



Developing Sustainability Standards for Tourism Suppliers in Thailand... a Work in Progress

The Corporate Social Responsibility and Market Access Partnerships Project for Thai Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains (CSR-MAP Project)

Prepared in February 2010 for GATE Network of Culture and Tourism

Mr. Peter Richards, CSR-MAP Project Manager

1. Background: finding a path to sustainable tourism...

Blessed with a vibrant diversity of peoples, arts, crafts, cultures, nature, food and fun, Thailand has been a leading Asian tourist destination for several decades. As the Thai tourism industry has developed, the number of visitors has grown from only 390,000 people in 1967² to 2.44 million people in 1985, reaching a peak of 14.46 million visitors in 2007³. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTTC), in 2009, the tourism industry provided employment for over 4 million Thais, equivalent to 1 in every 9 jobs, and 14.7% of Thailand's GDP.⁴

Steady growth has made tourism a top priority for successive governments, and an attractive job option for Thai students, young professionals and even local communities. Nevertheless, economic benefits have been accompanied by serious impacts on Thailand's environment and society. Many Thai people, including tourism industry stakeholders, are deeply concerned about these impacts, and have been working hard to develop a more sustainable industry.

During the past decade, European travelers have also become increasingly aware of the negative impacts which their holiday choices can have on the environment and local people in holiday destinations. Consequently, they have begun to search for more 'sustainable' and 'responsible' tourism experiences. Motivated by a combination of pressure to improve their companies' sustainability performance and desire to meet growing demand from their clients, many European tour operators are now searching for quality, sustainable tourism products.

This article describes some initial outcomes of an EU-funded initiative, *The Corporate Social Responsibility and Market Access Partnerships (CSR-MAP) for Thai Sustainable Tourism Supply Chains project*. The CSR-MAP is working with Thai tourism suppliers which offer 'responsible,' 'green' and 'sustainable' tourism products, as well as Thai communities, which have developed community-based tourism (CBT) programmes, and EU tour operators with a firm commitment to supporting sustainable tourism. The project aims to assist these suppliers to raise sustainability standards and improve their access to European 'responsible tourists'.

The CSR-MAP project is giving Thai suppliers the opportunity to learn about the *European market's demand* for sustainable tourism products and standards; participate fully in the development and improvement of *Sustainable Tourism Standards*; gain recognition from European tour operators; and develop and market innovative and integrated sustainable tourism products – *Thai Sustainable Tourism Routes*, tailored to the needs of EU tourists.

² <http://repository.kulib.kyoto-u.ac.jp/dspace/bitstream/2433/56779/1/KJ00000132246.pdf>

³ Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) Statistics department and United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) World Tourism Barometer

⁴ <http://www.tourismroi.com/InteriorTemplate.aspx?id=27126>

2. The CSR-MAP Suppliers and Project Partners:

Suppliers participating in the CSR-MAP project are locally owned, small and medium sized enterprises, and communities which have developed community based tourism (CBT).

The project focuses support on SME's and communities because the project team considers local experts with long-term commitment to be essential for a sustainable Thai tourism industry. Many suppliers participating in the project have been putting sustainable tourism into action for over 10 years. Similarly, the project team shares a conviction that sustainable tourism requires the active cooperation of local communities which coexist with the natural and cultural resources which we hope to protect. In a highly competitive industry, with limited funds and capacity, these suppliers need special assistance to lift standards and reach target markets. The project partners are umbrella organisations working with the sustainable tourism suppliers:

- **The Thai Ecotourism and Adventure Travel Association (TEATA)** is a pioneering association of 50 environmentally conscious, socially responsible Thai tour operators who are working together to put the ideals of ecotourism into practice;
- **The Greenleaf Foundation** is a hotel standards and CSR certification organization, representing over 200 members who adhere to a broad set of environmental criteria;
- **The Thailand Community-based Tourism Institute (CBT-I)**, provides participatory research and development support to a network of over 70 rural Thai communities, working with stakeholders to support local people to manage rural tourism sustainably.
- **The European Center for Eco and Agro Tourism (ECEAT)** supports an extensive network of more than 1300 EU sustainable tourism suppliers. **ECEAT Projects** have extensive international experience facilitating sustainable tourism standardisation; building sustainable supply chains and promoting sustainable tourism around the world through the EU-funded Green Travel Market: www.greentravelmarket.info

