

**Local Residents' Perception on the Impacts of Ecotourism Development in the Wolong
Nature Reserve, China**

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The Wolong Nature Reserve has been severely damaged by the Wen Chuen Earthquake in 2008. The earthquake not only destroyed the habitat of the Giant Panda, it has seriously affected the livelihood of local residents particularly those relied on the tourism industry. This study aimed to investigate the attitudes of local residents towards the ecotourism development in the Wolong Nature Reserve. Questionnaire survey has been conducted to glean the views from the local residents. Altogether 217 responses have been collected from two major towns within the Wolong Nature Reserve. Principal component analysis (PCA) was used to categorize the 16 impact items, which were listed in the questionnaire, into four major impacts namely positive impacts (PI), negative living environmental impacts (NLEI), negative social impacts (NSI), and negative economic impacts (NEI). Local residents' willingness to participate (WTP) in the ecotourism development has also been investigated and positive association was reported between WTP and PI and NEI indicating that the residents with greater WTP concerned more on the PI and NEI than their counterparts. Beside, the residents who claimed that they have had serious losses in the earthquake indicated more positive attitude towards the ecotourism development. The findings suggested that local residents in the Wolong Nature Reserve are desperate to have the re-development of tourism industry and they have had an optimistic attitude towards the ecotourism development in the near future. However, they may possibly have expected too much on the development that could bring them enormous benefits and neglected those potential negative social, economic and environmental impacts. It would be dangerous if local residents are overly optimistic to the tourism development that may result of

irreversible damages to the invaluable natural environment due to excessive tourism development.

Keywords: Ecotourism; tourism impacts; residents' attitude; willingness to participate; Wolong Nature Reserve