Community Development Administration: A Case Study of Ban Khuan Mak’s Community Organizations in Tambon Wang Yai, Thepha District, Songkhla Province, Thailand

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Abstract

This article focuses on the development administration of community organizations of Ban Khuan Mak Community, Tambon Wang Yai, Thepha District, Songkhla Province. The data of this qualitative study were collected through in-depth interviews, focus group discussions, and participatory observations. The results of the study revealed that there were two types of community groupings: an occupational investment group, and public interest activities group. These community organizations were important in strengthening and developing the community. Most families were members of several organizations. The organizational management was carried out by a committee whose members were elected in an annual general meeting. The committee managed the organization, set rules and regulations, criteria, and organizational structure assigning responsibility to systematically and clearly frame the operation of the organization. There were learning promotion and cooperation expansion in order to increase the organizational potential continuously. The community organizations appointed auditors to follow-up and evaluate their operation and performance, and report the results at the monthly meeting for improvement of the organizations. In addition to this, representatives of each organization also reported them again at the village meeting so that members of the community could ask questions or suggest solutions to problems.

The changes taking place after people in the community formed themselves in the groups were that the living condition in each household was improved, and they had good occupations and income resulting in the improved overall economy of the community. Moreover, the groupings resulted in people’s love for their community, and there was more unity and cooperation among themselves in solving problems and developing their community which further strengthened the community in a sustainable way. The factors that made the organizations successful were the leaders and members of the community who played an important role in driving the organizational operation, in addition to support from related governmental, private, and local agencies. However, the economic condition that had effects on marketing and investment was a problem and obstacle to the groupings in the community.

Keywords: administration, community development, community organization, strong community
Background

The economic crisis in Thailand that began towards the end of 1996 affected people in all social sectors and that was when a strong community was raised as an important alternative for development. Government and private sectors had to join hands to solve the problems placing emphasis on the process of people-centered development and strong communities. According to the concepts of Seri Phongphit (2008), a strong community refers to a community where people show their potential by gathering together with unity, caring, and helping each other without discrimination but with public mind and public conscience in solving problems arising in the community to make the community self-reliable with dignity; the community is ready to learn, not waiting for help from the government or outside but helping each other to find ways out of the problem and try to develop the community’s own potential, can freely make its own decisions with data and knowledge that it has sought, manage its fund efficiently; people participated in decision-making, and its operations are for benefit of the community. Samphan Techa-athik (1997) claims that what reflects strength of a community is community organizations which are mechanisms that are driving forces for development with four major components: ideology, goal, objectives that together are beneficial for members and the community; important human resources consisting of leaders and members; good administration and management; and activities and resources that are capital and budgets. This corresponds with Thiraphong Kaewhawong’s concepts (2011) that states that suitable organizational management can result in activities and cooperation, and good resource management so that they can be used in carrying out activities continuously.

In addition to this, there are other important components which are: 1. human capital referring to the ability of the leaders and members, and the increasing number of members; 2. the quantity and quality of activity; 3. the increasing quantity and quality of object capital and natural environment that are sustainable; 4. friend/network capital that depends on each other, and network expansion to increase organizational potential; and 5. the status of the community organization (Kanchana Kaewthep, 1997). It can be said that how strong the community is depends on how strong community organizations are.

