, unless you're
very, very rigorous about before and after kinds of things.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“Increasingly, we’re trying to come to grips with the sociological impacts as well, certainly cultural, because a lot of these communities are not in stasis. They are evolving...It’s such a complicated and convoluted system...There are no numbers, so you really have to rely on qualitative assessments and you could probably spend 10 years on it and still not come up with the real figure anyway.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“We’ve seen situations, for example, where young children, they won’t go to school because they can actually make more money by standing on the streets and begging. Not a good picture. Yes, they can make more money, and if you just looked at the hard stats, you could say their income just quadrupled. Well, yes, on that measure it has. However, these other elements tend to downplay what we think is going on. There’s nothing like being there and seeing it and making evaluations based on more than numbers on a sheet of paper. It’s attitude, it’s lifestyle, it’s all those elements and very, very difficult.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“You need to look at the long-term impact of tourism, if tourism improves quality of life. You need to look at a holistic view of community life or does it destroy life? Does it support learning, quality of life? A holistic view not only impacts one person or one activity or issue. Tourism impacts on surrounding factors, other parts of life. You need to look at long term.” (NGO, Thailand).

“Tourism is just one kind of modern global phenomenon that opens up the ethnic communities to the outside world. Tourism itself kind of speeds up the changing or some of the new kinds of global impacts on ethnic culture and community...Even if there is no tourism to the village, the village threat from changing their own culture anyway from education, from economic development, or whatever other issues.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“Tourism-induced change is a lot less (maybe 10-20%) compared to roads, cars, infrastructure, land development, electricity, missionaries, Thaification, and TV. TV is full-time exposure to Thai culture. Compare it to a group of tourists going into the village and the impact is small.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“Tourism-induced change is minor compared to the search for modernity.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“Monitoring is difficult, especially cultural impacts. It’s much easier to show economic impacts and it’s difficult to weigh cultural impacts against economic ones.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

Determining if the benefits of ethnic tourism outweighed the costs specifically for the poor was a challenge, especially when there were different perspectives on the value,
significance, importance, and positivity or negativity of impacts. Weighing economic and cultural impacts was especially difficult in the context of ethnic tourism and many interviewees recognized that there was a delicate balance between income and culture in these traditional societies. Reported benefits tended to be on the economic side, and negative impacts on the socio-cultural-spiritual side, although positives and negatives were cited in all spheres. Most respondents discerned that the incursion of tourists and tourism income into ethnic minority communities led to the erosion of traditional ethnic culture and community cohesion. Others argued that tourism was the impetus for cultural preservation and that, without tourism, most villagers would see little reason or means to retain aspects of their culture, such as weaving, traditional clothing and handicrafts.

"To weigh cultural richness with economic poverty is difficult." (NGO, Thailand)

"How can you measure or compare between the money they get and the speeding up of the loss of their culture?" (Research institute, Thailand)

"It is also possible that if there is enough tourism to generate benefits to the poor, it will ruin the cultural exchange." (NGO, Thailand)

"Tourism should only reach a certain percentage and after that, it’s damaging to the culture." (Tour company, Thailand)

"There is a dark side to tourism. There are drugs, there is prostitution, there is crime, there is name it...And it looks like it’s some sort of critical mass. When you get to a certain number, if you will, that these elements get drawn to it like moths to a flame and then all of a sudden you’ve got a whole bunch of negative issues...You’ve got to really balance the equation. And a lot of the communities are very fragile so the critical mass is much lower and you’ve got to be aware of that." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"On the positive side, it helps them get out of their traditional poverty because they don’t have education, they don’t have any help. The negative factor is this attraction or exposure to consumerism." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"Modern ideas come and this Prime Minister is talking about solving poverty by wanting people to have money. But when villagers get more money, they don’t care about the community. They think more about themselves, don’t help each other, and get more greedy." (NGO, Thailand)
“Some things are good, like a better standard of living, but there has also been loss of culture.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Even the hill tribes themselves, they think about income. If they get income, their lifestyles change.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“Some have become quite rich...They make income, economic benefit only. But their lifestyle has totally changed, their ideas changed, their minds changed.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“I think that people is more shift from cultural or spiritual to the money.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“You get money, but you lost your religious way of life.” (Villager, Thailand)

“[Money and culture] are the same importance if you know how to do. Because if you develop too much money and forget to sustain, culture goes away. But money, be careful with the money. If you have too much, you don’t know how to use it, if you don’t have regulation, can do wrong thing.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“Tourism, far from making them work together, has made them competitive and if you go around the hill tribes around Chiang Rai, you see all this competition between different tribes to get tourists.” (NGO, Thailand)

“They used to be friends. Now it’s a business area, not a residential area. You can’t find the spirit of community anymore. Now they dress up and ask for money and yell at you when you don’t give it. Now they need money for everything. There is less trust of each other. They used to depend on each other.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Because tourism goes down there, people would like to have television, car, good house, this thing, that thing. Then they come to the town. And the problem when they come to the town, they have no education, no one employs them, they need to go to a shop, and then they end up in prostitution.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“The women came not to be the housewife anymore. They’re involved in tourism businesses, sell handicrafts...so they don’t have time to look after their children...Some children also don’t go to school. They just dress up in traditional clothes and ask for money...And so they learn. They change not only their lifestyle but also their mind, learn how to get income from tourists.” (University/institute, Thailand)

“Many people think tourism is negative. But it can be positive now. Villagers have costumes, handicrafts, etc. that they maintain for tourists. It’s a losing battle to keep culture with the young. If they didn’t have tourists, maybe these things wouldn’t be around at all.” (Tour company, Thailand)
“It’s not bad to find and encourage and give support to people who want to preserve culture...Tourism can encourage people to preserve culture, not put stops on it. Tourists can give value to certain kinds of cultural things.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“The changing not come by tourists, because the world has changed, media, many media go to the village. Everything make people change already and if we don’t have tourism, sometimes people don’t know why they have to keep culture...At least when people come, they get some money, they get some extra money, there is some profit that come by the thing that they keep—culture.” (NGO, Thailand)

4.4.2 Different perspectives and priorities on economic and cultural impacts

The perspectives of different stakeholders on the overall impacts of tourism were sometimes contradictory. While villagers were generally happy with tourism, a small number of scholars and NGOs (usually those not directly involved with tourism projects) tended to view tourism as having been predominantly detrimental, exploitative, and unfair for poor people and ethnic minorities. Those directly involved with tourism initiatives perceived their own projects as being primarily beneficial for villagers, while acknowledging that negative impacts were probably the norm in the broader mainstream tourism industry.

“Hill tribes themselves quite agree and accept tourists. For their mind, most of them are happy when tourists come to visit their village. They get some more income from tourists. For scholars like us, I think this kind of tourism, especially in Chiang Mai, is not fair, very unfair for hill tribe people.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“[Tourism] hasn’t improved the lot of the poor in many instances as far as I can tell over the years. Tourism has far too often been used as an instrument to exploit the poor further...It doesn’t seem to me, particularly in Third World countries, that the poor have benefited at all from the presence of tourism. The jobs they get are almost entirely menial. The good jobs are always preserved by the people in power. Even the cultural and artistic things are exploited time and time again.” (NGO, Thailand)

Outsiders (e.g., NGOs, international organizations, government officials, tour operators, researchers, and scholars) were much more apt than insiders (i.e., villagers) to express concerns about culture loss and environmental sustainability. Several international
donors and NGOs admitted that what they as outsiders thought was good for the villagers was sometimes in conflict with what the villagers themselves wanted. Project goals of preserving environment and culture were, to some extent, at odds with villagers’ desire for more income via more tourists. Villagers associated tourists with money and, therefore, wanted more tourists, not less. Project organizers, on the other hand, wanted to set limits on the number of tourists as a means of minimizing negative socio-cultural and environmental impacts. Many organizations, Thai NGOs in particular, cautioned against dependency on tourism as a sole income earner that would undermine villagers’ foundational way of life (i.e., living off the land) and make them more vulnerable to outside shocks.

“What you think might be good and what villagers think is good are often different.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“We often think we know better than villagers and that’s why we have these monitoring questions. It’s true to some extent. When they have no experience with tourism, they can’t know the impacts.” (International organization, Lao PDR)

“[The project] tried to limit the number of visitors but the villagers wanted greater numbers. Tourism is new so there is less awareness by local people of the cultural impacts.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“It is difficult to get an idea from the community of how many visitors they want and can accommodate. They just say they want as many as possible.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“Often villagers just want more tourism and more money and seem less concerned about other potential impacts like culture. If you ask them, they will say it’s good and they want more tourists.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“We also talked with them on the impacts of tourists when they come in but the villagers seem not to be worried about that because they are more worried about the income...This is understandable because their living is very hard, very hard life going and doing the agriculture. So if there’s something they can do to get better income, they welcome it, are very excited about it.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“Most important for [villagers] is to earn money. That is the main thing I want to help them, to know how to protect culture, environment, wildlife. Culture is important for them, for their life.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)
"The government has different departments. Government and tourism have different ideas about development and conservation. The department of tourism has to have image, but others want to develop." (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"We try tell them it's only extra (not main) income. Sometimes they ask us to find more tourists." (NGO, Thailand)

"We consider the impacts on their way of life. This is most important because we don’t want to bring in tourists and then they stop their way of life and just change their way of life to serve tourism...Because tourism sometimes is very sensitive. If something happens, then it disappears, so then what will the villagers do? So this was our biggest concern. We always talked to them that they still have to rely on their traditional income from agriculture. Tourism is still a sideline, an add-on income.” (Regional organization, Thailand).

“As people try to get away from normal agricultural work and going into the habit of searching for money through different businesses, making them entrepreneurs, which we think as Westerners is not a good thing. But why shouldn’t they be able to afford at some point a small tuk-tuk to bring the goods to the river instead of on the horses or the backs of their women?” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“The perception of villagers is sometimes in conflict with ours and what we think is good for them. For example, they want TVs, good houses, electricity, etc. but this may detract from tourism.” (NGO, Thailand)

Project organizers often sought to convince ethnic minorities to retain aspects of their culture as an opportunity to earn extra income from tourism. Western tourists were believed to be looking for visible displays of traditional culture (e.g., colourful costumes, ethnic handicrafts, traditional housing, no modern amenities), whereas villagers and domestic tourists reportedly preferred modern conveniences and attire. Western tourists were said to view cultural change and the signs of modernization and materialism as negative, whereas the contemporary lifestyles of many ethnic minorities (especially in Thailand) were becoming more modern. Ethnic minorities were often reported to want modern amenities such as electricity, satellite dishes, TVs, radios, mobile phones, vehicles, better housing, and Western style clothing. Western style clothing, for example, is considered to be more comfortable, convenient and functional for everyday use than traditional clothing. Because
foreign tourists wanted to see specific physical manifestations of culture, however, ethnic minorities frequently responded by showcasing these traits just for tourists, even though they were no longer a part of their everyday lives. Once tourists discovered it was no longer 'authentic', they moved on. In Thailand especially, there were many reports of highland ethnic minority villages having dropped off the tourist track because they were no longer considered to be untainted by worldly influences.

"It's partly for tourism that [we] encourage them not to change their behaviour because it's a lost opportunity. All [village] staff are required to wear traditional clothing when they are on duty." (NGO, Thailand)

"If they deculturate themselves in the process, they lose tourism." (International organization, the Lao PDR)

"The tourist wants a romantic (not all tourists, some tourists), they want to go back to this idealistic, rural lifestyle where life was simpler and people have a coherent community bounded by rituals and customs, where people felt that their identity was that." (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"Foreign tourists want to see the primitive. Thai tourists want to see developed things." (Research institute, Thailand)

"The tourist wants the perfect village...a primitive way of life." (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"Villagers choose not to wear traditional clothes because they're too hot, but guests want to see traditional clothes. I try to tell them the guests want to see, but they don't believe." (Government office, Thailand)

"In general, most of the ethnic groups, they do not really concerned about try to maintain their way of life or house style or costumes in order to attract tourists." (Research institute, Thailand)

"Traditional clothes are difficult to make and usually expensive and must grow cotton and takes time to make (have to spend many days). But now if get money from tourists, always go to market to buy western clothes...Like traditional clothes because they have to spend the time for making, but western clothes are easy, so when they get money, they buy. But this change is not so good. Because the tourists come here, many tourists ask...about their culture, their outfit. They want to see traditional clothes from different ethnic groups." (Government office, the Lao PDR)
"We had lots of complaints from tourists because in our catalogue or brochures we said we go up the hill to study the livelihood of the hill tribes but when the tourists get up there, there's no hill tribes, no costumes, they wear just like jeans and t-shirts, and nothing for them to see. The traditional culture disappear or start to disappear. So, in tourism point of view, it means that that type of product deteriorating." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"In terms of monetary needs, they grew rice, needed salt, made houses from forest. Now, they come down and see mobile phones, TVs, electricity, and they want it too. You can't stop it. Tourists won't be so interested if they change too much." (International organization, the Lao PDR)

"This is the dilemma. You see these people. They see all these tourists arriving and they gather around and they try to sell and then they get money. And they want to have also, normal human beings, to have also these new gadgets like everyone and they know that television exists and VCR, video, DVDs. So how do we reconcile both?" (Regional organization, Thailand)

"What they find is that the more the community change to be modern, the less the tourists visit the village because when we talk about ethnic minority or tribal culture, the foreign tourists they would like just to go to a kind of very traditional community only...There is no such traditional community left." (Research institute, Thailand)

