

Empowering the Natives: Community Participation in Tourism Development in Tutuala, Timor leste

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What is the research about?

- The role of Haburas, a local NGO in Timor Leste, in supporting community based tourism development in Tutuala, East Timor.

Tutuala:

- Tutuala is a remote area located at the eastern end of Timor island, a sub district of Lautem in Timor Leste.
- It is about 27 km from Lautem.
- Tutuala sub-district was divided into two villages and each village was headed by a village head called *chefe Suco*.
- The distant from Dili, the capital of East Timor, to Suco Tutuala is 234 Km.
- The trip from Dili to Suco Tutuala took about 8 to 9 hours due to bad condition of the road.

Tutuala Location (Taken from google map):



Tourist attractions at Tutuala: Ili Kere-kere Site



Jaco Island:



How does Haburas start with the program in Tutuala?

- Concern about the local community livelihood after UNTAET declared the area of Tutuala and its surroundings as a protected area in 2000.
- Access of the community to their livelihood resources is very limited.
- People used to combine traditional subsistent agriculture and fishing to make their living.
- Potentials of the area as a tourism destination for its scenic natural beauty.
- Since 2000, tourists have flowed to the area bringing their own tents, food and other camping facilities.
- With the support from CIDAC, an International NGO based in Portugal, applying fund from EU, between 2003-2008, Haburas ran a community based tourism program in Tutuala as an alternative livelihood for the locals.

Challenges during start up program:

- Gain trust from the community.
- To change the locals' mindset that they did not come to bring donations.
- The community used to receive different types of aids from both the central government and NGOs such as clean water facilities, education, health, road and electricity.
- Building awareness about the valuable potentials of the area for tourism and the importance of environment protection in the area.

Initial contact with the local community:

- Sending an NGO staff who came from the area.
- He discussed with a village chief about a possibility to start a community development program.
- He made repeated visits every month, staying at a local small lodge, exploring whether the community would agree to develop a community based tourism in the area.
- Conducting both formal meetings and informal visits to the members of the community.
- It took more or less a year before finally the community agreed to start with a tourism project in the area.
- Identifying a potential community leader.

Program implementation:

- In one community meeting, the community reached a consensus to start the tourism project in early 2005.
- They started a cooperative consisting representatives of 12 clans living in Tutuala.
- 67 people were members of the cooperative – 44 men and 23 women.
- They were divided into 7 groups with 10-15 members in each group.
- Each group chose the group leader and elected one person to be the head of the cooperative.
- Haburas facilitating the cooperative members to build tourist facilities, joining different trainings, and do a comparative studies to other community based ecotourism in Bali.

Building Tourist facilities:

- A year of Building tourist facilities.
- Repairing the road from Tutuala village to Valu Beach.
- Digging wells for water supply.
- Building 5 bungalows with the capacity of 7 rooms for 14 guests, using the local material on one of the members' land closed to the beach.
- A small kiosk selling needs for tourists such as soaps, toothpaste and others and a restaurant serving food and drinks.
- A small house for the Valusere cooperative members.
- Community members involved in building the tourist facilities.

Bungalows at the Valu Beach built by the locals:



Empowerment program:

- The community was encouraged to identify their own needs.
- Through meetings, they decided on what skills they needed and decided who would be sent for trainings and would discuss with Haburas:
- Bamboo craft training.
- A financial and accounting record training.
- Training on tourism services in order to meet the universal standard of cleanliness, hospitality and hygiene.
- Cooking course.
- Tourist guide course.
- Managing waste : sewage from toilets and bathrooms using eco-friendly approach.
- Study tour for the members of the cooperative visiting ecotourism site in Bali.

Advocacy role :

- Advocacy in initiating the cooperative.
- Advocacy about the importance of environment in tourism.
- Advocacy on the mechanism of the cooperative business operation, financial management and tourism business management.

Benefits of the program for the community:

- The community can gain alternative source of income for their livelihood through the tourism development.
- The community confidently makes decisions on what is good for them as a community.
- The cooperative functions as a business incubator for the members.
- With more skills, the members of the community have better self-esteem.