Ban Khuan Mak, Tambon Wang Yai, Thepha District, Songkhla Province is a village in the administrative district of Thepha District which has been designated as a risk area in the four districts of Songkhla Province which is one of the southern border provinces where the violent unrest situation takes place. Moreover, development of the country has
economically and socially affected the way of life of people living this community. Thus, people in the community have to join hands in solving the problems using the capitals available in the community such as natural resources, culture, knowledge, wisdom, and spirit. As people solve problems together, relationships take place and as a result they have formed groups and set up organizations to promote their occupations, investments and savings. Some groups held activities for benefits of the community in various aspects such as health, safety in life and property, etc. This type of gathering activities was truly for self-reliance of people in the community. Therefore, these community organizations were all important in strengthening and developing the community. The organizations are managed in such a way that benefit their members and the community as a whole, and hence, are recognized by the inside and outside of the community as evidenced by many awards the community, its leaders, and community organizations have received. For this study, the researcher has selected three main organizations that have been successful in their operations and are recognized by the inside and outside communities, namely, Khuan Mak Phatthana Rubber Fund Cooperative, Ltd., Ban Khuan Mak Village Fund, and Ban Khun Mak Savings Group for Production. The awards that are evidence of their potential are as follows: In 2009, Khuan Mak Phatthana Rubber Fund Cooperative, Ltd. won the National Outstanding Cooperative in the category of rubber producers, and in the same year, Ban Khuan Mak Village Fund was chosen the Outstanding Village Fund at the district level. Then in 2011, Ban Khun Mak Savings Group for Production won the first prize at the district level, and the first runner-up prize in the category of savings groups for production at the provincial level.

The above-mentioned phenomena are interesting and, thus, the researcher decided to study the development administration of Ban Khuan Mak community organizations that have strengthened the community. It is expected that the results of the study could be applied as guidelines for community development administration that would benefit community members and the community that would result in a strong and sustainable community.

**Objective**

To investigate community development administration.

**Research Methodology**

The study of community development administration were conducted with the following methodology.
1. Study area selection

Three main organizations were selected for the study: Khuan Mak Phatthana Rubber Fund Cooperative, Ltd., Ban Khuan Mak Village Fund, and Ban Khun Mak Savings Group for Production. The reasons for the area selection were that these three organizations had good management and administration, had been successful and had potential that resulted in the strength and recognition of the community that had been accepted by the inside and outside of the community.

2. Target informants selection

To obtain the results that correspond with the purposes of the study, the informants selected for the study consisted of: four key informants who were community leaders who were trusted and recognized by people in the community in addition to their being dedicated, and able to be representatives of the community in carrying out activities, and three secondary informants who were people playing important roles in the community.

3. Data collection

The researcher studied related documents and research reports in order to use the data in writing guidelines for in-depth interviews, focus group discussion, and participation in community activities.

4. Research instruments

4.1 In-depth interviews conducted according to the guidelines written from data obtained from reviewing related literatures in order to make the interviews incongruent with the purposes of the study.

4.2 Focus group discussions were conducted to collect data from the interactions, discussions and opinions in order to get correct and credible data.

4.3 Participatory observations were carried out by the researcher taking part in community activities and observing behavior and collecting data for analysis in order to answer research questions.

5. Data analysis

Content analysis was conducted in which data obtained from related documents and research, and data from the field, the surveys, observations, in-depth interviews, and focus group discussions were classified according to the study topics, screened, checked, analyzed, interpreted and concluded. Then the results were written descriptively.
Findings

The strength of the community resulted from people in the community gathered into groups, clubs, cooperatives and other types of organizations. They learned, managed, and solved problems together to make change and economic, social, cultural, and environmental development in the community. The strength of the community depended on how much potential the community organizations had. The results of the study on community organizations of Ban Kuan Mak Community were as follows:

1. Types of groupings

The gathering of people in Ban Khuan Mak Community could be classified into two types of groupings: 1. The group that promoted occupations and investments in the community consisting of Khuan Mak Phatthana Rubber Fund Cooperative, Ltd., Ban Khuan Mak Village Fund, and Ban Khun Mak Savings Group for Production, Long Gong Classifying Center, Community Drinking Water Plant, and Women’s Center, and 2. The group that did activities for benefits of the community consisting of Public Health Volunteers (PHV), a Youth Group, an Elderly Group, Village Security Keeping Group, and Community Social Workers Group. These community organizations played an important role in strengthening and developing the community. The study found that most households became members of various organizations because they wanted to increase the income of their families and to participate in activities of the community. Some parts of the interviews were as follows:

“...the objectives of the Million Baht Fund are to enable members to have some savings, to help the underprivileged in the community to have capital to invest and increase their income, to reduce expenses of people in the community, to allocate fund with other organizations to do public activities for the benefits of the community...”