3. The CSR-MAP Standards Development Process

Between March and September, 2009, the five Thai supplier groups drafted new sustainable tourism standards through participatory processes, facilitated by the project partners. A set of 'common principles' was also developed, based on each of the supplier groups' new standards. The **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria - GSTC** (please see section 4 below) was used as a common frame of reference during the standards development process, adapted as necessary to the Thai context. Standards development included the following common activities:

- A study of comparable standards was undertaken. Subsequently, the facilitating organisations drafted service and sustainability standards in consultation with suppliers. A supplier workshop was held to discuss and develop a fully participatory draft of the standards. These standards were sent to ECEAT, the European partner for feedback;
- ECEAT's feedback was prioritised and discussed at a **National workshop to discuss SME Green Hotel, Ecotourism and Community Based Tourism standards, with the involvement of product suppliers**; held in Bangkok on 3rd to 4th November 2009;
- **Following the workshop**, indicators, an assessment system and handbooks will be developed. The standards will be shared with European tour operators, who will also have the opportunity to survey example products during a June 2010 FAM Trip. At the end of the project, partners will share the standards and other outcomes of the project with responsible Thai government agencies and other stakeholders, and discuss how to build capacity to reach standards, disseminate, fund and assess the standards.

This standards development process is still underway. However, project activities have already allowed many fascinating insights into the opportunities and challenges waiting for SME's in developing countries which try to lift their sustainability and service standards, and access EU markets. This paper presents some lessons learned so far during this process. It is a 'work in progress', so please expect changes in situations and conclusions as the process rolls out.

4. The Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC)

Since the Rio Earth Summit, developing standards has become an increasingly popular way to assure customers that they are buying a genuine sustainable product, and motivate suppliers to operate in a more environmentally and socially responsible way. Good standardising initiatives also provide suppliers with the necessary knowledge and skills to be able to take action.

Tourism is no exception. By 2005, there were already over 7000 certified sustainable tourism products (Goodwin.H. 2005). Unfortunately, this profusion of schemes only served to create confusion among tourists and tour operators. In addition, sincere efforts to lift standards had to compete with 'Greenwashing', as un reputable companies 'jumped on the bandwagon', and mislead tourists about their social and environmental credentials, in order to steal 'green' sales.

The desire to win back credibility for sustainable tourism standards lead to partnerships between initiatives. In 2007, a coalition of 27 organizations – **the Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria** came together to develop a **Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria** (GSTC). They reached out to 100,000 tourism stakeholders, analyzed over 4,500 criteria, and received comments from over 1500 individuals. The GSTC has 4 core principles:

- Demonstrate effective sustainable management
- Maximise socio- economic benefits to the local community / minimize negative impacts
- Maximise benefits to cultural heritage and minimize negative impacts
- Maximise benefit to the environment and minimize negative impacts

CSR-MAP partners chose the GSTC as a guideline for their standards development, so that Thai standards would benefit from all of the work undertaken by the GSTC initiative. Partners hope for the following benefits from using the GSTC as a tool during standards development:

- Learning from the lessons and expertise of practitioners around the world;
- Better understanding the needs of tourists and operators, in terms of sustainability;
- Increasing the international credibility of the Thai standards
- Having a common frame for comparing the Thai standards
- Benefiting from dialogue with a global network
- Mid-term marketing opportunities, as the GSTC becomes known by industry / tourists

Limitations of the GSTC

The GSTC has both supporters and critics. Dr. Harold Goodwin of the International Center for Responsible Tourism (ICRT) is one vocal critic of the GSTC. To ensure a balanced perspective, participants were informed about the debate over the limitations of the GSTC. Based on Dr. Goodwin's criticism of the GSTC, Thai suppliers were recommended to consider that a global standard may not necessarily address issues which are highly important for Thailand, or for tourists to know about before they travel to Thailand. They were advised to carefully consider Thailand's priorities, needs and limitations while they drafted their standards.

