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South East Asia Sustainability Network

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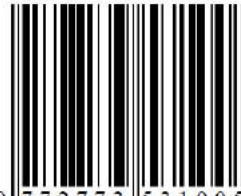


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Published by:

Centre for Global Sustainability Studies (CGSS),
Level 5, Hamzah Sendut Library,
11800 Universiti Sains Malaysia,
Penang.

Tel : +604 653 2461

Fax: +604 653 5273

Email : cgss@usm.my

Website: cgss.usm.my



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Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK)'s Engagement with the Kelantan State Government in Developing Community-Based Tourism (CBT)

By Mohd Fadil Mohd Yusof & Marlisa Abdul Rahim
(Universiti Malaysia Kelantan)

On July 9th and 10th, 2019, the Human Resource Division (HRD) for the Kelantan state government office organised a community-based tourism (CBT) workshop at Min House Camp (MHC), Kota Bahru, Kelantan. The MHC is located at Kampung Pulau, a small village in Kota Bharu district. It is an ideal location to organize the workshop due to the various recognitions received by the property.

MHC has earned several recognitions and standards such as ASEAN Green Hotel Standard 2018-2020, ASEAN CBT Standard 2019-2021 as well as recognitions from global travel companies such as TripAdvisor and Booking.com. The HRD appointed six members from the Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness, Universiti Malaysia Kelantan (UMK) as CBT project consultants to assist the state government in developing CBT for identified districts in Kelantan. The appointed members are tourism experts and experienced in research and consultation projects. There were three main objectives of this CBT workshop. First, to give exposure to the participants about CBT and the tourism industry in general. Second, to create awareness among kampung community management about the importance of CBT in creating new jobs and providing additional incomes to the local people.



CBT brainstorming activities

Third, to train relevant officers to lead their respective kampung in developing CBT together with the local villagers.

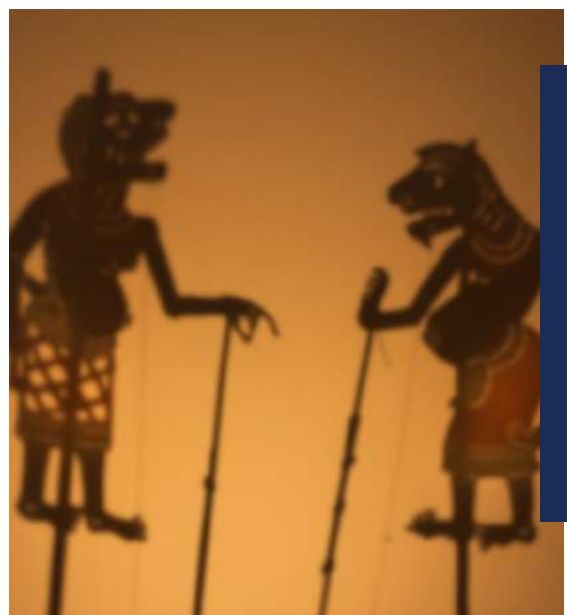
The two-day CBT workshop was opened to all state district officers in charge of development as well as local representatives of kampung community and approximately 50 participants were in attendance. During the workshop, participants worked as a team in identifying the potential sites in their respective districts that can be developed for CBT ventures. The participants were guided to conduct SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of their own area and to justify the feasibility of developing CBT projects. Towards the end of the workshop, participants presented the details of the SWOT analysis of their area in front of a panel of UMK consultants, the State Director of HRD and the director of State Development.

Following the presentation, brief comments and suggestions from the groups were delivered on the viability of the area and their proposed project. Some concerns and issues raised by the participants about the CBT projects were also addressed towards the end. One of the crucial outcomes of the workshop was to have viable CBT projects proposed by each district and to apply for funding from the Ministry of Rural Development. YM Dato' Dr. Tengku Mohamed Faziharudean bin Tengku Feissal (Tengku Kaya Perkasa) the Deputy State Secretary of Development officiated the event and spoke about a variety of economic issues and the importance of tourism sector in stimulating the local economy. Kelantan is one of the 13 states in Malaysia. The state is located in the North-Eastern corner of the peninsular Malaysia and occupies an area of 15,044 km² of land. with a total population of 1.89 million in 2019. Even though poverty in Malaysia is very low and expected to decrease (0.4 percent of Malaysia households were living below the national poverty in 2015), Kelantan is still considered as a poor state among other states such as Sabah, Sarawak and Kedah. There are many ways to address poverty in developing countries such as microfinance and providing equal access to health, education and basic infrastructure. Tourism has been identified as an economic sector that may alleviate poverty by providing additional income to local people and create new job opportunities.

The Kelantan state's economy depends mostly on agricultural activities dominated by rice, rubber, fishing and cottage industries such as handcraft production, weaving and woodcarving. However, Kelantan has many 'assets' that can be developed as tourism potentials such as its natural resources, local culture and heritage.



Capitalizing on the global shift of tourism markets towards ecotourism and nature tourism, Kelantan has the advantage of attracting many visitors. In 2018, the state launched the Visit Kota Bharu campaign and managed to attract more than 6 million of mostly domestic tourists and also tourists from other countries such as Thailand, Singapore, China and Korea. The influx of tourists to the state has signalled the state administration that tourism is an area that can be further developed to stimulate the local economy. There is an urgent need to diversify the state tourism products which currently depend on heritage, culture and food as the main attractions. Therefore, the state government has decided to embark on CBT projects to diversify its tourism products and encourage the local community to get involved in tourism.





Participants from various districts in Kelantan

Community-based tourism or CBT is a form of tourism that emphasizes the involvement of the host community in planning and maintaining tourism development in order to create a more sustainable industry. The CBT concept is not new and has been introduced since the mid-90s to promote community participation in the tourism industry. CBT has been identified as a viable tool to support socio-economic development and poverty reduction. In theory, CBT can provide significant economic benefits to the local community as an income supplement through many tourism activities such as homestay, selling local handicrafts and guiding fees. CBT ventures are managed by a community comprising various enterprises and businesses owned and operated by community with the goals of providing economic benefits to the community. Through CBT ventures, there will be active participation by the community in tourism planning, promotion of host-guest interactions, and preservation of cultural and natural heritage.

The engagement between UMK and the state government is part of the university's contribution to the society especially in the context of developing the tourism industry. The faculty members are extending their expertise

beyond the university walls and inviting the community including the industry players, NGOs and relevant stakeholders to work as a team in developing the community. This is exciting for both the university and the state government to work on such meaningful CBT projects. The CBT ventures are expected to give benefits not only to the state economy but also to create additional jobs and incomes for the local people.

The state government through the State Development Office has agreed to continue working with the Faculty of Hospitality, Tourism and Wellness, UMK in providing training and capacity building workshops among local leaders, NGOs and state officers in developing CBT ventures at various districts in Kelantan. The aim of the training is to create awareness among the participants and equip them with tourism knowledge and therefore to get them ready to implement various CBT projects at their respective districts. The local MHC model will be followed in order to achieve the CBT ASEAN standard and the state government is expecting more CBT areas to be established. It is hoped that such engagement may create an ecosystem that facilitates more interactions between the university and society and enlarge its networks.