"Most of them have lost their traditional lifestyle. They still keep that lifestyle to sell to tourists (like their costumes, their performance) but they don’t practice it; just as a show for tourists." (Research institute, Thailand)

"What I see from my own experience, the more they talk about their own ethnic culture in order to revive or to maintain, it’s just to perform for tourists only and it is not the real life of them anymore." (Research institute, Thailand)

"Traditional clothes are very hot and heavy. But in order to attract tourists, they have to wear them...The point is that these are not really the life of them or the performing of their own traditional costume in their own context." (Research institute, Thailand)

"Twenty years ago, many foreigners came and then they changed their way of life. Now only a few foreigners visit because of development, not development, modernization." (Research institute, Thailand)

"People in a village had become wealthy from tourism and as a result, changed their lifestyle and village; for example, bought TVs, motorcycles, got electricity, etc. Because of this, the tour operators left the village." (NGO, Thailand)

"Ten years ago, about 11-12 songthaews a day went to our village. Now hardly any because tourists are looking for something different from the city and now villages
look the same with wood houses, electricity, modern clothes, etc.” (Villager, Thailand)

"[The NGO] can only give advice that if they change their lifestyle so much that it loses its unique characteristics, it may affect tourism. I felt upset when they introduced electricity last year and some satellite dishes. However, I also realize that the villagers have logical decision-making and there is rationale for what they do, even when it appears illogical from outside. I would like to find the middle ground with cultural tourism between freezing a culture and having it totally modernize.” (NGO, Thailand)

For most (but not all) villagers interviewed, income generation was the priority, with half contending that money was the only benefit of tourism. As long as they profited from tourism, villagers viewed tourism as primarily positive, though many expressed a desire to earn more money from tourism. They were happy to see tourists coming to the village and seemed willing to dismiss minor inconveniences and potentially negative impacts (e.g., culturally inappropriate behaviour on the part of tourists) as long as tourists brought money. Eliciting negative reactions from villagers was usually quite difficult and many (especially in the Lao PDR) claimed there were no drawbacks to tourism, even when prompted. All villagers felt that tourism was a vital source of income, even though it was usually of a casual, informal and supplemental nature, and too small, irregular, seasonal, and subject to crises beyond their control (e.g., Avian flu epidemic) to rely or survive on. Some villagers reported feeling somewhat dependent on tourism and were very concerned when tourist numbers dropped. The ability to earn tourism income directly in the village rather than travel outside to work or sell products was viewed a major bonus. Furthermore, tourism income was more immediate, more frequent, less labour intensive, easier, and sometimes more substantial than villagers’ main livelihood sources—agriculture and/or non-timber forest products, as well as livestock. There were a few reported instances of food prices rising in villages because of tourism, however. In remote villages without road access and few other
income sources (such as one of the study villages in the Lao PDR), tourism income was especially important for villagers, even in amounts as low as US$40/year. Incomes varied widely and were difficult to assess because of fluctuating tourist numbers, seasonality, irregularity, different types of activities yielding different profits, intermittent and casual involvement, and so forth, but most villagers in the Lao PDR appeared to earn less (often far less) than US$1/day, whereas many villagers in Thailand seemed to earn more than US$1 or $2/day, on average. Villagers in Thailand most often reported using tourism income to help cover children's education expenses and to make housing improvements, followed by buying some food and rice. Buying clothes, vehicles, televisions, and making church offerings with tourism income were also mentioned. Villagers in the Lao PDR most often mentioned using tourism income to pay for medicine and cooking additives (e.g., salt, seasoning powder, chili, garlic, oil), followed by kitchen and household items (e.g., bowls, pots, utensils, blankets). In a few instances, clothes, rice, alcohol, cigarettes, better housing, electricity and water were also mentioned.

“We can see that the economic benefits, the hill tribes themselves are quite happy with that...They may not be happy with the imbalance, but in general I think they’re quite happy because they get more income compared with some villagers.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“Money is better than before because of tourism.” (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

“Money is more important than the effect it has on children copying tourists.” (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

“Many things are good when tourism comes to the village because we don’t need to work outside. We can feed animals here, have a garden in this village, and go to cook for tourists in the kitchen. So it’s easier.” (Villager, the Lao PDR)

“When we get food, we don’t need to take to the market in town because we sell it here, so it’s better.” (Villager, the Lao PDR).

“Compared with outside earnings, tourism is easy and more comfortable.” (Villager, the Lao PDR)
“Tourism is good, better than collecting from the forest because tourism is once every two months but the forest is just once a year, so tourism is better.” (Villager, the Lao PDR)

“It makes life easier.” (Villager, Thailand)

“If there is no tourists come to the village anymore or if we don’t have enough from the tourists, it’s hard for us, that it’s not enough for the family. And also it’s difficult that when we get like bamboo shoots or cardamom or tree bark, we have to take it to [the city] to sell there.” (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

“If no tourists come for one week or 3-4 days, many people here talk and wonder why they’re not coming...They worry that they won’t have money.” (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

“The cost of living has gone up (e.g., chicken, fish). Before, they could buy meat for 5000 kip for 1 kg. Now it costs 22,000 kip for 1 kg. Most families raise their own animals but if they want to buy, it’s expensive.” (Villager, the Lao PDR)

“In one village, there is some inflation because they charge more for food to tourists. Villagers won’t sell ducks and chickens to each other because they can make more money from tourists.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“Economic impacts are small. An outsider may see them as small, but for the community, it helps a lot.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“The money that goes into the villages from the villagers’ perspective is significant. If you compare that a woman brings a basket of bamboo down from the mountain, walks 8 hours, sells that basket of bamboo for maybe 20,000 kip, walks back up. And we bring one tourist into that village and that tourist drops $10 per head in the village, that is really significant in the villagers’ terms. But from a donor’s perspective or from a government’s perspective, they want to see big tag items but this is not a big tag item. And so there’s a credibility that this is actually a really significant activity, economic activity that’s going on. So that’s kind of part of how they like to see much bigger numbers.” (Tourism company, the Lao PDR)

Other stakeholder representatives asked about villagers’ apparent focus on income over culture concurred that they had made similar observations, and provided several possible reasons for it. Some underscored the economic imperative for villagers living in poverty, where poor people have little choice but to prioritize money over culture and environment. Others maintained that the comforts and pleasures of modern society are too
enticing for ethnic minorities to resist, especially under the dominant influence of globalization, capitalism and government policies aimed at economic development and modernization. Capitalism turns ethnic minorities into consumers and then tourism (also an agent of capitalism) follows as a much needed source of cash to these rural and remote areas. In a few cases, respondents pointed out that the deeper and more meaningful cultural and spiritual values (which are not immediately visible to tourists) may still be maintained in the face of modernizing influences. Still others explained that villagers tend to concentrate on short-term economic benefits because they do not have the education, global awareness or long-term perspective to make meaning of the changes that are taking place, or to understand the broader, long range consequences of tourism.

"From the perspective of poverty, economics are the priority. Villagers need to survive. It’s hand to mouth.” (Tour company, Thailand)

"If people feel they don’t have enough to subsist, basic needs are the priority.” (NGO, Thailand)

"Villagers think they want tourism for money because resources around the village are scarce.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“It’s hard if you just say you should preserve this or do this. They don’t understand. They have to struggle to survive. They need to work. They don’t have time to conserve environment.” (NGO, Thailand)

“The government policy is focused on modern economic development more than social development. It is trapped in capitalism. With roads, electricity, irrigation, etc. it is easier to follow with money. If you have a road, you have a chance to bring many things back from the city and you need more money. With electricity, you need a fridge, TV, etc. It doesn’t mean you shouldn’t have these things, but people should be educated so they know what it means.” (NGO, Thailand)

“The ADB/World Bank paradigm tries to create stability through consumerism. It creates a desire to buy, consumerism. Capitalism gets people to want things and then tourism becomes a way for them to get money to buy those things. How else do you get money to those remote areas but through tourism? The corporate mode feeds itself. It is spinning out of control.” (Tour company, Thailand)
"When villagers see tourists come to the village, they think of it as a way to make money. They think in short term benefit. The economy is based on capitalism and it is difficult to think in long-term benefit. Villagers should think about cultural transmission as well as money. If it is just short term benefit, it is not sustainable and everything breaks down" (NGO, Thailand)

"In the past, I don’t think they considered money because they can survive. Nowadays because there’s many things—mobile phones, motorcycle, cars, advertising, and now they have TV (so they see advertising), they need more money to buy those kinds of things...The concern is that the community needs to be strong enough in how they believe. If they’re not strong enough and they see new things coming, they will change." (NGO, Thailand)

"They are a culture in change. There are so many influences. First of all, they say themselves, “We don’t want to be mountain people anymore”. They see the lowland Lao riding on motor scooters, having televisions and so on. This is what they want" (International organization, the Lao PDR).

"Culture is still ingrained. Their spirituality is still so pervasive. For example, spirit house offerings are still prevalent. No matter how modern they are, they still maintain culture." (Tour company, Thailand)

At the same time, villagers are not homogenous and a number of interviewees commented on differences between themselves. For instance, older generation tend to be more concerned with cultural, spiritual and environmental impacts, whereas the younger generation tends to be more focused on making money.

"Before, the clothes they made by cotton. They did everything by themselves here. But now the young men, young people don’t want to do it because it’s hard, it’s difficult, many steps to do it. Right now, they just earn money and buy from the market. It’s easier." (Villager, the Lao PDR)

"The young people they don’t want to do their own traditional ways because the young people right now, they want to be rich, so they want to change. If they do the same things, only taboos and taboos, they don’t have time to make money.” (Villager, the Lao PDR)

"The young people, they want to earn money. But old people, they want to keep culture. Because the young people, they need money to go to school, to pay for their material, to pay for their clothes, to stay there. So they need much money, it’s not like culture. If they just use culture, it’s not successful for study in the town.” (Villager, the Lao PDR)
"The priorities for my generation and older generation are: (1) spiritual life, (2) preserve natural environment, (3) money. For young people, money always comes first. We are trying to gather and help young people see that spiritual life is most important thing. If you have spiritual life, you have care and concern for each other and can work together. If village compete with each other, that will be a big problem." (Villager, Thailand)

4.4.3 Cultural preservation goals in potential conflict with poverty elimination

A particular challenge with regard to using ethnic tourism as a tool for PPT is the potential conflict between ethnic tourism's requirement of authenticity and the material advances often associated with poverty reduction. Several interviewees alluded to the possibility that ethnic tourism may actually perpetuate rather than alleviate poverty if poverty itself is in some way the tourist attraction. If poverty is associated with a primitive lifestyle and a lack of modern amenities (e.g., lack of electricity and running water, basic housing, unable to afford modern things), and if that is what ethnic tourism encourages (assuming that is what tourists are looking for), then ethnic tourism may, in fact, be encouraging the continuation of living in poverty. Even some villagers reportedly believed that tourists were coming to see them because they were poor. If PPT reduces poverty in such a way that it brings in improved infrastructure, better quality housing, new clothes, good roads, electricity, telecommunications, material goods, and so on, and makes villagers less perceptibly traditional, PPT may in effect be creating the kinds of conditions where the ethnic tourism destination quickly loses its appeal to tourists, especially foreign tourists. Tourists then move on to more traditional territories, leaving those villagers in the wake and depriving them of the tourism income they have grown to rely upon. The sustainability of pro-poor ethnic tourism is, therefore, called into question as ethnic tourism itself may hinge upon ethnic minorities maintaining a certain level of material poverty. Tourism may, at best, be a short-term solution, placing ethnic minority villages at greater risk in the long run without a backup
plan. On the other hand, if villages are too desperately poor, they also become unappealing to tourists, as a small number of respondents pointed out. In other words, it seems that if villages are either too rich (i.e., too modern) or too poor, they are less attractive as ethnic tourism destinations. Finding a proper balance could prove to be a major challenge for pro-poor ethnic tourism.

“What the tourist wants to see is the traditional lifestyle, and the reality is that traditionally people live pretty poor...So which comes first, the chicken or the egg? Is it the demand or the poverty?” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“Does tourism help them to get out of their poverty or is tourism trying to let them live in the same poverty? You see, this is the kind of dilemma. I don’t want to see these tribes to be presented like a museum. When the tourists arrive, they go into their own traditional way and then as soon as the tourists leave, they live their normal life.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“Because this is PPT, pro-poor, I don’t know whether I decided correctly that in one meaning, we want tourism to help the poor...in order that poor get better life...Is that correct? Or maybe, in another sense, is that tourism wants to see the poor. If the poor change, then tourists will not go there.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“The reality is that where do our guests want to go, into the hills and stay with the villagers that are far up in the hills, and those are the poorest villages.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“I went around to all the villages and did these tourism awareness seminars, and I always asked the question, ‘Why do you think all the tourists are coming?’ and some villagers told me, ‘Because they want to see how poor people live’. And in a sense, that’s right. But the tourist would never think of it in those terms.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“We visit because we are selling their...way of life...Tourists see a primitive way of life...But pro-poor means we have to tell them to get away from a poor living condition. But how? How to get away from poor life, to be sustainable for both? It takes many years...I don’t know how to do...The tourist wants the perfect village.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“In the past, many tourists went to see their village but then less and less tourists went. The government officer made a good road, cutting the road through the village, building the construction, and then the whole village welcomed it very well so they all changed everything. They put up concrete houses, had satellite, TV, everything. And then we saw that they were not that poor and then the attractiveness of the village was gone.” (Regional organization, Thailand)
“Exposing these relatively wealthy people to desperate poverty, the people wouldn’t have a good time going to that village... The tourists would feel so guilty going to it.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“Some feedback from tourists that it’s like visiting a zoo and they’re so poor... I don’t want to see. Why did you take us here? That means we need to organize, we need to develop.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

4.4.4 Recap of findings on generating net benefits for the poor

Evaluating whether the benefits of tourism outweigh the costs for the poor is problematic when widely divergent impacts are not easily measured, weighed or compared. In the context of ethnic tourism, balancing economic and cultural impacts is particularly challenging and complex. Exposing traditional ethnic minority cultures to the monetarizing and modernizing influences of tourism potentially induces and speeds up cultural change which, in turn, threatens the viability of the ethnic tourism ‘product’. Most outsiders tended to view cultural change as negative, whereas many villagers (especially youth) reportedly welcomed the changes associated with money and modernity. The cultural and environmental preservation goals of tourism projects were sometimes in conflict with villagers’ own wishes for greater income generation. Consumer demand for cultural authenticity may, on some level, demand the continuation of poverty conditions, making ethnic tourism (as it is currently practiced) and PPT potentially irreconcilable.

