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The Development of the Co-operative Movement in 36 Provinces Of Thailand.

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Abstract

This article focuses on the process of network building among groups/organizations and co-operatives. The results of the research project were as expected, that is, the establishment of a network of 300 researchers sharing concepts, skills and experiences for the "Value Network Connection". These researchers have built up a participation process among more than 38,342 leaders of the groups/organizations and co-operatives in their 36 provinces. 117 networks have been established consisting of networks for business, social and academic purposes. Some of these networks' activities have resulted in business opportunities, decreased expenses, and a growth in income and opportunities for network members. A linkage of value networks is regarded as an important strategy for the 2nd Co-operative Development Plan (2007-2011). The value network connecting supply chains of major economic crops and livestock should be extended and developed into a fair-trade system.

El Desarrollo del Movimiento Cooperativo en las 36 Provincias de Tailandia.

The Development of Cooperative Movement in the 36 Provinces in Thailand

Resumen

El objetivo se centra en la construcción de procesos de conexión de red entre grupos/organizaciones y cooperativas. El proceso de

conexión consiste en tres pasos. Primero, hay que preparar el terreno para compartir el conocimiento y comunicar entre grupos/organizaciones y cooperativas sobre valores cooperativos, una red de valores, y el proceso de gestión estratégica. Segundo, es necesario ayudar en el desarrollo de un marco de direcciones y caminos a seguir para grupos/organizaciones y cooperativas que están interesados en la red y sus procesos. Se esperaba que el proceso de participación en la investigación-acción mencionada crearía un "Red de Valores" que funciona de forma colaborativa en el desarrollo del espíritu cooperativo que conecta a personas, organizaciones y procesos de trabajo de modo sistemático. También se esperaba que el compromiso con valores cooperativos generaría eficacia en el funcionamiento de grupos/organizaciones y cooperativas. Con esta fortaleza, grupos/organizaciones podrían jugar papeles activos y desarrollar capacidades para mejorar su nivel de vida y, finalmente, resolver el problema de la pobreza entre sus miembros.

Los resultados del proyecto de investigación fueron los esperados, eso es, el establecimiento de una red de investigación consistiendo en 300 investigadores con conceptos, destrezas, y experiencias en común para la "Conexión de la Red de Valores". Estos investigadores han conseguido construir y fortalecer procesos de participación entre más de 38.342 líderes de grupos/organizaciones y cooperativas en una zona que engloba las 36

provincias. Se establecieron 117 redes tanto para fines empresariales como para fines sociales/locales y académicos. Algunos de las actividades de estas redes han dado lugar a negocios prósperos, recortes de gastos, incrementos de ingresos, y una expansión real de oportunidades para los socios de las redes.

El análisis, dentro del proyecto de investigación, de los efectos de la conexión a la red sobre la resolución de problemas de pobreza demostró el proceso utilizado en los proyectos que consistió en el método de investigación-acción participativa. El método implica que los equipos de investigadores han ayudado a los líderes de los grupos/organizaciones y cooperativas a comprender conceptos y procesos importantes para la resolución del problema de la pobreza. La pobreza bajo estudio puede categorizar se en tres dimensiones: pobreza económica, pobreza de ideas, y pobreza de relaciones. La serie de proyectos ayudará a solventar estos problemas a un nivel profundo, el nivel de causas. Mediante el proceso "Unir Manos para la Red de Valores" la cadena de bienes y servicios del sistema social y económico se integrará y resultará en un sistema razonable de comercio y servicios, y de este modo, facilitará una distribución de ingresos justificada y, por fin, una solución al problema de pobreza sistemática.

Las recomendaciones son posibles mediante dos métodos; mediante la creación de vínculos entre redes de valores, lo cual se considera como una estrategia importante para el segundo Plan de Desarrollo Cooperativo (2007-2011); también mediante la extensión de la red de valores para unir cadenas de suministro de los principales cultivos económicos y del ganado, lo cual debería integrarse en el sistema de comercio justo.

