

Cooperative Movement Development in Yasothon Province

Project

Abstract

The project of Cooperative Movement Development in Yasothon is the action research aiming at creating the network of the alliance of the people organizations, including the cooperative organizations, in Yasothon. One of the major objectives of the study is for human and organization development to enhance the poverty mitigation within the province. The networking of the groups, organizations, and the cooperatives through the mutual learning process of the leaders of these organizations had been employed. The study adopted the concept of participation action research (PAR) and the focus group discussion among the three main groups of people i.e. the leaders of the local people organizations, the officers of the supporting organizations, and the research team members so that they might simultaneously learn together. The research team would play the role of facilitators in providing the forum for the discussion and it was expected that the supporting organizations might continue the support even by the time of the project termination.

The project duration was one year and it was splitted into 5 phases. The first phase was for collecting the data and information relating the operation of the groups and organizations concerned. The second phase was for synthesizing for the framework of development of alliance network. The third phase was for creating the alliance networks for development which were the models for quality improvement of the network for the groups and the cooperatives. The fourth phase was for further expansion of the networks. The fifth phase was for project evaluation, writing-up, and research report preparation.

The findings of this research project was that within Yasothon province even before this project there were already several groups, organizations, and cooperatives, for example, agricultural cooperatives at the district level, farmer associations, also at the district level. There were a number of the occupational groups being promoted by the Provincial Agricultural Office, Provincial Community Development Office. There were other promoting organizations for development such as Social Investment Fund (SIF), Institute for Community Development Organizations (Public Organization) , as well as other social grouping within the villages. Besides

the individual organizations, there were some networking organizations mainly for the organization of similar occupations.

The outcome of this research project was the opening the forum for situation analysis of 59 organizations of groups, organization, and cooperatives. The leaders of these various organization had a chance for analyzing the local situation, the SWOT analysis of their own organizations. This type of meetings made them have more understanding the strength, weakness, opportunity, and threat of their own organization. Besides, they could have the opportunity to know which groups they could join as the network.

At the provincial level, there were 4 networks of the local organizations 1) Farm network (farmer groups, agricultural cooperatives, livestock raiser groups etc.) 2) Occupation network (housewife groups, agro-processing groups etc. 3) Saving group network (saving groups, saving cooperatives) 4) Environmental conservation network, which was the additional network from what had been done for Khon Kaen since in Yasothon there were a lot of community forests and water resources. This was based on the conviction that the poverty alleviation was much related to the natural resource base. From the provincial strategic plan, the proposed projects under this research study was in line with those of the province but those of the provincial administration there were more on the water resource projects.

During the early meetings of the network leaders of 11 groups, there was a plan for joint activities, however, no actual activity was carried out. Therefore, some more meetings were organized for a deeper understanding and gaining more trust for all the participants and in addition to the meetings some field trips to the members' projects were organized which could strengthen the solidarity among the members. Some Tambon Administration Organizations (TAO) hosted the meeting and the implementation of the project, for example, the community forest conservation projects. In each network there were several meetings for the strategic planning. Each group member had more appreciation of the value of networking.

In addition to this the researchers of the team proposed the conservation group for aquatic animals particularly along the Chi river in front of Sri Thammaram Temple, and the establishment of community forestry of Ban Kam Laem village, Kam Kuen Kaew District within the environmental conservation network.

Later when the other meeting of the network at the provincial level was organized, the number of the groups increased from 11 to 16 groups within the 4 networks. The

network committee were nominated and several projects were proposed. These projects would be proposed to the province and Community College of Yasothon for the financial support.

As for the future of these groups, organization, and cooperatives, they should be organized as a network for the alliance which might be for social, academic, and business purposes which might work beyond the boundary of each particular group and cooperative.