(Manot Intharasan, interviewed on March 25, 2010)

“...the objectives of our group are to enable people in the community to have savings, to have money to deposit (in a bank), and to provide welfare for our group members...”

(Rit Thongpenphet, interviewed on March 25, 2010)
The interviews revealed that the objectives for people in the community gathering into groups were to help and to be self-reliant; to improve members’ living condition, to provide occupations and incomes as well as welfare to members.

2. **Organizational management and administration**

The community organizations of Ban Khuan Mak Community designated the role and structure of the organizations as their operational framework so that they could carry on according to their objectives for the benefits of their members. They had a work plan for the following year for organizational development. However, the strength of the organizations depended on suitable management, dedicated and determined committee members and their ability to manage the organization.

3. **Learning promotion and cooperation expansion to increase organizational potential**

Learning promotion was another factor that increased community organizational potential so as to improve their efficiency. Receiving the skills and experiences from knowledgeable people and experts was to increase knowledge that could result in ideas and ability to solve problems. Knowledge and experience received could be applied to create various useful activities for the people themselves and the community.

“Every community organization always promotes learning, for example, by taking committees or committee members to pay study visits to other organizations that are different. We can apply their good points and take their bad points as things to avoid, and we can improve ours…”

(Roon Chomani, interviewed on March 20, 2012)

“...The Rubber Fund Cooperative takes its committees and members on a study visit every year to other rubber associations and other agricultural occupation groups. The organization also invites speakers who are knowledgeable and expert in vocations to give talks and advice to members…”

(Chalermphon Sutthisawang, interviewed on February 22, 2012)

The interviews reflected the organizations as seeing the importance of human resource development as humans are an important driving force for the organizations. Human resource development also contributes to the expansion of network cooperation and knowledge exchange for improvement of organizational performance.
4. Follow-up and evaluation

The follow-up and evaluation of each organization in Ban Khuan Mak Community were carried out by auditors who were appointed to audit the activities of each organization and report at the monthly meeting where reports were made by the management and administration. If there were any problems or mistakes, they would help each other to find solutions, as can be seen in the following interview:

“...responsible for auditing the Rubber Fund Cooperative’s business...I am happy that I’m trusted by members to take part in the follow-up, auditing and evaluation which give the cooperative transparency and correctness to keep members’ benefits as the first priority...”


After the monthly meeting, representatives of each organization reported the organizational performance again in the village meeting so that members knew the organizational performance and if they had any questions they could also ask as well as give suggestions for improvement. All members could express their opinions as said by Mr. Roon Chomanee:

“...Village meetings are good because we can help find solutions to any problems that arise as every organization is at the meeting to report the organizational performance and if any problems arise, we can help each other find solutions in time so that problems do not accumulate...Every village has problems but if without regular meetings, or without explanation or without understanding, problems can accumulate. Our village has a monthly meeting regularly which lets us know what’s happening and there is no problem accumulation; problems are solved timely...”

5. Community change after the groupings taking place

The gathering into different organizations in the community resulted in development and change in quality and way of life of people in the community as can be seen in the following interviews.

“...The community organizations have changed the living condition of their members for the better. I’m also a member and an advisor for several organizations. Like the rubber cooperative, the rubber latex we take to the coop everyday is processed into
smoked sheets that can be sold at a higher price. The coop is also reliable and transparent; it’s accountable so we don’t have to worry as when we sold rubber latex to some individual traders outside…”

(Thonglo Chanthit, interviewed on November 10, 2011)

“…As the economy of each family is better, it affects the community as a whole. Each organization not only provides dividends to members but also allocates budget as public fund for the community. The fund is used as development fund, scholarships for students who are children of organization members, etc. People in the community have better livelihood. People participate in community activities held by organizations. In the past some of them never took part in any activity but now they take part in activities and help each other...

(Roon Chomanee, interviewed on March 20, 2012)

The interviews showed that there were changes in the community after people gathering in groupings which economically benefited the individual family as well as the community as a whole. The groupings into organizations also tightened relationships among people who had become more united because the gathering resulted in mental relationship making people want to help and share continuously in their community.

