



**PROJECT «NETWORK FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT  
THINK-TAKS FOR COUNTRIES IN MEKONG SUB-REGION (NARDT)»**



***Regional research***

***Agricultural innovations review in Sub-Mekong region countries***

**Community tourism model in Hoa Binh province – Viet Nam**

## **1. General information**

Community-based tourism is a form of ecological and cultural combination, in which the community is the organizer, manager, and mutual benefit based on natural and cultural conditions with the goal of protecting the environment, preserving the culture values and improve people's lives. In Hoa Binh province, a province in the Northwest region, 73 km from the center of Hanoi Capital, there is an ancient village of Thai ethnic people called Lac village located in Chieng Chau commune, Mai Chau district. In Lac village, people together upgrade their houses, cook delicious food, and set up a performing arts team to serve tourists. From just weaving towels and brocade shirts to wear, Lac village women gradually make souvenirs such as scarves, wall hangings, bracelets, wallets, while men make bows and crossbows, buffalo mules, horns and logs... for sale to tourists. Over time, community-based tourism in Lac village has been diversified to homestay tourism. In addition to the landscape and cultural identity, community-based tourism in Lac village is also chosen by many tourists because of its reasonable cost, security and order are guaranteed. Due to limited area of arable land and few change for off-farm jobs, farmers are difficult to improve their living except doing community-based tourism. It has contributed to promoting socio-economic development in the area.

## **2. Model development**

Chieng Chau commune has 6 ethnic groups living together, of which the Thai ethnic people account for about 85%. In the past years, the people of Lac village in Chieng Chau commune mainly engaged in agricultural production. To find a new direction, the people of Lac village have exploited the advantages of topographical conditions, climate and their cultural identity (stilt houses, festivals, cuisine) to develop community-based tourism. All these factors have created a strong attraction for Lac village, attracting tourists as well as public and private community-based tourism development investment plans. Basically, the model of community tourism here has 03 main components participating and distributing benefits including: (1) Local community; (2) Local government; (3) Travel businesses.

The community is the main actor, providing cultural and catering services and guided tours. Participating households must register their businesses and enjoy benefits when providing catering services, accommodation, folk performances, souvenir sales, etc. The village head is the operator managing activities in the village, disseminating Party guidelines, State policies, laws, regulations related to tourism to business households, in charge of village security and responsible for reporting of temporary accommodation for tourists.

Local authorities manage, guide and assist the community in welcoming and dealing with guests; preserve and promote national cultural identity; environmental protection, food hygiene and safety; collect visit tickets or administrative procedures for temporary residence registration for tourists; ensure security for visitors in the village; use the mass media to introduce and promote their local tourism.

Travel companies directly plan to build tours, routes, travel programs, develop publications to promote and participate in supporting people's houses to improve their facilities and services.

Community tourism products in Lac village include following services:

- Homestay is a type of tourism in which visitors live in the houses of the local people, which is very popular with international tourists to experience the real world. The stilt house in Lac village is tall, spacious and clean, keeping the ancient architecture. Currently, the price for renting a house on stilts is 50,000 VND/person/night. Each stilt house can accommodate 30-40 guests. In Lac village, there are also many stilt houses with private rooms and independent bangalows. If you want to stay separately, tourists can rent for about 400,000-500,000 VND/night.

- Food service: Each stilt house has an adjacent kitchen for convenience in cooking and eating. Guests can rent a kitchen if they want to cook for themselves or can order rice with the host to prepare it. In the village, there is also an ethnic restaurant with traditional dishes, mountain dishes and a bar that opens late.

- Souvenirs: Thai brocade products have left a good impression in the hearts of tourists, almost anyone who has the opportunity to visit Lac village when returning home does not forget to buy some brocade gifts for themselves and their loved ones. for souvenirs after the trip.

- Costume rental: Visitors only cost 10,000 - 15,000 VND for one time renting a dress to transform into a Thai ethnic boy or girl.

- Entertainment: At the beginning of Lac village, there is a large area of land that can organize outdoor collective activities and exchanges. At night, visitors will be immersed in the traditional cultural space of the Thai people, light a campfire, exchange stalls dancing with the villagers and sway with the Thai Xoe dance.

- Traditional Market: Coming to Lac village, visitors can also experience going to the early market in the village. Goods in the market are also very easy to buy because people here do not challenge. They exchange, talk carefree, comfortable, very popular with tourists.

- Tours: Currently, there are many Mai Chau tours taking place daily with reasonable prices and schedules from 1-3 days. Joining Mai Chau tours in general and Lac village tours in particular, visitors will enjoy unforgettable experiences with gentle, honest ethnic people and a unique culture and landscape.