4.5 Mainstreams a Pro-Poor Approach into Policy and Practice

According to the last principle, in order for PPT to have a palpable impact on poverty on a national and global scale, it must be instilled into the entire tourism system and related sectors, all levels of government policy and planning, local and international business operations, development assistance, and consumer choices. To gauge the likely uptake of
PPT by multiple stakeholders, interviewees were asked what they thought about PPT, its widespread adoption, and its effectiveness as a poverty reducer. Most felt that PPT was difficult to grasp and attain, that it was little different from other forms of alternative tourism already underway, and that direct poverty impacts were likely to be minimal in the overall picture.

4.5.1 Limited stakeholder interest, commitment and uptake

Most interviewees felt there was meager interest, motivation and capacity on the part of different stakeholders—private sector, government and tourists—to adopt PPT. Some claimed that PPT initiatives in the region were restricted to a few caring, committed, outstanding individuals. Many contend that the success of PPT depends to a great extent on the character and commitment of the individuals involved (e.g., company managers, investors, guides, tourists, government officials, development workers, village leaders, and poor villagers), as well as good governance and management at all levels, but that it is difficult to achieve in practice.

"There are very few good examples; just a few outstanding individuals." (Tour company, Thailand)

"If you get a good tour company, you get a positive benefit. But if you get a bad tour company or tour agency or tour guide, you get a negative...They will go there and if they're a bad business, they will take a lot from that community." (NGO, Thailand)

"[The new head of the PTO] is really hoping to create the benefit and help people improve their lives. That always depends so much upon the individual." (International organization, the Lao PDR)

"You need people who care—government, private sector, and tourists." (International organization, the Lao PDR)

"What you're asking for is a total change of heart" (NGO, Thailand)

"It would take a lot of commitment and resources." (Tour company, Thailand)
“You’ve got to have buy-in at the very highest levels of government. And it has to be real buy-in. You can’t just pay lip service to it. And that means a policy framework and a regulatory and a legal framework that allows for good development at a pace decided by the stakeholders.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“[The poor gain power and control over their tourism situation] only if the government is willing to give it to them and if the government puts in effective measures to protect them from people who would exploit them. It’s extremely difficult though, in countries which are already poor and already struggling to see ways in which the government would be at all willing to release some of its, or share some of its, responsibilities and powers with those who need it.” (NGO, Thailand)

“On this small-scale level, working with communities, working with villagers, governments in Third World countries generally don’t have the capacity, the knowledge and the funding to set up something like this.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“It is difficult to change tourism because the country’s policy is based on promoting economic development.” (NGO, Thailand)

“They try to set PPT in the Ministry of Tourism, Recreation & Sport, but we don’t see any contribution.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“Neither the private sector nor the public sector is doing enough collectively to raise the water so that all the boats float up. Everyone’s worried about their own boat as opposed to the water underneath the boat. The private sector is too competitively priced and the government sector seems to have their own agenda.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“(To shift the industry) is a very, very ambitious and challenging problem.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“You’ll never get everybody in the industry because we’ve got to raise the standard and product knowledge. Not all of them are equipped to do it.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“I don’t see many tour operators with a mission to do this sort of thing...or are willing to invest in it.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“To find the right company—a company that’s committed, that wants to keep it up, and sees that this is a market for them, that they can also benefit from it—it is difficult.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

As for the private sector, many interviewees were of the opinion that either incentives or disincentives would be needed to encourage more companies to act in a pro-poor manner,
especially if PPT does not immediately or directly boost profits. Incentives included enhanced image, recognition, special support for pro-poor companies, and certification systems with clear standards for companies to be able to demonstrate their social responsibility and for tourists, in turn, to choose more socially responsible companies. Education and promotion of PPT were also urged for industry managers, developers, operators, marketers, and government officials, as some interviewees reckoned they are simply not aware or knowledgeable enough about PPT to undertake it. Disincentives included rules and regulations, and might involve taking away business licenses from companies not operating in a pro-poor manner. It was generally believed that most companies are unlikely to adopt PPT on a voluntary basis unless they get something in return or are somehow compelled to do so. The majority of people interviewed, including tour operators, agreed that PPT will only work with some control and regulation and that the government plays an important (although often ineffectual) role in instituting, monitoring and enforcing rules and regulations, as well as ensuring that villagers are protected from exploitation and duly compensated for their involvement in tourism. Furthermore, it was recognized that if the government enforces too many rules and regulations, investors may simply move where there are fewer restrictions.

“To make it happen on bigger scale, it needs to be more business friendly; actually, more business unfriendly so that if businesses are not doing it, they should run the risk of losing their business. It needs to move beyond being a charity. It needs standards.” (International organization, Lao PDR)

“The government should support companies with an interest in supporting the community more than other companies, but it may be difficult to identify, control and support those companies.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Most people need to be forced a little bit. Nobody will think I need to do this. Few help. Most need to be obligated.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)
"You need a government with a lot of control, that is not corrupt, to implement, monitor, and enforce rules and regulations." (International organization, the Lao PDR)

"You need the guideline from the authority concerned. You have to make the regulation on this one, how to sell the tour, how to operate the tour, how to develop the product." (Tour operator, the Lao PDR)

"The authority must enforce operators to pay the village...markup to pay villagers for service...If you don’t pay, we don’t authorize you to visit. This will last longer.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"It’s hard to understand why these guys in the tourism office, which we pay through our tax, are not taking any action. There are no rules.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"We have to have a law to control. Otherwise people will do as they want, not so good. Many tourists, they no good, spoil. It depends on the people who use the tourism way. If you use a good way, it help you, to bring the people together to share, learn. If think about profit, money only, sorry.” (NGO, Thailand)

"To institutionalize it, the concept needs to be better marketed. There needs to be clearer standards for tourists to choose and businesses to market, such as certification to get a step up. Business needs real incentives, like a logo to say they have achieved certain levels." (International organization, the Lao PDR)

"Villagers start asking for things...but if it is not clear that...we at least get some recognition for it, it's senseless to do anything. If we only get recognized by the villagers if we bring things like school materials (e.g., t-shirts, books, pens for the whole school), but who else would give anything for that? It's just goodwill.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"We must help them see how they can develop that main objective [to make profit] and help the community; to impress upon them that without losing their objective of getting profit on commercial activities, they can also contribute because, at the end, these contributions to targeted community, poor community can help them to get more or to increase their benefits because then they help the community. You develop a kind of respectability in the travel industry and community.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

"In the case of corporations, we appeal not only to their social conscience but we try to show that there is a sustainability impact in changing some of their practices—to employ more local labour, to use more of the locally supplied products and produce and so forth. It's a one step at a time job. There's no giant leap forward at all. It's incremental inch-by-inch, and not always successful.” (Regional organization, Thailand)
"[Most operators are not so interested in PPT] because they don’t know, I think. We have to advertise, by authority. We have to advertise PPT to operators." (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"Developers need training, need to get operators more responsible, how to visit. They need training on management. We never have training on it, only guide training, marketing training, pricing. This is key for core business people. Many can’t do because they don’t know." (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"We’re actually trying to almost re-educate the industry." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"If you place too many new regulations on the private sector, they’ll just go elsewhere." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"It’s not just only up to the tour operator, or not just only up to the government sectors, because if the government or the local administration unit they set up a very strict rules, then no investor will come to them...They go somewhere else which don’t have that regulations." (Regional organization, Thailand)

Consumer interest and demand for PPT was also believed by many to be marginal. A number of respondents implied that it is the long-haul market—primarily white, Western tourists—that is interested in ethnic tourism, CBT, ecotourism, and voluntourism, whereas domestic and regional tourists show little interest. Even then, only a fraction of the Western tourist market was seen to be willing to put in the extra time, effort and expenditure often required to pursue more responsible travel options, and PPT was perceived to be less appealing than other options. Many interviewees agreed that, unless tourists demand PPT, the majority of companies are unlikely to engage in it voluntarily.

"The demand for more sustainable tours (e.g., low impact tours, pro-poor tours), that people are willing and able to pay more and the company understands it, is at the margin." (International organization, Lao PDR)

"This is also about market mechanism in the end...It’s one part of tourism, maybe not a niche anymore, where people being tourists really try to be responsible tourists and they would choose a company who can really prove or who can really explain that they are benefiting the villagers and where the tourists might not feel really awkward in walking into their homes. And I think that is the only way that it can work. It will never be on a total scale because there are just too many tourists who just don’t care,
who want to go on the beach, drink and then maybe it would be nice to see a
colourfully dressed ethnic person.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“I think on a global scale that there is certainly a potential that it could be
transformed. Whether PPT or sustainable tourism ever becomes mainstream tourism
I think is a long ways off because most tourism is done with day trippers, and there’s
lots of them; there’s shopping trips. There’s a lot of tourism that isn’t very
conscientious or conscious. I think that this kind of tourism that we’ve got is a very
special market and it’s directed towards white people.” (Tour company, the Lao
PDR)

“What is missing in this PPT initiative is that it needs a lot of marketing because
otherwise nobody knows, nobody will go.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“I wouldn’t push tourism for poverty alleviation to tourists. They’re not interested.”
(NGO, Thailand)

“The tourist profile is Australia, UK, New Zealand, North America, and Europe. The
Thai market is not interested in CBT and the Chinese market isn’t really interested
either.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Hundreds of big Thai companies with thousands of tourists do a quick circuit. Eco is
a very small part of the market and how much is a buzz word?” (Tour company,
Thailand)

4.5.2 Ambiguity, jargon and negative impressions of PPT

Additional barriers to the uptake of PPT were the lingo, ambiguity and negative
perceptions surrounding it. PPT was not a well understood concept for the majority of
interviewees, who generally disliked the term. Many believed that PPT is mostly jargon,
good intentions or an ideal concept that is difficult to put into practice. Several international
and regional organizations alleged the need to include poverty language in all plans and
proposals in order to serve the international poverty agenda and attract funding. A number of
interviewees surmised that PPT is the latest evolution in the re-invention of unclear terms and
‘alternative tourism’s subject to abuse and co-optation, with ecotourism and sustainable
tourism as its predecessors. Many people had not yet heard of PPT, especially NGOs and a
few universities/research institutes in Thailand, and some Lao tour companies. Only a few
were very familiar with the concept, and those who had heard of PPT were primarily from international organizations or organizations with international connections. A number of interviewees intimated that PPT is for international organizations and international researchers, not for general use, and that it is unattractive to tourists, inaccessible to local people, Western biased, and too narrowly focused on income and working with the poor. PPT language was more prevalent in the Lao PDR than in Thailand, and was adopted to a greater extent by the Lao government, probably because of the greater presence and influence of international organizations working in the Lao PDR. The majority of PPT definitions provided by interviewees were economically disposed. Many associated PPT with promoting local economic development, creating jobs and opportunities for local people, and moving revenue down to the village level, often using community as a proxy for reaching the poor. Some saw PPT as a philanthropic or humanitarian endeavour. Others were confused by the terminology and wondered if “pro-poor” meant it encouraged people to be poor or to see the poor.