Dr. Goodwin's critique also notes the limits to how far tourism products can be labeled as 'sustainable tourism,' because of the range of activities undertaken on holiday and the impacts of different types of consumer: "the tourist is not merely a consumer, they too have impacts."⁵ For this reason, it is essential that suppliers prepare tourists to be active 'responsible travelers.'

Furthermore, standards use 'ecolables' to identify certified products. Labels are designed to simplify purchasing decisions. However, a possible impact is that such schemes may fail to inform a tourist about the most important sustainability issues in a destination, exactly what the supplier is doing to address these issues, and how tourists can help to play their part.

⁵ Goodwin H, 'Open Letter to the Board of the GSTC', (Jul 2009), www.haroldgoodwin.info and www.responsibletravel.com/copy/copy101753.htm

5. What's New about the CSR-MAP Standards?

Many sets of standards have already been developed for the Thai tourism industry, by responsible Thai government offices and the private sector. This includes standards with sustainability criteria.

However, such initiatives have often been challenged by low uptake by Thai suppliers, and lack of recognition by markets.

The CSR-MAP Project is trying to overcome these obstacles through a highly participatory process, involving supply and demand-side stakeholders from the start of the project.

Thai Tourism Standards: Role of Government

- The Office of Tourism Development (OTD), Ministry of Tourism and Sports is responsible
- Tourism Authority of Thailand also support



สำนักงานพัฒนาการท่องเที่ยว
Office of Tourism Development



Diverse Thai tourism standards have been developed for services, destinations, and activities. Government have done good work, but challenges with uptake by suppliers / recognition by market.




6. No sustainability without good service...

Furthermore, in order for the standards development process to best assist market access, participants were informed that **even when tourists are motivated by sustainability, all evidence suggests that responsible tourism is not the most important reason that they choose to buy a product.** Sustainability standards cannot replace quality, safety or value for money in the purchasing, decision making process. Suppliers which focus only on sustainability, without a great product and services will not be commercially successful.



For this reason, all of the Thai project partners chose to develop **service criteria** as an important part of their new standards, from the beginning of the project. These include:

- Tour Operators: *Sustainable and effective service and management* criteria
- EcoGuides: *Service* criteria
- Restaurants: *Service* criteria including certification by the 'Clean Food, Good Taste' system, overseen by the Department of Health, the Thai Ministry of Public Health and the Department for Promotion of Environmental Quality .
- CBT: *Safe and satisfying experience for guests* criteria
- Greenleaf SME: *Quality, environmentally friendly service* criteria

7. Outcomes of the process... the story so far

7.1. Some general observations

The project is educating and building relationships among committed Thai tourism enterprises. There has been a serious search for ways to improve sustainability performance and suppliers' new draft standards include significant, specific commitments across a range of highly important issues. Thai suppliers have also had a unique opportunity to learn about 1) how to make their operations more sustainable, and 2) the needs of partners and guests in Europe. They have also seen potential links between **sustainability, market access and profitability**.

7.2. Common Principles

At the National Workshop, the 5 supplier groups defined common principles. For the supplier groups to formulate a common principle, they had to be able to show that each common principle was represented by specific criteria included in each of their individual standards:

1. Commitment to sustainable management

- Sustainable tourism policy
- Staff training in sustainable tourism issues
- Respect for nature and culture integrated into management

2. Natural Resources and the environment

- Efficient natural resource use
- Contributions towards nature conservation / natural resource replenishment
- Management of waste and water, reusing and recycling
- Information to increase understanding of how to reduce environmental impacts

3. Socio-economic

- Support for community development projects and training for local people
- Employ local community members and purchase local products and services
- Assist local artisans and merchants to develop sustainable products
- No tolerance for exploitation

4. Cultural Heritage

- Support for cultural diversity and the unique identify of the local area
- Cultural information and interpretation to increase understanding of local culture, and facilitate cultural exchange between Thai hosts and their guests
- Support for living cultures, and the continuity of local cultures, lifestyles, local wisdom, traditions and practices, so these are passed on to future generations



Above, the Community Based Tourism (CBT) participants discuss their standards

7.3. Important Issues reflected in discussion and the new drafts

Throughout the project, there has been a high level of agreement among Thai suppliers with the GSTC and the European experts over which issues should be address by the standards. Most hot discussion has been at the level of how to prioritise criteria, or if certain criteria are actually possible at this time in Thailand. Important issues which have arisen so far include:

7.3.1. Socio- economic issues:

During the project, Thai suppliers were informed about the special importance of social issues in European countries. All supplier groups have committed to following Thai and international laws and agreements related to labour, child labour, human rights and sexual exploitation.