6. Factors contributing to success in groupings

Why the community organizations were successful could be classified into two factors. Internal factors which were important components, namely, leaders or operational committees and organizational members as evidenced in the following interviews:

“…The village headman and organizational leaders are representatives and play an important role in making the group successful. Good leaders are good role model for members; they are honest, dedicated, and recognized across our village. Our village headman, for example, is a good role model for us; we see what and how he does things and we follow…”

(Thonglo Chanthit, interviewed on November 10, 2011)

“When members are concerned with the cooperative and feel that they are owners, they give good cooperation in organizational development…”
“...Members play an important role in making a success for the organization. If every member sees the importance of the joint benefits, they will help support the group to make it successful with its potential...”

(Roon Chomanee, interviewed on March 20, 2012)

In addition to organizational members and leaders, the other factors that contributed to the success of the organizations were external factors consisting of support from related agencies, namely, government agencies, private agencies, and local agencies as well as networks. The support was in the form of budget, academic knowledge, and experiences that could be used in practice like public relations, marketing and investment. For example, Khuan Mak Phatthana Rubber Fund Cooperative, Ltd. sold and bought rubber according to the reference prices provided by the Office of the Central Rubber Market, Songkhla Province; and Ban Khuan Mak Village Fund, and Ban Khun Mak Savings Group for Production used the capital circulation in providing loans for their members.

7. Problems and obstacles to the groupings

The study found that the problems and obstacles to the groupings of the community organizations were as follows:

1. The economic situation of the country as a whole affected the marketing and investments of the organizations, especially, the cooperatives that had to face the high cost of investment in rubber business while the selling price was low.

2. Members of the Village Fund and the Savings Cooperative postponed paying their debts or asked for extension for payment of their debts which affected the capital circulation.

Discussions

The gatherings or groupings of Ban Khuan Mak Community were gatherings of community members by setting up groups in the community to manage and solve problems of people in the community. The researcher sees them as congruence with the concepts of Prawet Wasi (1998) and the National Economic and Social Development Board (2001) in stating that strong communities affect the country development that begins by using the
strong points of the society and the existing social capitals, especially the community that can gather into groups that are important social capitals. These groups can strengthen the community to be able to solve problems by itself, and as a result the groups become organizations with continuous learning, management, and problem solving that members take part in. Groups that care for each other can empower members in solving problems and creating good things. Community organizations that are formed by the needs of people in the community who want to help each other have a management process that is accountable, and people can participate in decision making and problem solving. The strength of Ban Khuan Mak Community is a result of people in the community gathering into groups that have good management, and consequently, learning and development take place among members of the community who have organizational leaders and community leaders as their representatives in coordinating and linking with networks from inside to outside the community. This corresponds with the study by Uraiwan Saichai (2002) which found that strong community organizations resulted from many factors such as villagers participating in thinking, doing, and planning for the organizations to be set up because villagers saw the importance of the organization in making the community strong. The community was successful in getting into groups because members and leaders played an important role in management and participate in all aspects. This is in line with a study by Chandet Charoenwiriyakul (2003) who studied local leaders and strength of rural communities and found that leaders had to make efforts in making the group successful and strong. If the group leaders lacked efforts when faced with problems, and were discouraged when having obstacles, the group would be inefficient. Moreover, group leaders had to allow group members to express their opinions and participate in making decisions which empowered members to make them feel part of the organization.

Recommendations

1.1 The study found that human resource development was an important factor for driving community organizations to be with efficiency that resulted in a strong community as a whole. Having good leaders who were competent in management as well as member participation were crucial in making the organization developed and efficient. Therefore, learning promotion is another important way to increase skills, knowledge, and ability through doing activities, study visits, and training. In addition to this, it is a way to expand
networks that will result in knowledge exchange, and such knowledge and ideas can be applied to improve potential of the organization.

1.2 Strong organizations develop continuously and result in a sustainable strong community. Good management and administration are important in making organizations efficient, and therefore, opportunities should be given to youth or people in the community to learn about the management and administration in order to carry on the intentions and to build a new generation of leaders who will be part of the organizational development so as to have organizations that are with potential and sustainable strength.

References


Interviews