“I haven’t a clue [what PPT is]. I’d never heard of it until you told me.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Pro-poor—that means to tell the people to be poor? I never heard of it.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“I don’t really like the word Pro-Poor Tourism...I think probably my reaction to it is that having poor in the name is not attractive to your average tourist. I think it’s a technical term that people use in the industry but it shouldn’t be a term that you should ever advertise in the brochures or anything. I don’t know. But I also think it’s very specific to working with poor communities.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“I don’t use the word pro-poor because no consumer would understand it. It’s not a popular word. It is used in project documents because it maybe better reflects what ADB meant. They’re a bank so they’re concerned with economic development and they want to see there’s good economic development from tourism that helps the poor.” (International organization, Lao PDR)
“I don’t know if it is maybe a kind of marketing problem. Because at the beginning, even us, we were saying that pro-poor doesn’t really give a good image of what we are trying. It looks like we are trying to develop tourism only for the poor, or to help only the poor, which we find out is not what we want because we want to develop tourism and associate the poor with the benefit of this tourism development.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“It’s a tough one because everyone has different definitions.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“[There is less familiarity with PPT in Thailand because] there are more international organizations working in Laos, like SNV, ADB. In Thailand, there aren’t many international organizations working anymore. They’ve moved to other countries like Laos.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“PPT is more for international organizations and it’s largely international researchers who are looking at it. But looking at poverty from an income standpoint isn’t enough...It’s too much about developing tourism for economic benefit; for example, anything to make money, and not enough about integrating tourism with people’s way of life.” (NGO, Thailand)

“I haven’t seen a process. If we talk about PPT, we have to talk about a process, how tourism will eliminate poverty...I don’t agree with an idea like this because it’s linear. If linear idea, it will not justify or it will not fit with the rural poor. When we look at poor in Africa, Asia, even America, we found that there are different factors or explanations of why they are poor. By the end of PPT, if they just think about money, I think it is the wrong way. If you talk about PPT as a way how people can manage their own tourism resources, this is a better idea than just talking about money.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Well the policy maker would like to use tourism as a tool for pro-poor, they’re just thinking about the money. If they create money in the rural area or the poor area, the money will help the poor or eliminate poverty.” (NGO, Thailand)

“PPT that means the tourism concerned about the local people in developing countries, less developed countries. It’s a Western concept to make themselves more concerned about the local people.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“I think all we have so far is the concept. I don’t think the infrastructure is there.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“I just think that...what is the idea, what are the objectives of PPT? I don’t know what the idea is of what the Western people think. I don’t know exactly what ideas of the UN are.” (NGO, Thailand)

“The UN sometimes starts with a good idea but doesn’t follow up the ground about what it means and how it gets implemented.” (NGO, Thailand)
“My impression about PPT could be wrong, but I think it’s about a lot of really good intentions.” (NGO, Thailand)

“It is very hard, not easy to reach it. It takes time. Sometimes what we think, not in reality.” (Research institute, Thailand).

“It depends how you put the idea into practice. It is an interesting idea but needs support. Idealism maybe.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Nowadays, in the UN jargon, poverty is the main problem so everything has to have a poverty component. Whatever project you have, poverty. Like we used to have women before. But still today, we still talk about the gender mainstreaming and poverty mainstreaming.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“1995-2000, there was not this poverty alleviation talk like there is now. You can hardly do anything without mentioning this. It’s new. It’s like, everywhere, you see publications, plans and so on, this term has to be there. Like before, gender has to be mentioned everywhere. If there’s no gender in your proposal, your proposal is not good. So it’s poverty alleviation now.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“It’s easier to get money [if you use the word poverty].” (Regional organization, Thailand).

“We had that same thing with the eco program that was launched, that was going to save the world, and this was the new thing. You look at the results of that; they’re negligible, and I don’t see that I would be any more confident about this program.” (NGO, Thailand)

4.5.3 PPT not easily differentiated from other alternative tourisms

On the ground, the distinctions between PPT, ecotourism, CBT, community-based ecotourism, and voluntourism were seldom clear. The majority of respondents thought that PPT was little different from these other forms of tourism and that they all have similar goals. Thus, many people implementing ecotourism, CBT and voluntourism projects thought they were already practicing PPT to some extent, even though they preferred not to call it PPT. None of them used the term PPT in common practice, although a few projects did use PPT terminology for specific purposes or in certain documents, and a number of projects had poverty alleviation as a stated goal.
“Ecotourism and sustainable tourism and PPT are flimsy terms, not clear, abused. It needs to be made more clear so the consumer understands and local people can do it too. It’s an esoteric concept that means you’re trying to be a philanthropist. It’s not accessible to local people who are trying to make ends meet. International organizations are the ones doing it. Pro-poor is a new term. Terms keep getting re-invented because people have different ideas about what it means and what they want to do about it.” (International donor, Lao PDR)

“When you look at Cambodia, Laos, there are lots of NGOs who are working and offering PPT. In Thailand, you have development, you have a lot of other development, but not PPT. You have community-based tourism, ecotourism, homestay, all these activities. They don’t call it pro-poor but it is in fact, to one extent, a contribution to pro-poor.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“I would say the PPT definition is usually told by SNV and ADB. Ecotourism or CBT is usually told by the UNESCO or something like that...In fact, these three or four type of tourism, the aim and the objective and the goal is quite similar. All of the form is, should be involved with the local people, try the way to encourage them to preserve the natural and the cultural, try the way that they can benefit from that preservation, from their value, from their effort. I don’t see much differences between these; only who use to talk about what.” (Government office, the Lao PDR)

“ADB is not using the term ecotourism in its document but it does use PPT. The Mekong Tourism Development Project uses community-based ecotourism. Ecotourism alone doesn’t necessarily mean communities, just a part of it. ADB’s focus is on community. The PPT component focuses on community.” (International organization, Lao PDR)

“Also agrotourism, CBT, CBET [community-based ecotourism], pro-poor and something like that. I don’t see much difference. We do the community-based ecotourism. In fact, it is...integrated with the pro-poor. It should support the idea of pro-poor already because we do the CBT, we aim for the sustainable use of the natural resources, getting benefit for them, for the local people, and then, if they get the benefit, they will try to alleviate or reduce the poverty. So I don’t see much difference.” (Government office, the Lao PDR)

“PPT is also the same, when you’re talking about PPT, ecotourism and CBT. It’s tourism that we also develop in the area, try to get the local community getting involving by their poverty reduction. Pro-poor is getting the tourism in that area and develop the tourism and then the tourism can bring some dollars in there, and people can have some income.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“Yeah, this concept [i.e., PPT, CBT, ecotourism] is more or less same because the concept is to reduce the poverty, alleviation, or whatever it is that they’re saying. Because the object is the target of each, really is to reduce the poverty way. This is the thing that we more or less come back to the same...And the thing is, ecotourism is more or less to the conservation, to conserve the nature, some culture. Also it comes
back again when tourism goes there and people get income. Then the local people in that area get more money.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“PPT is CBT that brings money into the community” (International organization, the Lao PDR).

“If a community is ethnic minority, and poor, then any CBT where benefits stay with the village is PPT.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“Maybe we do [PPT] but here we call it ecotourism.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“Ecotourism also eliminates poverty. The end purpose is the same.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“Are they trying to target the poorest of the poor, or the hilltribe village itself? Genuine ecotourism is supposed to do that so maybe they had to come up with a new term because ecotourism had been co-opted. Ecotourism should be PPT. There are so many terms and acronyms.” (Tour company, Thailand)

“I think they are very similar [i.e., PPT, ecotourism, sustainable tourism] but the words aren’t all the same. PPT come I think pretty lately. First come ecotourism, then come sustainable tourism, then PPT.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“Maybe not the same [i.e., CBT, ecotourism, PPT]. Maybe that’s the reason they came with PPT because they want really to have as the primary objective to help the poor. Like the others are to develop the activity, the ecotourism, which is an activity, and they may be benefiting also the poor community where this activity takes place.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

Most people interviewed were of the opinion that small-scale, locally-based, alternative forms of tourism were more likely to benefit local communities and poor people and to reduce negative impacts and leakage than large-scale mainstream tourism. At the same time, they recognized that those initiatives were usually limited in scale and level of impact on poverty. Only a few regional representatives were of the opinion that mainstream tourism might be in a better position to make larger scale contributions to poverty reduction than small-scale, narrowly focused, time-consuming initiatives at the village level. In this case, they postulated that both types of tourism are necessary. Mainstream tourism supports
macroeconomic growth, which is needed to provide a foundation for niche tourism. Niche tourism, in turn, can more effectively channel benefits to the micro level in peripheral areas.

"I would say if we are developing tourism in a sound policy, sound strategy, then the community ecotourism, or PPT, it will be the way to alleviate the poverty because the mass tourism development, it will have a high leakage factor." (Government office, the Lao PDR)

"The priority of the government is mass tourism. But alternative tourism is how we can give opportunity to local people." (Research institute, Thailand)

"Depending on the community and the size of the community, you're really looking at sort of niche tourism. You don't necessarily want 40 or 50 buses pulling up every day. So you may want much smaller groups interacting over a longer period of time where they may not give as much money back to the community but they also bring far fewer negative consequences. So it's the size of the footprint, ultimately." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"In the past, we focused quite heavily on, for the poorer parts of the community, these rural and sometimes urban, small-scale developments, which, for the local communities in which they're developed, can be very important and very beneficial. But we're dealing with a very small community, in the 10s usually. Sometimes, if you're lucky, 100 people may be affected." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"Of course, all those ecotourism initiatives, the main focus is to help the local community so naturally, there's a stronger link. But we shouldn't forget the roles that mainstream tourism can play in terms of economic improvement, economic growth, which is a crucial factor for the level or standard of living." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"The difficulty is that tourism sometimes needs development of basic infrastructure so for poor countries to develop tourism in an area with little infrastructure, it becomes very difficult. When it comes to agrotourism, ecotourism, green tourism, they don't need too much investment and it can utilize existing infrastructure so that is an area where you would see the type of tourism linked to poverty reduction." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"These pro-poor tourism initiatives being initiated in many places, but we consider at the same time it is very important that you see the mainstream tourism to be developed in a way to benefit the poor communities. Just only very focused to targeted pro-poor initiatives, the impact is so narrow and limited." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"CBT is one way to reduce poverty, but there are many approaches. The CBT impact is small and takes many years. We are also looking at mainstream tourism. For
example, if one hotel employs local people and buys local products, it may increase impacts.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“It’s a very small project (2 villages) for poverty alleviation. [The donor] is happy it works but, on the other hand, it’s too small for foreign advisors, investment, etc.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“In the bigger picture, 8 villagers doesn’t seem like a lot but if you want to set up something like this, it is.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“It should not be vice versa, not PPT or mass tourism. They have to go in parallel and they should be both complementary. It is important that there be pro-poor initiatives. But sometimes we use the word mass tourism but it has a very bad connotation and academics are critical of the negative impacts of mass tourism. We are not using mainstream tourism. Particularly, the countries in the early stages of tourism development first need to have a basis for getting mainstream tourism to expand the economy through tourism because they can’t go directly jump into PPT because the impact is so small.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“For poverty reduction, any kind of effort, economic growth is important, but economic growth alone cannot help, so both approaches are necessary. In terms of tourism, when we think of economic growth, certainly mainstream tourism will contribute in terms of employment creation as well as income generation opportunities.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“All of them have an impact on poverty at different levels, starting with the mainstream, which is the main one. Then you go down to niche markets, like ecotourism and CBT. People like to go and have a traditional or close experience with what we call the living culture, but not everybody wants to do that.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“I think the global scale is a long ways away. And we’re very focused on a very specific type of tourism [community-based ecotourism], working with communities in this way. I don’t have the perspective or the broader view of how these principles can be adapted in different situations. I’m confident that they can be, but I just haven’t gone through the process of thinking about how.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

4.5.4 Confines to which tourism can substantially impact poverty

Opinions varied on tourism’s ability to reduce poverty. Some interviewees thought tourism alleviated poverty, others thought it did not, but the majority felt it was circumscribed in some way. Some steered away from using terminology like “poverty” and “alleviation” because of the magnitude of such words, and the difficulty of defining poverty,
preferring terms such as livelihood improvement or income generation and diversification. Most respondents were tentative about tourism's ability to eradicate poverty on a grand scale, but thought it had some potential to reduce poverty for some people, in some villages, under certain circumstances, or at certain stages of the tourism lifecycle. Some interviewees gave examples of specific villages that had, over time, achieved an improved standard of living, at least in part through tourism. Representatives of multi-sector projects opined that tourism projects on their own were less effective at reducing poverty than tourism initiatives built into comprehensive development projects addressing a range of issues. Organizations at the regional level, in particular, felt that tourism played an important role as an indirect contributor to poverty elimination through mechanisms such as economic growth, area development, job creation, infrastructure, foreign revenue, and subsequent government spending. They also argued that tourism is a better tool for poverty reduction than many other industries because it does not require huge levels of capital investment, infrastructure or education to get started. For the most part, interviewees recommended tourism as a supplement, not a panacea. A small number of interviewees (usually NGOs not directly involved with tourism projects) rebutted that tourism would only have an impovershing effect in the long run on a broad scale.

