

Opportunity for building relationships in Thailand emerged from an accessible tourism internship sponsored by Kenan Institute Asia (<http://www.kiasia.org/web/>) in 2009. Our student, **Ailse O'Neil**, my colleague **Jenny Womack**, MS, OTR/L, SCCMD and I developed a proposal for KIA Asia to support this internship for Ailse in the post-tsunami region of Thailand. We explored the issues and opportunities for inclusive tourism for people with disabilities and older travelers. It was through work in linking economic development interests of Thailand with justice and participation issues for older adults and people with disabilities that the project was supported. The culmination of the project was a workshop for stakeholders in the tourism industry in Phang-Nga province.



Accessibility and family support in Thai culture.

Developing the project and arranging supervision in Thailand for our student was a learning experience that built relationships with leaders in the Thailand Ministry of Health, Mahidol University and Chiang Mai University. Suchada, OT, Deputy Minister of Mental Health, generously offered her time and supervision for our student, and hosted me during my visit in July. Khun Suchada has been a leader in the WFOT and currently serves on the WFOT Executive Committee as Coordinator for International Connections.



With Suchada Sakornsatian, OT
WFOT Coordinator of International Connections



Evening out in Pattaya with our friend Nui



In Bangkok with Executive Director, Richard Bernhard, and Paul Wedel, President of KIASia (wearing OT hats!)



UN in Bangkok: Aise and I were invited observers for an Accessible Tourism meeting held by Aiko Akayama, Social Officer for the United Nations Economic and Social Commission- Asia Pacific (UNESCAP)



Training workshop for Accessible Tourism- Pattaya - 7/16-17/2009
(Thailand office of Tourism and Sports& Redemptorist Center)



Accessibility Assessment in Thailand





KIAsia Inclusive Tourism Workshop in Phang-nga 7/28/09

Ailse O'Neill, OTS did an amazing job of networking and taking the lead in organizing this workshop together with few resources.



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Suchada Sakornsatian moderating discussion on Phang-nga as an accessible tourist destination.



Ailse O'Neill presenting at workshop



Nakorn and Saowalak



Group of workshop attendees who stayed after the workshop: Sarun Rongrueangkul (Bann Khaolak); Wanpen Lungkasith (Professional Tourist Guide Association of Thailand-PGAT), Pimolrat Patrapotikul, PGAT, Ailse O'Neill (UNC OT student/KIASia Intern), Owner of Princess Village Wife of Khun Mai, Sue Coppola, (OT, UNC) Khun Mai (Owner Princess Village), Aiko Akiyama (United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific), Suchada Sakornsatian (OT, Ministry of Public Health); Saowalak Thongkuay-seated (Disabilities Peoples International – Asia Pacific), Kobkul Pitarachart (Office of Tourism Development), Maria Karagiozakis, DPI-AP; Daughter of Khun Mai (Princess Village); Hotel Representative (Ramada KhaolLak in pink); Representative from Phang-nga tourism office(hidden); Two representatives of Dr. Wachara Riewpaiboon (Institute of Health Promotion of Persons with Disabilities, Ministry of Health); Nakorn Amornwatpong (Kenan Institute Asia), Representative of the Phang-nga social service office.

Experiencing Thailand with in-person meetings has given me opportunities to explore and develop mutually beneficial relationships for future collaboration and research. In the multi-sector partnership of accessible tourism, economic interests align with social justice issues of inclusion. The UNC Associate-Provost funded my travel to Thailand from July 16-August 2, 2009 to work on the project.

Future Plan:

We are working to create UNC OT student fieldworks in Inclusive tourism for 2010, in Phang-Nga and in Chiang Mai. Faculty from Chiang Mai University are interested in the project and have agreed to supervise our student in 2010. We are working to plan the southern Thailand fieldwork. Suchada has discussed having a meeting on inclusive tourism during the WFOT conference in Chile. We are encouraged to continue the collaboration in this area by leaders at DPI-AP, and our colleagues in the Professional Tour Guide Association of Thailand as well as the Ministry of Tourism and Sports.



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