Up to now, Lac village has more than 76 households registered to provide tourism services to welcome guests to sleep, rest, eat, brocade weaving and handicrafts of their ethnic cultural identity. As a result, it has contributed to attracting tourists to the increasingly crowded Lac village, creating jobs and increasing incomes for residents. In order to improve the

effectiveness of community tourism, in July 2021, Chieng Chau Commune Farmers' Association established the Farmers' Professional Association "Farmers and Homestay" in Lac village, with 18 members participating. There are 9 female members and 3 members with university degrees among them.

Chieng Chau Commune Farmers' Union has propagated to raise awareness for members about the purpose, meaning, role and benefits of establishing the Association of Farmer's Professional Association for development of agriculture, wealthy farmers and civilized countryside. This professional association has been built on the principle of "5 self" including self-discipline, voluntariness, self-control, self-management, self-responsibility and "5 together" with the same direction in the field of production, business, and the same relationship. shared, shared responsibility and shared enjoyment.

The establishment of the Association of Professional Farmers "Farmers and Homestay" in Lac village has promoted the available potential, creating a close connection between farmer members who have the same passion for community tourism business. contributing to building Chieng Chau commune into a model new rural commune. Since the establishment of this Association of Professional Farmers, it has helped its members link together to develop service businesses and experience services of Thai ethnic identity in Mai Chau district, contributing to innovation. organization model of the Association, mobilizing all resources to build a typical professional association, promoting tourism for sustainable development.

### **Homestay service in Hoa Binh province**



*Source: VnExpress.*

After more than a year of operation, the Association of Professional Farmers in Lac village has been trained in the field of tourism business; support and guide member households to invest in completing items, such as flowers along the entrance gate of village; outdoor stage at the member's yard. In addition, the Association also actively promotes and introduces images

of traditional costumes, cuisine, car rental services, photography, etc. on social networking sites. As a result, it has contributed to attracting more tourists; Currently, the average monthly income of members is from 6-10 million VND.

The locality has restored and maintained the festival "Xen Muong" of the Thai ethnic people; building a display area for ethnic arts and antiquities, etc. Mai Chau district also pays attention to training and improving the quality of human resources to meet the needs of tourists. Every year, people in the village participate in training courses, fostering skills in tourism; The road to the village was widened and concreted. The parking area is widely planned and built and garbage is collected daily.

### **Festival "Xên Mường" of ethnic Thai people in Hoa Binh province**



*Source: Hoa Binh Provincial Department of Culture, Sports and Tourism.*

Community-based tourism has created jobs for about 300 workers with stable income. Besides renting accommodation, processing food for guests, people also have income from selling souvenirs, renting costumes, participating in art teams. Recently, households in the village have invested on tourist transportation by electrical trams with a fee of 250-350 thousand VND/time. The village's per capita income has been increased from 32.5 million VND in 2018 to 43 million VND in 2019 that has enabled farmers to renovate their house and buy cars.

### **3. Opportunities and challenges**

Base on the development of community-based tourism, the lives of local people have changed positive including restoring traditional crafts, creating jobs, increasing revenue, promoting the development of farming and animal raising, promoting the development of off-farm activities and tourism.

On the other hand, developing community-based tourism also contributes to preserving and promoting the traditional cultural values of the Thai ethnic people. Cultural and spiritual values such as social activities, art, family lifestyle, and social relations are basically

maintained because that is the identity and attraction for tourism. The art teams of the village still regularly practice traditional dances and songs.

Along with cultural factors, the natural landscape and environment, the fresh climate is also one of the important reasons for tourists to choose Mai Chau as their destination.

However, developing community-based tourism in Mai Chau still faces many difficulties and challenges such as:

- Traditional Thai houses have been transformed quite a lot. These changes meet the accommodation needs of guests but have broken the traditional architecture of the community on stilts.

- Traditional costumes gradually disappeared before the wave of Westernization and Kinh ethnic styles.

- Food culture has many changes.

- The folk performing forms of the community tend to be transformed into commercial forms.

- Tourism develops rapidly, but without specific planning, it disrupts the landscape, making the village look urban.

- Impact on the environment.

#### **4. Conclusions**

Lac village has promoted the community factor very well, making it an essential engine for sustainable development of community tourism. The experience from Lac village can be flexibly applied to many other localities across the country, in which it is necessary to focus on rapid development without losing inherent natural and cultural values, so that future generations can still utilise these resources for economic, social and environmental values.