"There is a limit to how tourism can be used to benefit the poorest." (NGO, Thailand)

"It's really a drop of water on a hot stone" (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

"We consider the poorest countries, defined as LDCs, with potential for tourism. Tourism has already made some contribution to social economic development and poverty alleviation, such as in Laos, Cambodia, Nepal, Bhutan, and Vanuatu." (Regional organization, Thailand)

"Tourism will bring in foreign exchange rapidly. We don't need to do too much in the way of huge infrastructure projects to get it up and running, and it is even to this day a very solid employer of people. There's not as much mechanization in travel and tourism as there is in other industries." (Regional organization, Thailand)
“Overall, as an economic activity, tourism has a big impact because it is labour intensive. For the economy, tourism is important for pro-poor. It doesn’t require high levels of education. It can be one of the first paying jobs a poor person gets.” (International organization, Lao PDR)

“Tourism is hugely important to the region, huge. And it’s seen everywhere as being an important earner of hard currency, an important employment opportunity; important in terms of the opportunities to focus on the poorer parts of community. I don’t think it’s direct poverty alleviation.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“Directly, tourism can’t be pro-poor. Indirectly, tourism can be pro-poor...Indirectly, tourism provides a lot, but I don’t know how it brings distribution.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“It’s a trickle down approach.” (Regional organization, Thailand)

“Tourism itself can’t alleviate poverty but it can provide indirect benefits and supplemental income. It still needs more direct development like agriculture and health.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“I do not believe that tourism will eliminate the poor because when we talk about the poor, we have to find different factors that make people poor. It could be taking care of resources in terms of cultural identity or well-being. If we think tourism will eliminate poverty of hill people, we can see it is only money that they get. Other resources are still the same.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“I don’t think tourism can help people to become not poor.” (NGO, Thailand)

“One district has many villages and one village has many families so we could not help everybody.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“I don’t know whether tourism is a tool that benefits the poor. In fact, I think probably the reverse. I think it’s a way of keeping the poor in the situation once they’re in.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Tourism can also be impoverishing. If you look at the kind of sex tourism that goes on, that’s a different kind of poverty. Tourism can also push local people out of their areas or the cost of living becomes more and they don’t have access to it.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“I believe that we can’t change their poverty and turn it into something good. We are a small scale and the small scale effects will happen. It will not affect positively everyone. This is something I believe is probably impossible.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)
“[PPT] looks nice in a report, but if they [e.g., UN, ADB, etc.] worked on the ground like us, they would know it’s not possible.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“In the case of PPT, it may be possible, but it depends on how you can distribute income equally. This is very important.” (NGO, Thailand)

“In small villages in remote areas that are just right for tourism, tourism can do a lot. In large villages that are more loose and spread out, it is more difficult.” (International organization, Lao PDR)

“Some villages have people getting involved with tourism and they have less number of very poor families.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“[One village] was the poorest and most desperate village; 60-70% of the villagers were addicted, their houses were falling down, had no roofs, etc. After 4 years of tourism, the village had clean, nice houses, more pride, and the best handicraft selection to earn more money. The opium problem didn’t go away but tourism gave them an opportunity to reduce the impoverization of opium and mitigate the problem...There is no doubt that tourism ameliorates poverty.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“I think maybe part of it can be true [that tourism can alleviate poverty]. Because if the ethnic minority people have some idea to take advantage from tourism to benefit them, it can. Although not everybody or every household in the village.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“Maybe some houses, maybe some people who really practice, really try, really do a good job, speak English well, and they practice very much, then I think it is possible to make enough money and maybe alleviate poverty. But for the whole community, I cannot tell that.” (NGO, Thailand)

“Tourism can be a source of poverty alleviation. If you provide good service, you get more income. You can then invest more and make more money. Eradication of the poor is possible, but not everyone. It depends on the individual. It needs a critical mind, diligence, good beliefs and values.” (Research institute, Thailand)

“In general, I believe [we are contributing to poverty reduction]. It’s very hard to point out where...It could be poverty reduction through putting people into positions and training them.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“These things are reducing poverty but I would never say that we as a company are reducing poverty in a big scale for villages. I think that’s too much to say.” (Tour company, the Lao PDR)

“Alleviation might be a big word, but improving livelihoods, to try to find other means for them to try generate some income.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)
“So alleviation is not really arrested poverty from the people. But anyway, they can get more money.” (Government office, Thailand)

“Tourism can be a tool to bring tourism income to some poorer villages. It can help alleviate poverty in some situations. But tourism is better as a means of diversification. It is too uncertain as a sole livelihood.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

“Tourism helps diversify income, not lift people out of poverty.” (NGO, Thailand)

“It should be a supplement, not a substitution.” (International organization, the Lao PDR)

Perhaps most importantly, it cannot be ignored that the vast majority of villagers (including poorest villagers) in Thailand and the Lao PDR responded that tourism was a good way to help poor people, although it was generally insufficient as a sole livelihood supporter. Tourism’s contributions to poverty reduction, in this respect, usually referred to extra income, housing improvements, being better able to afford to send their children to school, and a general sense of improved well-being. A number of villagers in both Thailand and the Lao PDR reported that their poverty status and living conditions had improved as a result of tourism and that villagers’ lives were much better and easier as a result of tourism. Some villagers reflected on how tourism had made them non-poor over time, even when it had not been specifically directed at poverty. Villagers in two different villages (one in each country) declared that tourism had significantly reduced the number of poor people in the village. Even the poorest people in a Lao PDR village indicated that their poverty status was improving as a result of tourism.

“Before we had tourists, some were very poor, almost starving. Now, you can’t see such poor people.” (Villager, Thailand)

“At the beginning, most villagers were poor, but now almost every family’s life is better, better in various ways.” (Villager, Thailand).
“Comparing 5 years ago, we were poor. But when we get involved with tourism, we get a house. Life is easier and better.” (Villager, Thailand)

“We can survive now in this village. Life is better; not poor like in the past.” (Villager, Thailand)

“All families were poor in the past. Now, with tour business, life is better. Because they have tour business, they can send children to school and since children are well-educated, some can work with government, so they get benefit from tourism.” (Villager, Thailand)

“Before tourists came to the village, most villagers were poor and poorest. After 3-4 years, it made our life better.” (Villager, the Lao PDR)

“Before that, we had the levels of this village, we had poor and poorest. But right now after tourism come to this village, then everything changed. Our life is better. Many poorest families have come up like poor and middle.” (Villager, the Lao PDR)

“Because of tourism, the family is better now. Money is used for things in the house.” (Middle villager, the Lao PDR)

“It’s very useful when tourists come to the village. We can get money, buy materials for the kitchen, and buy blankets.” (Middle villager, the Lao PDR).

“From the poorest, my family has come to poor now because of tourism.” (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

“Before, it’s like poorest, and now it’s up to poor because of tourism.” (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

“If tourists keep coming to the village, I’m sure my family will be better than now.” (Poor villager, the Lao PDR)

4.5.5 Recap of findings on mainstreaming a pro-poor approach

The wide scale uptake and implementation of PPT is confined by limited interest, understanding and commitment on the part of various stakeholders. PPT as a concept and approach to tourism is still too ambiguous to be applied meaningfully. It is currently perceived to be little different from alternative modes of socially and ecologically responsible travel (e.g., CBT, ecotourism). Tourism can usefully generate supplemental income to
villagers, and may help villagers feel less poor, but its ability to significantly and directly abate poverty appears to be constrained.

4.6 Summary

The preceding sections highlighted key challenges identified during the course of my research that affect application of PPT’s five core principles in northern Thailand and Lao PDR. Table 4 summarizes these findings and represents the answer to the first half of my research question: *Relative to ethnic tourism in northern Thailand and Lao PDR, what challenges affect putting PPT principles into practice?*

Poor people were usually given the opportunity to participate in the tourism projects included in this study, but the poorest were rarely specifically targeted and they remained at a disadvantage when it came to accessing the benefits of tourism. The opportunity to participate did not usually result in equal participation or benefit; instead, those who had more tended to get more.

Local definitions of poverty were not easily matched with reported impacts on poverty in this study. Although income was not the primary indicator of poverty for most respondents, it was by far the most frequently cited benefit of tourism for poor villagers across all stakeholder groups. The foremost indicator of poverty amongst respondents was a lack of rice/food, yet increased food sufficiency was infrequently mentioned as a result of tourism and potential decreases in food security (e.g., higher food costs, not having enough food for themselves and tourists, conflicts with agricultural activities) were also reported. Political empowerment was seldom mentioned as an outcome, even though marginalization of ethnic minorities was one of the principal definitions of poverty used in the region. Thus,
it could be deduced that ethnic tourism had little direct impact on poverty as defined in the case study region.

Table 4: Challenges to Implementing PPT in Thailand and the Lao PDR

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>1. Prioritizes and targets the poor as primary beneficiaries.</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Variable and contestable definitions of poverty</td>
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<td>• Insufficient direct targeting of the poor and poorest</td>
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<tr>
<th>2. Empowers poor people to gain full participation and control in all aspects of tourism planning, development and management.</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Power differentials and marginalization of ethnic minorities</td>
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<td>• Practical barriers to poor people’s participation</td>
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<th>3. Equitably redistributes tourism industry benefits in favour of the poor.</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Inequity and inequality exists at all levels</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Pro-profit, pro-tourist orientation of the tourism industry runs counter to a pro-poor, pro-distribution approach</td>
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<th>4. Generates net benefits for poor people and ensures that tourism development based on their natural and cultural assets is to their advantage.</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Complexities of measuring and weighing diverse impacts (especially economic and cultural impacts in the context of ethnic tourism)</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Different perspectives and priorities on economic and cultural impacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Cultural preservation (authenticity) goals in potential conflict with poverty elimination and development</td>
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<th>5. Mainstreams a pro-poor approach into policy and practice with wide application across multiple stakeholders, sectors, and levels for maximum impact on poverty.</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Limited stakeholder interest, commitment and uptake</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Ambiguity, jargon and negative impressions of PPT</td>
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<tr>
<td>• PPT not easily differentiated from other alternative tourism, and more readily integrated with alternative tourism than mainstream tourism</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Confined extent to which tourism can have a direct and substantial impact on poverty</td>
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Measuring and weighing economic and cultural impacts (in order to determine if the poor had received net benefits) was difficult in the context of ethnic minority societies,
especially given the sometimes contradictory forces at play. On the one hand, there are many outside pressures (including tourism) foisting change upon ethnic minorities. Yet, ethnic minorities are expected to maintain vignettes of their traditional practices and gendered behavior and dress for the benefit of tourists. As a result, finding a balance between modernization and fossilization of culture can be difficult for pro-poor ethnic tourism to achieve. Furthermore, poverty reduction focused on income elevation may contribute to cultural decline. There is even a possibility that pro-poor ethnic tourism will destroy the cultural base upon which it depends if it improves material poverty and gives the appearance of acculturation. In addition, different stakeholders assigned different weights and priorities to economic and cultural impacts. Outsiders were generally more concerned with cultural impacts than villagers, whereas villagers placed top priority on income generation through tourism. Those directly involved with implementing tourism projects (including village recipients) were more inclined to view the impacts of their particular projects as positive overall, whereas tourism observers (and some project implementers) were more likely to view the overall impacts of the tourism industry on poor ethnic minorities as negative.

The projects in this study were augmenting benefits at the local level, but they tended to be limited in scale and scope. Interviewees were skeptical that there would be enough political will, commercial feasibility, and tourist demand to move beyond a few committed individuals, companies, and projects to mainstreaming PPT on a broader scale. Furthermore, a lack of clarity about what PPT is prevents its uptake in a meaningful way. Finally, while there was some admission that tourism could make some contributions to poverty reduction, most people viewed it as a supplement rather than a solution.

Based on the above findings in northern Thailand and Lao PDR, the next chapter picks up the second half of my research question: What are the implications of these
challenges for the ability of PPT to achieve poverty elimination? I draw out broader implications for PPT as a global strategy.
CHAPTER 5 – IMPLICATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS

This thesis sought to critique PPT on the basis of its guiding principles claiming to give precedence to poor people, empower them to take charge of their own tourism development processes, reorient the tourism industry so as to distribute benefits more favourably towards the poor, do more good than harm, utilize poor people’s cultural assets to their advantage, and mainstream a pro-poor ethos into policy and practice at all levels. Through a regional case study of ethnic tourism in northern Thailand and Lao PDR, an analysis of the attainability of five core PPT principles was conducted at the local level and 13 significant challenges prioritized. While recognizing that case study findings are not necessarily applicable to other contexts, I take the liberty of drawing inferences from the obstacles arising in this study to consider their implications for the global debate on PPT. I offer some tentative recommendations evolving from my research in Appendix 4 as a starting point for further research and reflection, but focus on the limitations of PPT in the remainder of this chapter.

Many challenges need to be addressed before PPT principles can be realized on a global scale. Close examination of the PPT literature and recent critiques of PPT reveal a number of inconsistencies, contradictions, shortcomings, and constraining factors (what I have collectively termed “challenges”), suggesting that these principles may be difficult to achieve in practice. Even the PPTP (2005, 2007) concedes that evidence is lacking to demonstrate that PPT initiatives have resulted in net benefits for poor people at the individual and household levels. Poverty impacts have been negligible and little progress has been made in moving beyond micro-level initiatives to mainstreaming PPT on a larger scale.
Much is written about the links between tourism and poverty reduction and yet it is often hard to find evidence of activities that have attempted to put the rhetoric into practice. (PPTP 2005, 1)

We do not know of any destination where the full range of impacts of tourism development on poverty levels (not just of one group but different poor groups) has been rigorously assessed. As for pro poor initiatives, rigorous ex-ante and ex-post assessment is lacking. Despite plenty of literature giving guidance on pro poor strategies to adopt, there is little that quantifies the tangible results. (Ashley and Goodwin 2007, 2)

[W]e still do not have enough examples of initiatives with clear demonstrable impacts. Similarly we lack case studies which demonstrate the mainstreaming of tourism and poverty reduction strategies...There are some projects...with clear and direct benefits to the poor, such as...the Nam Ha project in Laos. But in most cases we do not have data on impacts...[T]here are still only a handful of cases where we have demonstrable impacts. Most impacts that are evident are still at the very micro local level, based on a single product or locality. And still there is too often an unwritten assumption that if tourism is community-based, it must also be pro-poor. Or equally falsely, that if tourism is to be pro-poor it must be community based. Progress has been painfully slow. (PPTP 2007, 1)

This thesis provides some reflections on what might have hampered PPT progress to date.