However, in some cases, specific groups or issues are not referred to explicitly in the suppliers' standards. In these cases, broad criteria, such as "**The organisation or business operates according to all areas of Thai and international law, and all associated guidelines, e.g. health and safety, workers' laws, and the environment**" are understood to already cover these groups or issues. Culture also plays an important part in this, with some issues considered 'too sensitive' for participants to want to mention (see section 7.3.6 below).

There was significant discussion about when childrens' participation in tourism counted as '**child labour**.' Suppliers considered children's participation in cultural performances to be a positive benefit of tourism, as it encourages Thai youth to maintain and feel proud of their culture. Participants also considered that youth helping family businesses outside school time was a vital part of Thai culture, and should be viewed in a positive light. However, participants accepted that this area needs to be sensitively managed. Cultural performances or light work should not be scheduled late at night, or effect children's ability to perform well in school.

7.3.2. Environmental Issues

Recognising that "**Resources and the environment are the real capital of our business**," all participating suppliers committed to contributing actively towards sustainable natural resource management. Practical ideas included sponsoring local conservation activities, creating 'environmental funds' and sending staff to assist environmental camps for local students.

All suppliers also committed to implementing waste management, working to reduce waste and more efficient use of natural resources, including water and power. However, there are still technical challenges with measuring how effectively this is being done (see below). All suppliers also committed to avoid selling or using products made from rare, wild animals. In the case of CBT projects, the communities will also not consume rare / endangered species.

7.3.3. Capacity and technical Issues:

Capacity, technical and funding limitations have been key areas of discussion during the project. There are many areas where the Thai SMEs and communities will require assistance. For example, **measuring results** is obviously essential in order to prove that suppliers are complying with standards and improving their performance. However, this is not an easy task for Thai SME's and communities in practice. In particular, there are challenges to data measurement in the area of greenhouse gasses, and measuring resource consumption in community based tourism projects (e.g. sometimes there are no meters, water flows 24hrs through a gravity pipe, etc). Suppliers are unsure about how to overcome these limitations.

Beyond measurement, there are other cases, where suppliers agree in principle on the spirit of a criteria, but acknowledge that they are not able to reach the criteria at present. In this situation, suppliers wish to know 1) the most urgent priorities in a situation where they have limited resources to invest and 2) what kind of support may be available to help raise standards.

There was also discussion about how to offer **sustainable tourism experiences to people with special needs**. None of the suppliers are unable to commit to this as a minimum standard.

Some issues are highly specific to supplier groups. For example:

Community-Based Tourism:

CBT participants discussed legal compliance in great depth and confirmed that they are not prepared to include **GSTC A.2. The company is in compliance with all relevant international or local legislation and regulations (including, among others, health, safety, labor, and environmental aspects)** in their standard. The reasons given for this decision are:

- Many CBT projects are operated in agricultural communities located inside protected areas. In many cases, communities already plan and cooperate with park authorities. As a result, there is informal recognition by park authorities that CBT is a positive activity which is assisting local people to support natural resource management, and earn extra income which relieves pressure on natural resources. However, even when the communities predate the establishment of the national park (often the case), the community's location in a protected area makes CBT activities technically illegal.
- Many local community members distrust the law as an fair and effective means of enforcing justice. They have negative experiences of 'the law' being manipulated by influential and wealthy people to their disadvantage, and consider that they have insufficient knowledge and skills to be able to use the law to protect themselves.

