

Rural poverty alleviation: A case study of village sustainable development

Thailand

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Wunchai Satjabanpot, Secretary General
 Thai Agribusiness Development Association (TADA). Department of Agricultural Extension
 Email: agribiz010@gmail.com



Quick facts

Zone	6 northeastern provinces
Time Frame	2006 to 2009
Topic	Sustainable development for poverty alleviation and food security
Implementing Agency	Food and Agriculture Organization and the Thai Ministry of Agriculture

Background

Thailand's northeast is still marked by a comparatively lower quality of life and higher levels of poverty than other regions, in part due to a scarcity of natural resources and low agricultural productivity. From 2006–2009, the FAO and the Thai Ministry of Agriculture launched a technical cooperation project with the aim of alleviating poverty and increasing food security in the northeast at the village level on a sustainability basis. The project was implemented in six villages across three northeastern provinces: Nakhonphanom, Mahasarakham and Sisaket. Project activities were planned using the participatory rural appraisal (PRA) method and included: i) tackling the constraints of flooding, drought and low soil fertility; ii) building the capacity of the rural population; and iii) addressing the unsustainable use of natural resources, particularly forest and irrigation water.

Project activities and outputs

Each of the participating provinces implemented the project after having developed their operational plans in late November 2006. The project started with community meetings to introduce the project, select participants in each project activity, and coordinate with concerned agencies and other stakeholders for the provision of additional support and technical knowledge to run each project activity. The meetings were to be undertaken in conjunction with the agricultural preparations for the next monsoon season, and were scheduled from April 2007 onwards. Activities undertaken were as follows:

Nakhonphanom

- *Baan Aung*: production and utilization of organic compost; fodder cultivation; and food processing from fish.
- *Baan Thaboe*: organic liquid fertilizer production; cattle breed improvement; and fish products processing

Mahasarakham

- *Baan Lumpuk*: water quality improvement for agriculture; animal husbandry for supplementary income generation; and organic fertilizer promotion
- *Baan Taku*: agricultural product processing and packaging improvement; animal husbandry; irrigation system improvement; organic fertilizer promotion; and knowledge sharing between the target villages

Srisaket

- *Baan Hongkha*: dredging of community water source (Huaikung); agricultural product processing after harvesting; and community forest conservation
- *Baan Mieng*: dredging of public water source; promotion of cost-efficient cultivation methods; agricultural products processing after harvesting; and community forest conservation.



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Additional supportive project activities

The local administration bodies at different levels have also supported the project as requested by the local population in the project areas via PRA outputs in the following ways:

Nakhonphanom

Baan Aung

- (1) traditional cloth weaving
- (2) native forest and community food bank
- (3) fish cultivation in public pond (Nongsim)
- (4) artesian well construction with budget of 155,750 Thai Baht

Baan Thaboe

- (1) construction of artesian well
- (2) native forest and community food bank
- (3) community learning center

Maharakham

Baan Lumpuk

- (1) community learning center
- (2) vegetable and fish cultivation for self-sufficient economy
- (3) community reforestation and wood utilization
- (4) introduction of good rice varieties
- (5) bamboo cultivation for basket weaving

Baan Taku

- (1) community learning center
- (2) vegetable and fish cultivation for self-sufficient economy
- (3) community reforestation and wood utilization
- (4) black sesame cultivation for supplementary income earning
- (5) packaging improvement in farm housewife group
- (6) introduction of good rice varieties

Srisaket

Baan Mieng

- (1) shallow well construction for 30 wells
- (2) construction of nursery for mushroom cultivation
- (3) promotion of bio fertilizer production

Baan Hongkha

- (1) promotion of organic fertilizer production

Qualitative Outcomes

It can be concluded that the manner in which this pilot project was launched, based on a participatory approach at all levels, has had clear and positive implications for the project implementation. At the local level where the actual target groups are based, the participants have expressed that they have been able to tackle real community needs using sustainable methods which were learned in the programme. It is also clear that the opportunities extended to participants to create their own tools, including project activities and implementation mechanisms, gave participants a valuable sense of community ownership over the project.

Prior to the poverty alleviation and food security program, it should be noted that each target village that had previously been identified as having little community awareness or engagement, with the exception of a few village leaders. With the launch of this project, the villagers were encouraged to fully take part in identification of problems and the formulation of activity planning. Moreover, they were asked to run the activities based upon decisions made by their peer groups, to follow-up on progress made, and to decide on whether to replicate or adjust the project based on their own experiences and judgment. It should also be noted that each target group established and utilized revolving funds both for production-cost investment and social welfare, for instance, contributions to school lunch programmes.

Above all, the project trained rural communities in the efficient use of natural resources such as soil and water for their professional and private lives. Since its initiation, the governors of the three provinces have expressed their commitment to replicate the project idea and modality within other at least one village in every district, through which existing resources and previous efforts and experiences will be built upon.