Reaching the poorest of the poor in a significant and preferential manner is perhaps the central crux to making PPT a reality, yet one that PPT seems to fall short on. Paradoxically, while PPT claims to be directed at suppressing extreme poverty in alliance with the UN’s MDGs, PPT advocates concede that the poorest 20% “may gain few direct benefits from tourism while bearing many of the costs” because they have the least skills, capital and power to defend their interests (Ashley et al. 2000, 2). Ironically, while PPT seeks to change the distribution of benefits in favour of the poor, even PPT proponents admit there will be unequal distribution in favour of the less poor (Ashley et al. 2000, 2001b). PPT case studies cited as evidence for tourism’s potential to reduce poverty (e.g., Ashley et al. 2001a; WTO 2006a) have been weak on targeting and measuring benefits to poorer individuals and households; instead, assuming that benefits to the local economy or community equate benefits to the poor.
Early empirical evidence on PPT in Asia suggests that the economic benefits of tourism have predominantly been captured by better off groups and largely bypassed the poor and marginalized (with some exceptions and trickle down effects), thereby worsening inequality (ADB 2005b, 2005c; Juan and Piboonrungroj 2006; Kaosa-ard 2006a, 2006b, 2006c; Oula 2006; Prachvuthy 2006; Shah et al. 2000; Untong et al. 2006; Wattanakuljarus 2006).

Although poverty alleviation is often quoted as a policy objective, in practice, the development efforts are not fine tuned to the target group, which consist of the poorer segments of the community. Rather, it is generally assumed that if tourism reaches the village, the poor will be better off because rural people are relatively poor. It can be said if tourism is claimed to be a pro-poor strategy in the Mekong region, at the most it can only be a very weak strategy at this stage. (Kaosa-ard 2006a)

Tourism does not automatically alleviate poverty without specific targeting and intervention, and relying on market mechanisms to transmit benefits to the poor is insufficient. Kaosa-ard (2006a, 2006b, 2006c), therefore, recommends that governments shift their focus from growth, promotion and profit to ensuring greater benefits for all. Systems for fair distribution of tourism services and benefits amongst households are needed, along with a higher transfer of the skills and means for poor, rural people to take up tourism in a more beneficial manner.

My research corroborates these findings. Equitable distribution is constrained by the intensification of inequality that occurs in conjunction with tourism. Tourism to rural areas may increase the chances that the rural poor can participate but, without special measures, the poorest and most marginalized members of communities are most likely to be excluded from the benefits and opportunities that tourism presents. Delivering a disproportionate share of benefits to the poorest of the poor (thereby increasing equity and decreasing inequality) is a paramount challenge for PPT when those who start out with more continue to accumulate more through tourism. Yet, if poorer people are not specifically targeted, PPT will likely fail
to curtail extreme poverty and may even embed it further. To make PPT a reality, a considerable amount of time, effort and resources will need to be invested to overcome the sizable barriers poorer people face in terms of acquiring the necessary skills, experience, assets, finances, connections, and wherewithal to take advantage of tourism in a meaningful way.

Defining poverty in order to determine who will be targeted and which type(s) of poverty will be addressed has largely been overlooked in the PPT literature (Cattarinich 2001; Jamieson et al. 2004), even though poor and poverty are at the heart of PPT discourse. Different definitions and root causes of poverty would presumably lead to different beneficiaries being identified, interventions being undertaken, and impacts measured. For example, if poverty is defined as lacking sufficient food to eat (the main definition of poverty in Thailand and the Lao PDR), then the people with the least land and food would be targeted by PPT initiatives and interventions would be directed toward increasing food production and land tenure, among others. Enhanced food security and land tenure were only occasionally reported outcomes of tourism initiatives in this study, however. If poverty is defined as a lack of voice and power (another key definition in northern Thailand and Lao PDR), then those who are most marginalized would be targeted by PPT, and interventions directed toward increasing their political status and power. For the most part, however, in this study, tourism did little to increase poor, ethnic minority people’s control over their cultural, social, political, and environmental resources. Furthermore, if poverty/marginalization has been caused by neoliberal capitalist globalization (as suggested by some people in this study), the wisdom of introducing tourism to these marginal areas as a supposed solution would have to be questioned when tourism is an agent of those same forces that caused the marginalization in the first place. If individual behaviours like laziness, drug addiction and misspending are
blamed for causing poverty (as some local people contend in Thailand and the Lao PDR), then the tendency would be to dismiss people who exhibit these characteristics, ignore broader systemic and societal factors that contribute to these behaviours, and exclude them from PPT initiatives altogether, which would do little to address their poverty. Only if poverty is defined primarily as a lack of income would it make sense to direct PPT efforts towards increasing income, unless income had a direct impact on the other major dimensions of poverty identified. In this study, income was seldom considered to be the primary determinant of poverty, yet it was by far the most frequently cited benefit of tourism. It was not evident that income generation had directly or profoundly affected the other types of poverty identified in the region either. In the future, PPT planners will need to pay closer attention to local definitions and determinants of poverty in order to streamline approaches that have a direct impact on poverty in the local context.

Tourism’s main contribution to poverty reduction appears to be an economic one. Even when quantitative income measures are used, however, the challenges associated with measuring poverty impacts can make it difficult for PPT to show that it made a demonstrable difference. The small amounts of income generated to villagers through community-based initiatives in this study did not usually meet the US$1/day indicator, much less have national level impacts, yet they were very important from a villagers’ perspective. Evaluation based on perceptions is, therefore, likely to reveal different results than evaluation based on numbers. Tourism as a supplemental source of income may help pay for some essential needs (and, therefore, be crucial for villagers) but will not likely be enough to diminish poverty, so there is a question of magnitude of impacts as well. How the money is used may also make a difference in whether or not it has any direct impact on poverty, as some interviewees pointed out the problem of poor people misspending money on unnecessary items.
Determining the period of time over which impacts need to be measured, and tracking before/after scenarios, is another challenge as poverty elimination is a slow process and impacts like cultural change may only become apparent over time.

Measuring and weighing the heterogeneous economic, social, cultural, spiritual, political, and environmental impacts of tourism is a significant challenge, yet PPT hinges upon being able to demonstrate that the advantages of tourism outweigh the disadvantages for the poor. Assessing impacts specifically on the poor and weighing the multiple costs and benefits of tourism is difficult, especially when tourism can have multiform tangible and intangible impacts, which are not easily separated from other outside forces. Furthermore, evaluating impacts as positive or negative, significant or insignificant, important or unimportant, is at least in part a value judgement and dependent upon whose perspective is taken. A multi-pronged approach to PPT evaluation is needed to accommodate these various factors.

If PPT is to be appraised on the basis of net benefits for the poor, the criteria for making such an assessment will need to be better designated (e.g., whose perspective, which theoretical lens, qualitative vs. quantitative, tangible vs. intangible, socio-cultural vs. economic, short-term vs. long-term). In my qualitative study based on stakeholder perceptions, most villagers and project coordinators deemed the benefits of their own projects (often reported as income benefits for villagers) to have outweighed the downsides, whereas certain NGO and scholarly observers judged socio-cultural deterioration, environmental degradation, inequities, and injustices to have overshadowed any economic or other benefits to poor, ethnic minorities on a wider scale. From the perspective of poor villagers, a low wage was often better than no wage, even when some outsiders perceived they were being taken advantage of within the broader tourism system. If PPT evaluation were to take these
villagers' reports about financial benefits greater than costs at face value, it might ignore the systemic economic, social and political inequalities that prevent true empowerment and escape from poverty. On the other hand, evaluating PPT solely from the perspective of outside critics may neglect the importance of tourism income for villagers, small as it may be in the big picture. The theoretical framework applied may also make a difference. For example, approaching PPT from a social justice or political economy perspective may reveal different outcomes than evaluating it from an economic development perspective. Incorporating holistic, multidisciplinary, multicultural, multi-level, multi-stakeholder perspectives into PPT planning, implementation and evaluation is, therefore, essential for capturing and addressing the diverse impacts of tourism on the poor.

The PPT literature repeatedly promulgates the merits of turning the rich cultural assets of materially poor people into tourism products for their benefit, but complex and often contradictory forces are at play when it comes to the economic and cultural impacts of ethnic tourism. Comparing more immediate, tangible financial benefits with insidious, longer term socio-cultural-spiritual costs is particularly difficult and depends, in part, upon whose perspective is taken. The monetarizing influences of tourism can disrupt the cultural and communal patterns of traditional societies, potentially facilitating socio-cultural-spiritual poverty in the long run, while lessening material poverty in the interim. The competitive, profit-making tendencies of tourism contribute to greater inequality, stratification and conflict in previously somewhat egalitarian and harmonious ethnic minority societies. Ethnic tourism exposes these traditional societies to modernization through the presence of tourists and income, while simultaneously encouraging the fossilization of cultures to make them more attractive to tourists. In this study, many concerns were raised about the "human zoo"
approach to ethnic tourism; yet, concerns were also raised when ethnic minorities became too modern for ethnic tourism.

Ethnic tourism may have a proclivity for exploitation and perpetuation of poverty, which runs counter to PPT principles of empowerment, cultural sovereignty, and developing cultural tourism for the benefit of financially poor, culturally endowed villagers. Furthermore, pro-poor ethnic tourism may be somewhat of a paradox of using tourism, on the one hand, to raise poor peoples’ standard of living and, in the process, changing their traditional lifestyles and the perceived cultural authenticity upon which ethnic tourism currently depends. Johnston (2006, 37) proclaims that “[p]overty shapes consent” and “is simply a twisted rationale” for corporations and cash-strapped governments to exploit “the final frontier of Indigenous cultural ‘resources’.” Indigenous peoples’ cultures are marketed and sold like an endangered species while concomitantly drawing them into the world of “consumerdom”, uprooting them from their lands and cultures, expediting culture loss, and intensifying poverty, all the while extolling the merits of developing new cultural tourism products through PPT (Johnston 2006; 2007).

Poverty pressures often compel ethnic minorities to commoditize their cultures through tourism. However, the kind of cultural tourism development that occurs may not be in line with the deeper values or contemporary realities of ethnic minority cultures. Ethnic tourism places villagers in a conundrum of freezing culture in the face of modernization, when cultural adaptation may be a more viable response. Ethnic tourism tends to promote a narrow conception of culture that is based on the visible and perhaps more superficial manifestations of culture (e.g., food, dress, art, music, dance, rituals). Market forces and more powerful outsiders (e.g., tour operators, tourists, government authorities, and project developers) select those cultural traits and practices that have value in the tourism system and
deserve to be preserved. Ethnic minorities typically respond by catering to tourists by presenting certain cultural traditions for the benefit of tourists, even if they have to adapt, adopt or resurrect traditions accordingly. They may even begin to appraise their own culture on the basis of what tourists deem worthy and only keep those elements that are of interest to tourists. Being at the whim of market demands, ethnic minorities begin to lose control over their own cultural development processes if they wish to maintain tourism (and the often meager income it brings) to their villages. In addition, they may lose control over their economic development processes if ethnic tourism demands the kind of authenticity that is predicated upon villagers having no modern amenities or conveniences.

Authenticity at its extreme may demand conditions of poverty itself, therefore, encouraging ethnic minority villagers to remain in poverty rather than exit poverty. Butcher (2003, 56) argues that the anti-development stance of sustainable tourism essentially promotes “leav[ing] these societies as they are—culturally authentic, but grindingly poor.” If ethnic tourism is to be used as a tool for PPT, it would seem that a new approach is required, whereby the concept of authenticity is expanded to include the real life, modern day contexts and cultures of ethnic minority peoples, where ethnic minorities determine the desired images and traits that will be projected to the outside world, and cultural retention is driven by villagers for their own benefit, rather than the demands of tourists and other outsider stakeholders. An educational process challenging the stereotypes, misconceptions and unrealistic expectations of tour operators, tour guides, government tourism officials, and tourists could be one step in this direction.

It is questionable how empowered ethnic minority villagers can become when they rely not only upon market mechanisms to determine which cultural attributes hold value, but also upon outside assistance to develop, organize and operate tourism. Tourism is usually
initiated and directed by outsiders (e.g., tour operators, government offices, local NGOs, international donors, and tourists) who tend to have more power and influence than villagers, no matter how well-intentioned they are. At this stage, PPT appears to be largely donor driven. Time-limited donor funding poses challenges for long-term project sustainability. There is also a risk that outside organizations will inadvertently impose Western values, agendas and biases on what is best for ethnic minority villagers. In this study, villagers’ own perceptions of what was good for them was sometimes at odds with what educated outsiders thought was good for them. For example, many organizational stakeholders (and reportedly tourists) viewed changes in ethnic minority culture and lifestyle as negative, whereas many ethnic minority villagers (especially the younger generation) reportedly welcomed the material improvements that came with money and modernization. For the majority of villagers interviewed, income was the priority, but income generation opportunities were thwarted to some extent by the cultural and environmental conservation agendas of outside agencies. Perhaps it is primarily outsiders with secure livelihoods who have the luxury to consider issues of culture on par with economics. Furthermore, preserving culture was often done with a view to managing, maintaining and sustaining the value of the cultural resource base upon which ethnic tourism depends, not necessarily to facilitate villagers’ own wishes for cultural preservation or development. When developing PPT through ethnic tourism, the potentially conflicting goals of development and conservation need to be resolved in a manner that meets the needs of the poor while striving for sustainability. In addition, meaningful avenues of participation that enable poor people to set the parameters of tourism development are required, especially when it capitalizes on their cultures and territories.