Issues related to tour guides and their roles:

Participants also discussed persistent problems which occur when different types of tour guides are required to work together, often without training and proper management of their roles:

- **Foreign tour leaders**, are often sent by international tour operators to accompany their guests. In Thailand, these staff are not actually legally allowed to give information about Thailand, as this occupation is reserved for Thai nationals. However, in practice foreign tour leaders often try to take the lead role in explaining Thai life, culture and nature.
- **Professional, licensed Thai guides** are employed by inbound agents in Thailand. By law, all tours must be accompanied by such a guide. However, in practice, Thai guides are often required to be 'silent' or 'sitting' guides. In this case, the foreign tour leader will give guests information about Thailand, while the Thai guide (university-educated and licensed under Thai law) is expected to remain quiet. This situation obviously leads to feelings of resentment and undermines mutual respect between the 2 types of guides, not to mention that tourists' miss the opportunity to learn from their Thai guide.
- **Local Community Guides:** In an ironic localised version of the situation above, similar conflicts occur frequently between professional tour leaders / guides (foreign and Thai) and local community guides – local villagers working for a community based tourism project who have been trained to interpret local culture, lifestyle and nature to their guests. Often, tour guides choose not to use local guide services (even when agreements have been made to do so with tour operators). This leads to similar feelings of lack of respect for community members, in their own communities.

The guides highlighted the need for more **training courses on sustainable guiding**. They agreed that these courses should begin with a focus on 'ecotourism' and 'community based tourism,' including how to divide roles and responsibilities so that all guides could share their knowledge in appropriate ways, and felt respected. In the future, mainstream 'responsible tourism' should be included in training, to prepare guides to lead 'sustainable mass tourism'

During the workshop, Nicole Hausler, the EU expert also insisted strongly that guides need to earn more if they are to support sustainability. The promotion of fair trade services and goods is supported by all stakeholders. However, as long as the daily fee for local guides stays low, even guides 'committed' to sustainable tourism development and the support of fair-trade will continue to take their clients to commercial shops just to earn commission. Under these circumstances, there are also more opportunities for conflict of interest among different guides.

7.3.4. Market-side issues

Many of the small business owners and communities participating in the CSR-MAP project have been supporting environmental and social work for decades. Moreover, many of these suppliers have unrivaled local knowledge, and are able to offer highly creative programs to their guests.

Nevertheless, these SME's experience many challenges to market access. EU-Thai tourism supply chains are increasingly competitive and consolidated. Head offices are searching for ways to streamline coordination, buy in bulk and save money when training suppliers and implementing their own standards. They are increasingly encouraging their subsidiary companies to use a limited number of (often foreign-owned and managed) ground agents.

“There is a lot of movement going on in the travel industry and especially a lot of consolidation. In the Dutch market almost all of the adventurous tour operators are part of a larger company. It will be more and more difficult for small tour operators to survive as rules and regulations become stricter every day.” *Saskia Griep, Manager of Tour Operating, Sawadee Reizen Travel, The Netherlands.*

Local SME's often lack capacity compared to these operators. They may have slower communication, less English language, smaller teams or less funds to invest in technical improvements. They handle less volume, so are often unable to negotiate the best deals for accommodation and transport services. Furthermore, even with respect to sustainability, these operators are not able to meet every need or reach every standard overnight. In many cases, sustainability will require investment in new technologies, raising salaries or re-training.

Realistic opportunities for market access influence suppliers' ability to make difficult decisions, in particular where investment is required. At the same time, suppliers will only be able to put some standards into action (such as investing in expensive new technologies, raising staff salaries, or contributing towards conservation and community work) if their international partners do not force their prices too low. After a certain point, price competition makes it impossible for suppliers to pay a quality premium for sustainable products, good wages, etc.

7.3.5. Education and joint action: supply chain, guests and communities

All suppliers committed to educate their staff, suppliers and guests about important cultural and environmental issues. They also committed to providing their staff, guests, and neighbouring community members with 'hands-on', opportunities to support sustainable development.