Le Développement du Mouvement Coopérative dans 36 Provinces de Thaïlande Résumé

L'objectif de ce projet se concentre envers la création des modes de connexion du réseau parmi les groupes/organisations et les coopératives. Il y a trois étapes pour accomplir cette connexion. Premièrement, il faut arranger les étapes pour échanger des connaissances et de donner les informations aux sujets du valeur coopérative, du réseau de valeur et du processus du gestion

stratégique. La deuxième étape est de aider avec le développement du cadre. C'était prévu que ce processus dans ce recherche va créer un 'Réseau de Valeur'. Ce 'Réseau de Valeur' peut systématiquement connecter les gens et les organisations. C'était aussi prévu que l'engagement du valeur coopérative va être efficace envers les groupes/organisations et les coopératives. Cet effet permettrait ces groupes/organisations et ces coopératives d'avoir des rôles actifs et des capacités pour améliorer leurs statuts de vies et de résoudre les problèmes de pauvreté.

Le résultat des séries du projet était comme prévu. C'est à dire, la création du réseau contenant de 300 chercheurs ayant de même concept, qualité et expérience pour établir un 'Connexion de Réseau de Valeur'. Ces chercheurs ont réussi à développer le mode de participation parmi plus que de 38,342 directeurs du groupes/organisations et du coopératives dans 36 provinces. Il y avait aussi 117 réseaux- réseaux d'affaires, de sociaux/locaux et d'académiques qui sont été établis. Certains de ces activités ont aidé à couronner de succès d'affaires, d'amoinir des frais, d'augmenter le revenue et d'étendre les opportunités réels pour les membres du réseau.

En utilisant la méthode de participation d'actif, le processus du projet était révélé en analysant des effets du connexion de réseau pour trouver la solution envers le problème de pauvreté. La méthode implique que les chercheurs aident les directeurs du groupes/organisations et du coopératives à comprendre les concepts et modes pour résoudre ce problème. La pauvreté peut être catégoriser en 3 dimensions: la pauvreté économique, l'idée pauvreté, et la relation pauvreté. Les séries du projet vont aider à résoudre les causes au niveau de profondeur. En utilisant le mode 'd'Assemblée des Mains pour le Valeur de Réseau', une chaîne de contrat à termes et services dans le système d'économique et social va être relier. Cet lien va créer un système de commerce et de services raisonnable. Ainsi, faciliter la distribution de revenu de juste et de résoudre le systématique problème de pauvreté.

Il y a 2 approches qui sont possible pour ce projet. La première approche considérant comme une stratégie importante pour la Deuxième Plan du Développement Coopérative (2007-2011), est de relier un lien de réseaux de valeurs. La deuxième approche c'est de prolonger le réseau de valeur pour relier les chaînes d'approvisionnements du majeur récoltes économiques et de bétail doive. Ceci doive être développé envers un système de commerce équitable.

Introduction

The Thailand Research Fund (TRF) supports research on co-operatives, under the co-ordination project. In 2002, knowledge on development of the Co-operative Movement and a research project was applied to “The 1st Co-operative Development Plan, 2003-2006.” The plan prescribes a vision for co-operative development to motivate all parties concerned. **It promotes mutual self-help socio-economic organizations, to strongly encourage co-operative values and the linkage of networks in order to develop corporate effectiveness and good governance, and to build sustainable the strength of membership in communities, society and the nation.**

The strategies under the 1st Co-operative Development Plan underline the importance of

cooperation and **linkages of networks** aiming at developing a corporate capacity which will be favourable to the environment of co-operatives and the members' well-being. In addition, the plan emphasizes a campaign on cooperation among registered co-operatives and groups or organizations which have not yet been registered under the Co-operative Society Act, 1999. These groups will support the co-operative values that link them together in networks.

After the Board of National Co-operative Development approved the 1st Co-operative Development Plan in 2003, the TRF financially supported the project to co-ordinate co-operative research on guidelines for the development of mutual self-help groups in nine provinces. Its main purpose was to undertake participatory action research to link a network of registered and un-registered co-operatives in accordance with the vision of the co-operative development plan. The outcome of the research indicated best practices to form a network which was beneficial to cooperation among co-operatives and organizations of the network and their individual members.