One of the major pitfalls of PPT, according to Mowforth and Munt (2003), is its failure to acknowledge and account for power dynamics. Chok et al. (2007, 159) concur that
tourism "stakeholders include winners and losers working on a vastly uneven playing field." This study also finds that, without protective policies and preferential treatment, poor people are likely to be the losers when trade-offs are made due to limited resources and vested and conflicting interests. Elevating the status of the poor so that they are genuinely equal stakeholders requires strong political will, cooperation, and commitment on the part of all other stakeholder groups. It also demands willingness on the part of political and business leaders to relinquish and redirect some of their own power and profits to the poor, which seems unlikely. Solomon (2005) points out that "as long as the rich and powerful are going to draw up the parameters and architecture of tourism policy, nothing will change—not much, in any case. How can it? For after all, the investor is there to make profits." The tourism industry currently prioritizes profits (for economic and political elites) and pleasure (for tourists) over social welfare for the poor and marginalized. A fundamental restructuring of the entire profit system and values orientation of the tourism system will be required before it can tackle the enormity of global poverty.

Expanding poor participation is compromised by the profit and commercial requirements of the tourism industry. Commercial needs for cost minimization, risk and liability avoidance, reliable suppliers, and product standardization interfere with establishing partnerships with poor suppliers. It is often easier for companies to act through philanthropy (e.g., provide funds for community projects) and encourage tourists to volunteer or donate than it is to do business with the poor. Without an obvious tourist demand for PPT, the majority of companies are unlikely to change their business practices accordingly. While this study did not include tourist perceptions of PPT, it is an important area for future market research. Companies that are committed and willing enough to put the extra investment into PPT are not sufficiently rewarded within the tourism system. In the absence of incentives
and/or disincentives, most companies are unlikely to adopt PPT freely and willingly. The government may not be motivated to institute change either, especially if it is already making a profit from the way tourism currently operates. Yet, far-reaching enlightened government leadership, policy, regulation, monitoring, and enforcement of laws and regulations are needed to create an environment conducive to PPT.

Mowforth and Munt (2003, 268) conjecture that PPT may simply be a “repackaging of existing initiatives so that they fit within the prevailing development paradigm with an emphasis on poverty reduction, sustainable livelihoods and a focus on the poor and pro-poor growth.” In this study, PPT and poverty terminology was sometimes used as a means of acquiring funding, meeting reporting requirements, and linking with the international poverty agenda, whereas most interviewees claimed to be practicing CBT, ecotourism and other alternative forms of tourism on an everyday basis. A likely scenario for PPT mainstreaming is that anyone could say they are doing it because of the lack of clarity about what precisely it is, how it differs from other forms of tourism (or more importantly, how it makes other types of tourism different), and the minimum conditions for putting it into practice. Bottom line criteria for PPT have yet to be established and adhered to. In the absence of clearer definitions and standards, PPT risks becoming a meaningless concept, subject to co-optation and abuse like some of its predecessors. Business as usual with minor modifications, but no real profound transformation to the system, is the most probable outcome. If tourism fails to explicitly target or reach poorer people, and is satisfied with bringing more general and indirect benefits to the local level, can it really be considered PPT, or is it some other form of tourism? Without differential treatment, poorer people will continue to lose. In accordance with scholars like Chok et al. (2007) and Schilcher (2007), I propose that redistributive,
equity-enhancing policies, along with mechanisms to deliver a greater proportion of benefits directly to poorer segments of the population, be fundamental requirements of PPT.

Finally, the ability of tourism to mitigate poverty on a grand scale remains circumspect. Tourism is selective, uneven, unequal, fickle, and unreliable. Not all poor people and villages have tourism assets or can be helped. Chok et al. (2007, 161) emphasize that, "[a]s a tool, tourism is overly burdened with ideals it cannot realise, especially on a large scale and with any regularity or consistency." It is evident from this case study, and other PPT case studies, that individual tourism projects can make a difference in the lives of poor people, but these pockets of poverty diminution are quashed under the sheer weight of a massive industry. Small-scale, locally-based initiatives tend to have small-scale impacts and are not easily replicated or sustained on a broader level. The potential of large-scale, mainstream tourism also appears to be limited by circuitous, if not impoverishing, impacts on poor people and poverty. Mowforth and Munt (2003) sum up the likelihood of PPT abolishing poverty as follows:

Pro-poor tourism is not...a tool for eliminating nor necessarily alleviating absolute poverty, but rather is principally a measure for making some sections of poor communities ‘better off’ and of reducing the vulnerability of poorer groups to shocks. (272)

[G]iven the growth in global inequality and poverty, the benefits to the poor of poverty elimination (however real they may be where they occur) will be marginal within the overall context of tourism. (273)

In addition, it will prove necessary in the long run to consider the cumulative effect of supporting (through multilateral and bilateral aid programmes focused on economic growth) the expansion of capitalist relations and the manner in which this may undercut ‘sustainable livelihoods’ and exacerbate, rather than alleviate, poverty. (273)

On the basis of my research, I concur with Mowforth and Munt’s assessment. Unless there is a paradigm shift in tourism policy and practice, the ability of PPT to make a substantial
global contribution to the number one MDG—eradicating extreme poverty and hunger—is probably minimal.

While PPT strategies are a step in the right direction, this case study suggests that the actual attainment of PPT principles in real world situations is circumscribed on multiple accounts. The principles selected for this study, in a sense, represent the ideal scenario whereby all stakeholders (including the poor) join forces and willingly cooperate to resolve issues of extreme poverty through tourism, structuring tourism in such a way that poor people reap rewards on par with everyone else, take charge of their own destiny, and leave poverty behind for good. It is probably unrealistic to expect any form of tourism to accomplish these lofty ideals; yet, to some extent, these are the claims that are being made in the campaign to promote PPT. Tourism has some potential to be pro-poor but, in the end, transforming the system from the local to the global level and executing all of the necessary changes may prove to be too formidable a challenge. All in all, PPT is more of a livelihood supplement than a poverty solution, and poverty elimination through ethnic tourism is the exception rather than the rule.


——. 2004g. Sheet no. 7: Economic data on the importance of tourism in the poorest countries. Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership: Pro-Poor Tourism Info-Sheets. Available online: http://www.propoortourism.org.uk/info_sheets/7%20info%20sheet.pdf.


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APPENDIX 1 – PPTP AND UNWTO PRINCIPLES

Table A1-1: Later Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership Principles (Introduced 2005)

1. Pro-Poor Tourism is about changing the distribution of benefits from tourism in favour of poor people. It is not a specific product. It is not the same as ecotourism or community-based tourism, nor is it limited to these niches. Any kind of tourism can be made pro-poor. PPT can be applied at different levels, at the enterprise, destination or country level.

2. The tourism industry is primarily a private sector, market driven activity. PPT initiatives involve the private sector in reducing poverty through business activity rather than alleviating it through philanthropy. Philanthropy is desirable but businesses need to develop ways of engaging with poor producers of goods and services, to create linkages and reduce leakages from the local economy, so as to maximize local economic development. PPT is thus about doing business differently to benefit poor people.

3. An initiative can only be described as pro-poor where it is possible to demonstrate a net benefit for particular individuals or groups – the beneficiaries of the initiative. The beneficiaries need to be identified in advance; only in this way can a pro-poor impact be demonstrated, although there may also be some additional, initially unidentified, livelihood benefits.

4. The target beneficiaries of PPT are always poor and marginalised. They are economically poor, lacking opportunities and services like health and education – although not necessarily the poorest of the poor.

5. There can be multiple benefits to the poor from tourism, as well as multiple costs. All these need to be taken into account and assessed in terms of how they affect the livelihoods of the poor. Costs (including reduced access to natural resources and increased exposure to risk) should be minimized while benefits (including jobs, enterprise opportunities, improved access to infrastructure and services) are maximized.

6. Tourism is most likely to benefit the poor when they are actively engaged in the multi-stakeholder processes that attempt to govern it in destinations. Empowerment and control are major benefits for the poor. Pro-poor tourism should empower poor people and actively engage them in the management of tourism destinations.

7. The poor are often culturally rich and have developed a series of livelihood strategies adapted to their environment. This cultural and natural heritage is a tourism asset. PPT should not be used to secure access for mainstream companies to the cultural or natural heritage assets of the poor (under the guise of pro-poor tourism) with inequitable returns to the “owners” of the habitat and culture.
8. PPT will contribute little to the eradication of poverty unless it is mainstreamed. A poverty reduction focus needs to be part of the government master planning process and the way tourism businesses do their business.

9. One of the critical issues for poor producers is often access to the market - access to the established industry and to tourists. Pro-poor initiatives increase the market access of the poor. Initiatives that do not address how to market products of the poor and how to integrate them into the value chain ultimately fail.

10. It is the principles of Pro-Poor Tourism that are important – not the term.

Sources: PPTP 2005, 1; Roe 2006, 2

Table A1-2: Earlier Pro-Poor Tourism Partnership Principles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Principle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participation - poor people must participate in tourism decisions if their livelihood priorities are to be reflected in the way tourism is developed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A holistic livelihoods approach - the range of livelihood concerns of the poor - economic, social, and environmental, short-term and long-term - need to be recognised. Focusing simply on cash or jobs is inadequate. Focus on expanding benefits, not just minimising costs to the poor.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Distribution - promoting PPT requires some analysis of the distribution of both benefits and costs - and how to influence it. Do not expect the poor to benefit equally, particularly the poorest 20 per cent. Some will lose.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flexibility - blue-print approaches are unlikely to maximize benefits to the poor. The pace or scale of development may need to be adapted; appropriate strategies and positive impacts will take time to develop; situations are widely divergent. Pro-poor principles apply to any tourism segment, though specific strategies will vary between, for example, mass tourism and wildlife tourism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial realism - ways to enhance impacts on the poor within the constraints of commercial viability need to be sought. Involve businesses in development initiatives. PPT strategies need to be complemented by the development of wider tourism infrastructure. A balanced approach is critical - if competitive products, transport systems or marketing do not exist, the industry will decline and so will any pro-poor strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning - as much is untested, learning from experience is essential. PPT also needs to draw on lessons from poverty analysis, environmental management, good governance and small enterprise development. Learn by doing - the effectiveness of pro-poor strategies is not proven, but we won’t know what can be done to reduce poverty through tourism until more concerted efforts are made.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Ashley et al. 2000, 6; Cattarinich 2001, 19; Deloitte and Touche et al. 1999b, 4; PPTP n.d., Key principles
Table A1-3: UN World Tourism Organization Principles

1. Mainstreaming: Ensure that sustainable development of all segments of tourism (including the cultural one) is included in general poverty elimination programmes. Conversely, include poverty elimination measures within overall strategies for the sustainable development of all segments of tourism. (Programs linking culture and poverty have to be envisaged...aiming at improving poverty reduction efforts by mobilizing cultural strengths and assets).

2. Partnerships: Develop partnerships between government, non-governmental, private sector and international bodies, with a common aim of poverty alleviation through tourism. (In addition, since culture and tourism cannot be considered like competitors but rather as collaborators, partnerships have to be established between tourism administrators and tourism companies on the one hand, and cultural authorities and cultural site managers on the other, with a view to examine ways in which the local poor could be trained and employed at sites to help serve the tourists’ requirements).

3. Integration: Adopt an integrated approach with other sectors and avoid over-dependence on tourism. (And within the tourism sector, linking the cultural tourism offer with other tourism segments—nature, beach, and especially business tourism, etc.).

4. Equitable distribution: Ensure that tourism development strategies focus on achieving a more equitable distribution of wealth and services, since growth alone is not enough. (This contributes also to raise the awareness among local populations about the fact that cultural assets have to be protected, since they provide them with additional income and job opportunities).

5. Acting locally: Focus action at a local/destination level (e.g., a village, a site or a city), within the context of supportive national policies. (And establishing partnerships between tourism and cultural authorities at the local level too.).

6. Retention: Reduce leakages from the local economy and build linkages within it, focusing on the supply chain.

7. Viability: Maintain sound financial discipline and assess viability of all actions taken.

8. Empowerment: Create conditions which empower and enable the poor to have access to information and to influence and take decisions (and provide them suitable training to continue and strengthen their involvement in cultural tourism activities).

9. Human rights: Remove all forms of discrimination and exploitation against people working (or seeking to work) in tourism, particularly against women and children. (Indeed, in many communities, women are the guarantors for traditional continuity and must be included in the decision-making process regarding cultural tourism activities).
The corollary is also valid; tourism development must consider the right to self-determination and cultural sovereignty of indigenous communities, including their protected, sensitive and sacred sites as well as their traditional knowledge).

10. Commitment: Plan action and the application of resources for the long term.

11. Monitoring: Develop simple indicators and systems to measure the impact of (cultural) tourism on poverty, (as well as the impacts of tourism on the cultural assets and values. It regards, among others, increases in revenues, employment statistics, possible physical deterioration of assets (caused by tourists or not), the dependence of communities living close to the sites on the tourism resources, their loss of control over cultural properties, leakages, etc.).

Sources: WTO 2004d, 15; WTO 2006b, 3; WTO 2006b, 3; Yunis 2004, 3-4; Yunis 2005, 24-25. Additional notes from the principles specific to cultural tourism (Yunis 2005, 24-25) are listed in brackets.
APPENDIX 2 – INTERVIEW GUIDE

PPT Principles and Sample Interview Questions

1. Prioritizes and targets the poor as primary beneficiaries.

Clarifying conceptualizations of poverty has been identified in the PPT literature as an area requiring further research (Cattarinich 2001, 64; Jamieson et al. 2004, 27) and is the first step in identifying and targeting the poor. Sample questions included:

- How do you define poverty?
- How do you identify the poor?
- On what basis were villages, households, staff, tourism activities, etc. chosen? Was poverty a selection factor?
- What do you do (if anything) to specifically target poor people?