However, participants also emphasised that achieving sustainable tourism must be approached as a shared responsibility. They stressed the importance of **education** and **joint action** between 1) Thai-EU supply chain partners 2) tourists and 3) local community members:

7.3.6. Cultural Issues which impact standards development

During the standards development process, many specific cultural issues have become evident, which have effected both the **process** and **content** of the new standards. These issues are extremely interesting, and need to be openly addressed, so that the most culturally appropriate process for standards development, with most opportunity for success can be developed. E.g.:

- ***Thais have a cultural suspicion of public claims of goodness and do not like to be considered 'show offs'***. The impact is that 1) they often avoid mentioning sensitive issues directly, for concern that it will communicate that their group has a problem, and 2) if people already do something good, they may not feel comfortable to 'announce it.' Therefore, some of the suppliers' greatest achievements risk going unseen. In this way, they loose opportunities to stand out from the crowd of less sustainable operators.
- ***Thai culture is characterised by tolerance and flexibility, and tends to consider each situation according to its own merits, rather than 'go by the rules.'*** The impact of this on standards is that they may be considered as guidelines, rather than absolute rules governing what must happen under a given set of circumstances.

- **People, nature and culture integrated:** It can be observed that Thai people, especially CBT staff who rely from day to day on the environment, do not perceive great distinctions between ‘society, economy, culture and environment.’ They experience the ‘pillars of sustainability’ as one integrated system. This certainly has an impact on how criteria are formulated and how the aims of criteria are understood. For example, managing natural resources so that they do not run out, leading to the end of the local way of life, is considered more important than nature conservation for its own sake.
- **Security = access to money or resources:** Many CBT communities participating in the process do wish to earn additional income and benefit from ‘development.’ Nevertheless, they also wish to maintain many aspects of a traditional rural life. For this to be possible, their security depends on their access to land and natural resources (e.g. forest, water) just as much as, or sometimes more than access to cash income.

7.3.7. Issues Related to the GSTC

There are now areas where the new Thai standards are comparable to the GSTC; areas where the GSTC exceeds the Thai standards; and also areas where the Thai standards exceed the GSTC.

The GSTC was regarded as a very useful body of knowledge. However, Thai participants often preferred to develop their own formulations of criteria, reflecting their situations, priorities and needs.

Nicole Hausler, EU expert noted during the National Workshop that “it will not be sufficient to simply adapt the GSTC to local circumstances. It will also be necessary to place certain terms commonly used in the Western world into the local context.”

From “Report on National Workshop, Mrs. Nicole Hausler, November 2010”

- It was observed that the participants had a strong need to exchange their own past experiences and to adapt this knowledge to the Thai context by developing their own Thai standards (=ownership), rather than simply by trying to comply with the Global Sustainable Tourism Standards (GSTC)

Thai participants’ response to the GSTC’s perspective on ‘cultural heritage’ was particularly interesting. The GSTC focuses on the following aspects of culture:

- Establishing a code of conduct to culturally sensitive sites;
- Not selling historical / archeological artifacts, except as permitted by law;
- Contributing to the protection of local historical, archeological, culturally, and spiritually important **properties and sites**, and not impeding access to them by local residents;
- Using elements of local art, architecture, or cultural heritage in operations, design, decoration, food, or shops; respecting intellectual property rights of local communities.

Participants felt that the focus on protecting material culture did not manage to capture the breadth and meaning of culture in the Thai context. Participants wished to celebrate and support their ‘**living cultures**.’ This means lifestyles which are followed from day to day, rather than static or ‘displayed’ in a museum. Living culture is passed from generation to generation and found in daily life. In this context, facilitating cultural exchange between tourists and local people was also seen as a highly important issue, with criteria developed by 4 supplier groups.

Thai participants communicated ‘culture’ as an essentially important aspect of their daily lives. Their intention in developing standards for ‘culture’ is not simply to protect material culture – but to ensure that tourism contributes to the continuity and indeed celebration of their living cultures from one generation to the next. Suppliers committed to train staff to understand local culture, operate in culturally sensitive ways, and support initiatives which aim to support living cultures.

It is hoped that outcomes of the Thai process will be useful for the GSTC process, particularly in the areas of living culture and getting tourists actively involved in sustainable tourism initiatives.