Knowledge derived from this research shows the power of cooperation in the form of partnership networks between registered and non-registered co-operatives. This phenomenon is relevant to both business and academia. Furthermore, it generates a knowledge-based society for network members, which will be powerful in developing a framework of visions of group leaders, organizations and co-operatives. This will lead to development of the organizations' capacity to help individual members raise their standard of living, and tackle problems of poverty by co-operation.

In order to formulate a policy to help solve the problems of poverty, the TRF has assigned the Co-operative Academic Institute (CAI) of Kasetsart University to undertake a series of research projects, "the Development of Co-operative Movement for Solving Poverty Problems in 36 Provinces" within the time frame of one year. 36 research teams, form the partnership network of the CAI. They have carried out research under the participative action research program with the advice of the Central

Coordination Team, which supports the provincial research teams.

Each province research team consists of technical experts, co-operative-extension officers, learned country-men, and leaders of mutual self-help groups, organizations and co-operatives. All of them share the same goals and cooperate in development by cultivating co-operative values through groups, organizations and co-operatives that have been united in value networks. These value networks are expected to fulfill the mission of developing a knowledge-based society and business community which will work towards the elimination of poverty, under the cooperation of partnership networks.

Objectives of the research

1. To extend and expand the body of knowledge gained from research on existing registered co-operative in order to promote the development of the co-operative movement in 36 provinces.

2. To search for approaches to the development of cooperation, alliance and network linking among groups/organizations/co-operatives that are in line with the provincial context and take a co-operative approach to poverty eradication
 3. To create networks for scholars, technicians and developers in co-operatives at group/organization and network levels.
- society, financial support and fair trade as well as fair income distribution which will ultimately help to eradicate poverty.

Figure 1 presents the research target areas in 36 provinces. The research process follows three steps. (See **Figure 2**)

Methodology and its outcomes

Developing a conceptual framework for a co-operative movement for poverty eradication is supported by participatory action research. The focus of the research has been on linking group/organization and co-operative leaders through an operation direction framework as a value network. The value network will encourage cooperation among groups/organizations and co-operatives that voluntarily become part of the network to generate economic, social and technical power in the form of a value system. Such a value system would link activities and businesses through supply chains that support a knowledge-based