2. Empowers the poor to gain full participation and control in all aspects of tourism planning, development and management.

The extent to which poor people (especially the poorest of the poor) were involved in tourism initiatives was a key component of this study. Sample questions to explore the degree of participation by the poor in tourism initiatives included:

- Who participates in tourism/your tourism initiative? Who decides?
- To what extent are the poor/poorest people involved in tourism/your tourism initiative? How are they involved? If they are not involved, why not?

3. Equitably redistributes tourism industry benefits in favour of the poor.

In order to gain a better understanding of the relative distribution of tourism impacts, the extent to which benefits flow to the poorest of the poor, and the pro-poor potential of the industry, sample interview questions included:

- Who benefits (the most) from tourism/your tourism initiative? In what ways?
- Who does not benefit (benefits the least) from tourism/your tourism initiative? Why not?
- To what extent do the poor/poorest people benefit from tourism/your tourism initiative?
- To what extent do you think it is possible to change the industry so that it benefits poor people more?
- What needs to happen to ensure that the poor benefit more from tourism (on a larger scale)?
4. Generates net benefits for poor people and ensures that tourism development based on their natural and cultural assets is to their advantage.

Of particular interest was the dynamic interchange between economic and cultural impacts in the context of ethnic tourism. A UNWTO technical seminar on cultural tourism and poverty alleviation in Asia (WTO 2004c, 5; 2005a, 3) also highlighted the need to gain a better understanding of the socio-cultural and economic impacts of tourism on poor people and their communities. To investigate the positive and negative impacts of tourism on poor ethnic minorities, as perceived by different stakeholder groups, and to assess whether tourism is more advantageous than disadvantageous, sample questions included:

- In what ways does tourism/your tourism initiative benefit the poor?
- What are the negative impacts of tourism/your tourism initiative on the poor?
- How does tourism/your tourism initiative affect ethnic minority people and cultures?
- How do you balance economic and cultural impacts?
- How do you determine if the benefits outweigh the costs?

5. Mainstreams a pro-poor approach into policy and practice with wide application across multiple stakeholders, sectors, and levels for maximum impact on poverty.

As a new concept, perceptions and knowledge about PPT are likely to affect its adoption by different stakeholders. Many interviewees were asked what they thought about PPT, how widely it could be applied, and the extent to which it could alleviate poverty. Interviewing people from different stakeholder groups also gave some indication of the level of commitment to PPT by different stakeholders in the region. Sample questions included:

- What does PPT mean to you?
- Do you think you are practicing PPT? If so, in what ways?
- To what extent has tourism alleviated poverty? To what extent can PPT alleviate poverty (on a bigger scale)?
## APPENDIX 3 – ORGANIZATIONS, PROJECTS AND VILLAGES FROM WHICH PEOPLE WERE INTERVIEWED

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name and Location of Organization</th>
<th>Type of Tourism Project/Activity</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Local NGOs and locally-based international NGOs in Thailand</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Responsible Ecological Social Tours Project (REST), Bangkok</td>
<td>Community-based tourism, including support to Ban Huai Hee in Mae Hong Son CBT Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Population and Community Development Association (PDA) and PDA Tour, Chiang Rai</td>
<td>Set up Ban Lorcha Community-based Tourism Development Project, Chiang Rai province; works with international tour operator to generate income to other villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mirror Art Group/Mirror Foundation, Chiang Rai, Mae Yao District</td>
<td>Cultural Experience Eco-tour, voluntourism, homestay in 4 villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hill Area Development Foundation (HADF), Chiang Rai</td>
<td>Community-based sustainable ecotourism and voluntourism in 4 villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae Kok Foundation (formerly called Rural Development Through Tourism), Chiang Rai</td>
<td>Study tours, voluntourism, tourism funds channelled into development projects</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Upland Holistic Development Project, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Rural development with marginalized hill tribe people in the Golden Triangle region (exploring ecotourism and voluntourism opportunities)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter Mountain People Education and Culture in Thailand (IMPECT) Association, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Development work with seven Indigenous and tribal peoples in the highlands of northern Thailand (no direct tourism work)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International Alliance of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples of Tropical Forests – international NGO based in Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Worldwide network of organizations representing Indigenous and tribal peoples living in tropical forest regions (no specific tourism focus)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ecumenical Coalition on Tourism (ECOT) – international NGO based in Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Global coalition advocating for socially responsible, ethically oriented tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>International development organizations/donors supporting projects in the Lao PDR</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), Principal Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific, Bangkok</td>
<td>UNESCO-LNTA Nam Ha Ecotourism Project in/around the Nam Ha National Biodiversity Conservation Area (17 project villages), Luang Namtha province (a national model of community-based ecotourism and winner of a United Nations Development Award for its contribution to poverty alleviation)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>GTZ (German government technical assistance agency) Lao-German Program Rural Development in Mountainous Areas of Northern the Lao PDR, Muang Sing, Luang Namtha province</td>
<td>Community-based tourism through a Public-Private Partnership, The Akha Experience: a community-based trekking tour with 8 Akha villages, Exotissimo and GTZ</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>European Union Micro-Project Development Through Local Communities, Vieng Phoukha District, Luang Namtha province</td>
<td>Community-based ecotourism project in 12 villages, Vieng Phoukha District</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SNV Netherlands Development Organization, Luang Prabang and Vientiane</td>
<td>Advises on pro-poor sustainable tourism, community-based ecotourism; works with LNTA-ADB Mekong Tourism Development Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DED (German Development Service), Vientiane</td>
<td>Community-based Eco-Tourism Development in 2 villages, Phou Khao Khouay National Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LNTA-ADB Mekong Tourism Development Project</td>
<td>Pro-Poor Tourism component, largely delivered through community-based ecotourism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Regional intergovernmental and industry associations based in Thailand**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (UNESCAP), Transport and Tourism Division, Bangkok</td>
<td>Produced documents on tourism and poverty alleviation. Developing a pro-poor certification system with poverty reduction indicators for the mainstream hotel industry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pacific Asia Travel Association (PATA), Strategic Intelligence Centre, Bangkok</td>
<td>Global association of travel and tourism industry members with a specific interest in the Asia-Pacific region. PATA Thailand chapter initiated Ban Lorcha Community-based Tourism pilot project with ATTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mekong Tourism Office, Bangkok</td>
<td>Coordinates sustainable pro-poor tourism development projects in the Greater Mekong Subregion and promotes the Mekong region as a single travel and tourism destination</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Thai Travel Agents, Bangkok (interviewed a past President)</td>
<td>Thailand’s private sector association of travel agents with over 1,300 members. Initiated Ban Lorcha Community-based Tourism pilot project with PATA; implementation transferred to PDA</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tour companies based in Thailand**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Track of the Tiger and Voluntourists Without Borders, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Adventure ecotourism, educational tourism, voluntourism to develop ecotourism/geotourism products with/for (currently 3) hill tribe villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lisu Lodge, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Eco-lodge employing local villagers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
North by North-East Tours, Nakorn Phanom, Thailand, and Luang Prabang, Laos

| Specialty tours, responsible tourism, educational tourism, voluntourism, supports community projects |

**Tour companies based in the Lao PDR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Green Discovery and the Boat Landing Guesthouse, Luang Namtha</td>
<td>Community-based ecotourism and ecotourism lodge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inter-Lao Tourism and Luangprabang Travel Agents, Luang Prabang</td>
<td>Developing ecotourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tiger Trail Outdoor Adventures Laos and Lao Spirit Resort, Luang Prabang</td>
<td>Ecotourism, community-based tourism, eco-style resort, and Elephant Park Project. Developing public-private partnership with a group of villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lao Youth Travel, Luang Prabang</td>
<td>Ecotourism project in Muang Ngoi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action Max, Luang Prabang</td>
<td>Ecotourism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Government offices in Thailand**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiangmai Hill Tribe Development and Welfare Centre, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Pha Nok Kok cultural tourism village</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Social Development &amp; Human Security Office, Technical Promotion and Support Office, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Promotes ecotourism to highland ethnic minority communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ministry of Tourism and Sports, Office of Tourism Development, Bangkok</td>
<td>One Tambon One Product (OTOP) and Homestay program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Government offices in the Lao PDR**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Office Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lao National Tourism Administration (LNTA), Luang Namtha Provincial Tourism Office</td>
<td>Implements the UNESCO-LNTA Nam Ha Ecotourism Project and the LNTA-ADB Mekong Tourism Development Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luang Namtha Provincial Tourism Office – NamHa Ecotourism Project, Trekking Information Center, Luang Namtha</td>
<td>Provides information to tourists on Nam Ha Ecotourism Project trekking and river tours</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Universities and research institutes in Thailand**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Institute Name</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Chiang Mai University, Division of Tourism, Faculty of Humanities, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Courses, research and publications on tourism impacts, including ethnic tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chiang Mai University, Social Research Institute, Centre for Ethnic Studies and Development, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Articles and research on ethnic tourism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institution/Center</td>
<td>Description</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maejo University, School of Tourism Development, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Community-based tourism research</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Thailand Research Fund, Regional Office, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>Government affiliate supporting community-based tourism research. Community-Based Tourism Research and Learning Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian Centre for Tourism Planning and Poverty Reduction, Bangkok</td>
<td>Community-based tourism development projects in Thailand and elsewhere. Researching the PPT potential of mainstream hotel industry</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Villages in Thailand from which people were interviewed

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ban Raummit (Karen) village, Chiang Rai province</td>
<td>Tourism activities revolving around an elephant camp. One of the first villages in the area to start receiving tourists in the 1970s</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pha Nok Kok (Hmong) village, Chiang Mai province</td>
<td>Cultural tourism and homestay supported by the Chiangmai Hill Tribe Development and Welfare Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Mae Klang Luang (Karen) village, Doi Inthanon National Park, Chiang Mai</td>
<td>1 of 4 community-based tourism villages in the Ban Mae Klang Luang Tourism Alliance; some support from Thailand Research Fund, etc.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mae Moo elephant camp (Karen), Chiang Mai province</td>
<td>Elephant camp staffed by Karen villagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dton Loong (Lisu) village, Chiang Mai province</td>
<td>Next to Lisu Lodge, which employs local villagers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Huai Hee (Karen) village, Mae Hong Son province (interviewed a village tourism committee member in Chiang Mai)</td>
<td>Community-based tourism project supported by REST, the Thailand Research Fund, and others</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Villages in the Lao PDR where interviews were conducted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Village</th>
<th>Details</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ban Nalan (Khamu) village, Luang Namtha province</td>
<td>1 of 17 project villages in the UNESCO-LNTA Nam Ha Community-Based Ecotourism Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Huaykhoum (Akha) village, Muang Sing area, Luang Namtha province</td>
<td>One of the villages on The Akha Experience tour, a public-private sector partnership between GTZ, Exotissimo and 8 Akha villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Eula (Akha) village, Muang Sing area, Luang Namtha province</td>
<td>One of the villages on The Akha Experience tour, a public-private sector partnership between GTZ, Exotissimo and 8 Akha villages</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ban Tamee (Akha) village, Muang Sing area, Luang Namtha province</td>
<td>One of the villages on The Akha Experience tour, a public-private sector partnership between GTZ, Exotissimo and 8 Akha villages</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX 4 - TENTATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Incorporate holistic, multi-disciplinary, multi-cultural, multi-stakeholder approaches into PPT planning, development, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation.

2. Match local definitions and determinants of poverty with poverty targeting, selected strategies, and outcome evaluation. (In northern Thailand and Lao PDR, focus on increasing food sufficiency and the political status/power of ethnic minorities.) Conduct research on what poverty means for poor people and how they wish to address it.

3. Develop meaningful avenues of participation that enable poor people to set the parameters of their own development (e.g., cultural, economic, tourism development), keeping more powerful voices in check. Be creative in finding ways to engage the poorest of the poor in a more beneficial manner, removing barriers to their participation and providing the means for them get started and stay involved. Build PPT products around those activities that the poorest people are most likely to be able to participate in.

4. Re-examine the conservation agenda in light of poverty needs and the living cultures of ethnic minorities. Conduct further research on the cultural and economic interactions and implications of pro-poor ethnic tourism.

5. Rethink and expand concepts of authenticity, educating tour operators, tour guides, government tourism officials, tourists, and others to better appreciate the modern day (and political, historical) contexts of ethnic minorities.

6. Research tourist demand for PPT. Raise awareness and educate consumers about how to travel in a more pro-poor manner.

7. Implement and enforce regulations, standards and incentives to increase (even require) stakeholder uptake of PPT and create a conducive environment for PPT. For example, issue business licences only to those tour operators demonstrating a pro-poor approach.

8. Restructure the tourism industry’s profit prioritization, pricing systems, and market mechanisms that interfere with a pro-poor approach. For example, price products by first ensuring that the poorest people’s basic needs are met (see last quote on page 78), mandate village entrance fees, and establish fair prices for villager services provided.

9. Establish clearer definitions and criteria for PPT.

10. Prioritize and put in place redistributive, equity-enhancing policies and special measures to directly deliver a disproportionate share of benefits to the poorest segments of the population as a bottom line requirement of PPT. For example, in northern Thailand and Lao PDR, more widely institute household rotation systems for equitable distribution within villages, especially those that give poorer people preferential treatment. Give the poorest people priority access to village funds with little or no interest, and offer startup funds for micro-enterprises. Provide tourism skills training to the poorest of the poor.