



Kalasin, a landlocked province

nestled in the heart of Isaan, stands as one of the region's twenty provinces. While the broader Isaan economy has seen a boom in recent years, this prosperity has predominantly centered on the "Northeastern Economic Corridor" (NeEC) provinces—Nakhon Ratchasima, Khon Kaen, Udon Thani, and Nong Khai—driven by future high-speed rail initiatives and growth within major provincial capitals. The economic benefits, however, have largely bypassed Isaan's local sub-districts and villages. Among Isaan's provinces, Kalasin has notably one of the lowest economical GPP growth rate and a limited industrial base. Its only foreign investment is a plant from an American company (Ingredion Co. Ltd) producing starch for the food industry. The Thai company Mitr Phol Group is also operating a big sugar cane plant in the province. Crucially, Kalasin lacks essential infrastructure such as an airport, railway, or motorways.

Our workshop is specifically situated in Baan Suan Khok, a village that borders Baan Moei, both part of the Dongling sub-district in Kamalasai district. These two villages are home to 460 houses and 2,538 registered residents. The vast majority of family income is derived from rice cultivation. To supplement their earnings, many women engage in freelance sewing jobs for garment traders in Bangkok, while men often secure part-time construction work locally. A handful of families also run small convenience stores within the villages. For more stable employment, roughly ten villagers undertake a daily 30-kilometer bus commute to a big local garment factory in the adjacent province of Roi Et.

The Dongling sub-district itself has a population of around 10,000. Its primary retail businesses are construction DIY stores, which can provide jobs for 20 to 30 individuals. Kamalasai city, the district's administrative center, is an 11-kilometer drive and offers employment opportunities for a few people in government offices and various local shops. There are no industrial factories within the district of Kamalasai.

