

Title: Evaluating women's empowerment in rural tourism through economic and social dimensions (A case study of Kampung Sungai Sireh, Tanjung Karang, Selangor)

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Year: May 2006

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Abstract:

Rural tourism and its development can bring impacts to the whole community members including women. The changes in economic and social are expected when there are some tourism programs and activities in the area. In Malaysia, women's groups considered as a 'backbone' and supported actively in organizing and running the rural tourism activities. The greatest challenge in the future is to ensure that women are not just consulted, but listened to, when deciding whether to pursue rural tourism development and how to pursue the development. As such, the involvement and participation of women not only as a step for them to achieve broader goals, but also could result in empowerment for them in the community as a potential outcome. This paper evaluated women's empowerment in rural tourism through economic and social dimensions in Kampung Sungai Sireh, Tanjung Karang. Empowerment is defined as a person's capacity to make effective choices and the capacity to transform these choices into desired actions and outcomes (World Bank, 2005). Empowerment herein is also taken to be 'a process by which people acquire the ability to act in ways to control their lives' (Staudt, 1990). This definition covers different aspects of empowerment; economic, social, psychological and political. In collecting the data for this study, Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) method was used, which involved a way of crosschecking and building up a picture of local situation; direct observations, semi-structured interviews as well as make full use of existing written materials. This study relies on two techniques which are quantitative information obtained through the use of a pre-designed questionnaire and qualitative technique that relies on extracting information from the key informants, the women who participated in rural tourism by being with them, joining with them and talking to a whole range of people related to the activities. The result of this study showed that women who participated in rural tourism Programme in Kampung Sungai Sireh had moderate level of empowerment in economic dimension, but highly empowered in social dimension. Some recommendations to improve the level of economic empowerment were developed for

future consideration. Based on the analysis of the study, there are also some elements or factors that can be contributed as a flexible model in empowering women in rural area.