

## **Report on Participation in Thailand Field Trip 2015**

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(a) Visiting Thailand was an incredible experience that enriched my understanding of Thai people and culture, sustainable economic development, means through which change can be enacted, as well as field work and its value.

I have always been inclined to study and have experiences abroad as much as possible, and this trip has further reinforced that.

Firstly, I have had many interactions in the past with Thai people and culture, but this was the first time I was given the opportunity to visit Thailand and experience and see the culture at its center. As academia and life in general relies on communication in order to share with/spread ideas to people of different backgrounds, make connections and be successful at positively impacting the lives of those you interact with or who are the subject of your interactions, cultural fluency is incredibly important, and this trip was valuable in this regard.

Secondly, while my current focus of study is not sustainable economic development per se, it is a topic that I am keenly interested in and hope to play a role in during my career. Seeing and hearing the successes, failures, challenges et cetera experienced by both organizations and everyday people in this regard will help me understand how I can successfully play a positive role in the area of sustainable development in the future.

Thirdly, visiting various types of organizations that tackle similar problems from varying perspectives gave me insight into how I could achieve my goals, whether it be through the UN, creating or joining an NGO, et cetera.

Lastly, perhaps the most fundamental insight I gained from the Thailand trip is that, even in my economic/political study that often relies heavily on theory and data, meeting people in person and conducting interviews and surveys can greatly enhance my understanding in these topics. This has led me to believe I should incorporate these kinds of qualitative field work in my current studies where possible.

(b) Thailand was the first Southeast Asian country I have visited and thus a different overseas experience compared other Asian countries I have visited. It was important for me to see first-hand the differences in experienced reality on the ground. Numbers and data are one thing, but seeing first-hand how people live and in what condition, to what extent it appears people enjoy their life, how people treat those around them, the apparent gaps in well-being of different members of society, et cetera was enriching. On a different note, interacting with Thai people and enjoying the local cuisine was fabulous.

(c) All the lectures were fascinating in their own right. While many did not exactly coincide with my current research, I was able to make connections to the talks with my current research, and they dealt with topics that I will likely study more in the future. For me, the talk at UNIDO was particularly exceptional. Additionally, the student workshop was both insightful and motivational, as it not only provided ideas and construction criticism regarding my research, but also reminded me how much more I need to study.

(d) I am attending graduate school with the hopes that it will give me the knowledge and opportunity to one day help make a positive impact on those around me, and particularly on marginalized people and groups around the world. The trip gave me clear acumen on means through which I can maybe accomplish this goal. In particular, the trip made it clear to me that working in the UN, though it is a large international and bureaucratic organization that is often criticized for its ineffectiveness, is actually one viable path for me to help make a difference in development and well-being of peoples around the globe. Also, before the trip, I had never even considered working for or creating an NGO,

but this trip made it clear to me that this could be a viable means through which I can achieve my goals in the future. In particular, insight into this process and the effect one can have on people, communities and policy through NGOs was made clear through visiting the Khao Kwan Foundation and GreenNet.

In short the trip was not only incredibly enjoyable, but also incredibly insightful, and I am grateful I was given the opportunity to participate. I sincerely look forward to the possibility of joining similar trips around the world in the future.