

**Report on Participation in International Graduate Programme for
East Asia Sustainable Economic Development Studies - Field Research in East Asia**

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The outcome of the field trip in Thailand was very fruitful. During the field trip, it provided me with in-depth understanding for experiencing and observing business development in Thailand from many perspectives (other than the viewpoint from a tourist). As Thailand overcomes the financial crisis and strives for the economic development, I can sense that the topic of sustainability plays a critical role in the future agenda of Thailand. Through the various field trips, I was allowed to further reflect on the topic of sustainability and summarized my key takeaway: to ensure the success of sustainable development, we will need to consider three aspects thoroughly: a) Long-term vision, b) Indigenous know-how, and c) Institutional support.

- a. Long-term vision: With the gradual awareness of limited resources available, people and societies start to understand that we cannot sacrifice long-term benefits for short-term profits. One of the field trips to the Royal Project Development Center in Nong Hoi provided a great example to explain why. The Center was initiated in 1984 with the aim of eradicating the problems of opium poppies and shift cultivation in the area. Through the introduction of technology and agricultural training to the hill tribe farmers, the result was promising. It not only replaced opium poppies successfully but also improved the living standards of the hill tribe people in the area covering five villages of lowlands. I was impressed by the long-term vision set by the foundation, which nowadays has further achieved milestones of vegetable research, occupation promotion, social contribution, and environmental awareness. With its successful transformation, Thailand can get rid of the bad image of planting opium poppies and benefit the whole society well-being in larger magnitude. Without a long-term vision and relentless efforts from all stakeholders, achieving sustainable development will not be possible.
- b. Indigenous know-how: We can be much better off if we know what we knew. I think it is true if we could apply it to the topic of sustainability. In one of the field trips, we visited the Department of International Trade Promotion, which exemplified various Thailand and ASEAN ways of leveraging indigenous knowledge or local resources to make innovative products, ranging from furniture, fashion products, home appliances, and equipment. I was not only amazed by the beauty of design but also touched by the manner of integrating local know-how or material into industrial products in a natural and nuanced way. We visited local farms, such as the Granmonte vineyard and Harmony life organic farm, to further understand how farms could be transformed by applying advanced technology combined with a local adaptation to maximize the output and increase process efficiency while keeping a good balance with nature. Therefore, I believe that the whole society can benefit from one other if we could build a more open and transparent platform for information exchange. I also believe society needs to shift the mindset from a simply one-size-fit-for-all thinking to the way of respecting indigenous know-how.
- c. Institutional support: Any good initiative cannot be sustained without adequate and systematic institutional support. For example, today, as there are more pressing issues needed to be resolved jointly at the cross-

country level, such as poverty reduction, clean energy usage, and gender equality, a trusted institution is vital for conducting activities, such as to analyze the status-quo, develop concrete plans, reinforce agreed actions, monitor processes and ensure outcomes. Thus, the United Nations plays a significant role in dealing with mentioned global matters. During the trip, I learned about the details of the United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO) and the Economic and Social Commissions for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). It showcased many on-going projects, such as Thailand's industrial energy efficiency, greening industry through low carbon technology, addressing the critical points faced in Thailand and ASEAN regions. In addition, academia can provide input to the topic. Two workshops held at Chiang Mai University and Chulalongkorn University served as an ideal platform to exchange thoughts intellectually and broaden everyone's understanding of the topic. In short, to sustain an initiative and make an impact at global scale, I think a systematic support by neutral institutions is needed for helping facilitate constructive discussions, orchestrate concrete actions and sustain the outcome in an efficient and effective approach.

In conclusion, I was satisfied with the outcome of the field trip in Thailand. With in-depth opportunities for experiencing and observing Thailand, I have broadened my view of the topic of sustainability and believe that all stakeholders related to the topic will need to take into consideration these three aspects: long-term vision, indigenous know-how, and institutional support, to ensure the success of sustainable development in future.