8. Conclusions

At this point, I do not wish to draw too many conclusions – as stated in the introduction, this is a 'work in progress' and the real results will not be clear for at least another 12-18 months.

The CSR-MAP project has facilitated increased knowledge, interest and will among Thai SMEs to improve their sustainability performance. Great efforts are being made to lay the foundations for ambitious standards. However, there are still significant challenges to achieving these commitments in practice, including capacity, limited access to funds and identifying committed EU tour operator partners. These challenges will require time, effort and money to overcome.

Foremost, success will depend on the energy and commitment of the Thai suppliers themselves to take new lessons learned during the project back home, and strive to put them into practice.

Beyond this, for the initiative to succeed, the Thai SMEs will need to forge partnerships with European tour operators which have a genuine, proactive commitment to sustainable / responsible tourism, and are prepared to make a long term commitment to supporting these suppliers. For example, EU tour operators who are prepared to consider channeling a small percentage of their overall volume through the SME operators, to provide an opportunity for them to grow, and as a signal of their commitment to a sustainable Thai tourism industry.

The Thai government also needs to play a proactive role in supporting the Thai SMEs to put their commitments into practice. This could be done through provision of training, on the job coaching, or grants and subsidies to encourage the uptake of new technologies.



Above: participants at the National Standards Workshop, 3rd and 4th November, 2009.



Above: participants discuss their standards and feedback from Europe in small groups.

9. References

Publications

Batta, Dr. Ravinder, 'Green Tourism Certification Manual', Asian Productivity Organisation (APO 2009), Japan. <http://www.apo-tokyo.org/>

Bien Amos, 'A simple User's Guide to Certification for Sustainable Tourism and Ecotourism', (3rd Ed. 2006), Center for Ecotourism and Sustainable Development, Rainforest Alliance and The International Ecotourism Society. www.ecotourismcesd.org

CBI, 'European buyers' requirements: Benchmarking the tourism Industry', (2007), The Center for Promotion of Imports from Developing Countries (CBI), Netherlands.

Goodwin H, 'Open Letter to the Board of the GSTC', (Jul 2009), www.haroldgoodwin.info and www.responsibletravel.com/copy/copy101753.htm

Goodwin H, 'Responsible Travel and the Market' - The International Center for Responsible Tourism Occasional Paper No. 4' (November 2005) , ICR, The University of Greenwich, UK, www.icrtourism.org;

Richards, P, 'REPORT: National workshop to Discuss Thai SME Green Hotel, Ecotourism and Community Based Tourism (CBT) standards, with Involvement of Product Suppliers, Bangkok, Thailand, 3rd and 4th November 2009' (CSR-MAP Project February 2010), Peter@cbt-i.org

Roe D, Harris C and De Andrade J (Feb 2003) 'Addressing Poverty Issues in Tourism Standards – A Review Of Experience' Propoor Tourism Working Paper Number 14, www.propoortourism.org

The Partnership for Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC), 'Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria Preamble', (2009), <http://www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org/>

Websites

Global Sustainable Tourism Criteria (GSTC) www.sustainabletourismcriteria.org 12/02/2010

The Tourism Authority of Thailand (TAT) www.tat.or.th / www.tourismthailand.org 12/02/2010

United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO), UNESCO Water Portal Weekly Update, No. 155: Water and Tourism, 15th September, 2006, last accessed 13/02/2010 <http://www.unesco.org/water/news/newsletter/155.shtml>

United Nations World Tourism Organisation (UNWTO) www.world-tourism.org 12/02/2010

World Travel and Tourism Council, (WTTC) Thailand Information: <http://www.tourismroi.com/InteriorTemplate.aspx?id=27126> Last accessed 04/02/2010

The observations and recommendations of Mrs. Nicole Hausler, EU sustainable tourism expert, during the CSR-MAP process have been highly useful during the preparation of this article.

The CSR-MAP project is funded under the **Thailand-EC Cooperation Facility programme**. Its objective is to strengthen and diversify the relationship between the European Union and Thailand in a wide range of areas to deepen the economic, political and cultural partnerships.



www.teata.or.th

www.greenleafthai.org

www.cbt-i.org

www.eceat-projects.org