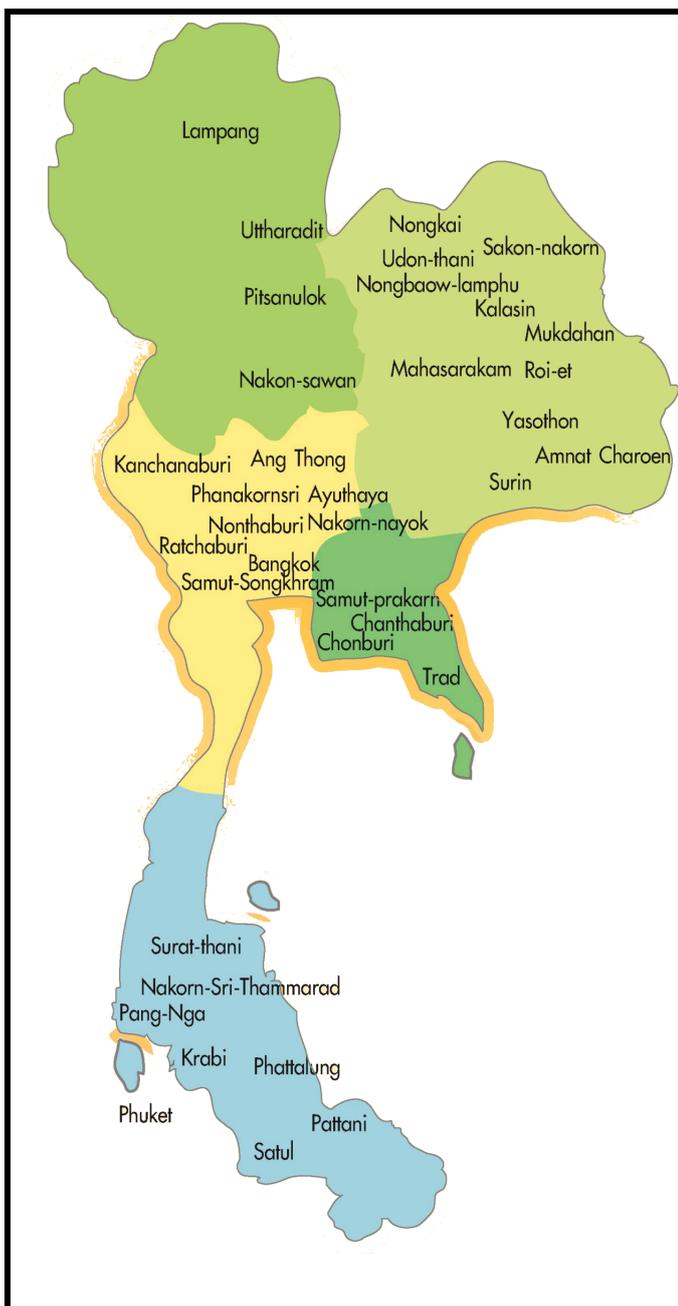


Figure 1: The 36 province research target areas of the project.

1st Step: Organise access to, and build-up of understanding among leaders of mutual self-help groups, organizations and co-operatives via based

line surveys on mutual self-help groups and their existing networks in the provinces. Make provision for forums for the exchange of knowledge and understanding through co-operative values, value networks and progressive management. Ultimately provincial research teams will attempt to persuade group leaders, organizations and co-operatives to take part in the projects.

2nd Step: Assessment of the potential of the groups, organizations and co-operatives which are interested in joining the projects, with the aim of establishing a frameworks and direction for operations, including considerations links between networks.

3rd Step: The provincial research teams, under the support of the Central Coordination Team, encourage and support the groups, organizations and co-operatives to establish, in the context of their respective areas, the appropriate linkages between networks.

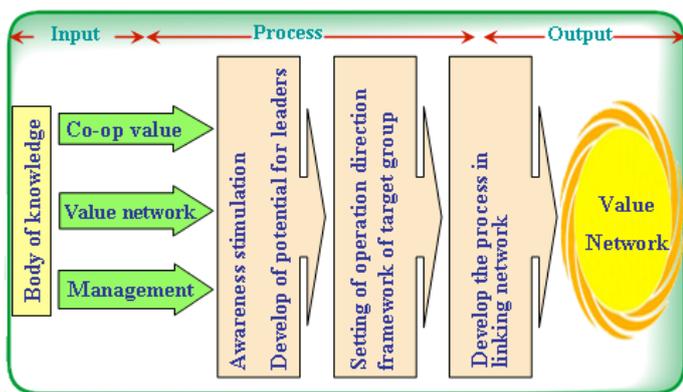


Figure 2: The research process for linking value networks.

In order to support the 36 provincial research teams to carry out the research project using participatory action research approach under the provincial context to meet their expect targets. The central coordinating team provided various means of support to the provincial teams. Among them are:

- a) Establishment of a forum to exchange knowledge, techniques and experiences between resource persons, central coordinating teams, researchers and the public.

- b) Introduction of knowledge management processes to research teams to apply in the field.
- c) Dissemination of general and technical information in the form of documents, video and electronic media through the project website, www.cai.ku.ac.th.
- d) Support from the central coordinating team through regular field visits to the provinces.

1. Outcomes of network

A total of 117 networks arose out of the research. They can be classified by purpose or by network mechanism.

1.1 Classified by purpose

- a) **Business network.** These are networks created from the cooperation of groups/organizations and co-operatives with the main purpose of business. Some examples are Value Network, Pitsanulok Province; Rice-variety Network,

Nonthaburi Province; Rubber Collection Network, Surathani Province; Home-stay Network, Pang-Nga Province; Andaman Tourism Network, Phuket Province; Occupation-group Network, Krabi Province; Co-operative Network, Chiangrai Province; Rice Collection Network, Nongbualumpu Province; Paddy Network, Udonthani Province; Yom-Kram Handicraft Network, Sakonnakorn Province; Organic-fertilizer Network, Kalasin Province; Rubber Business Network, Mukdaharn Province; Hommali Rice Network, Roi-et Province; Rice Network, Mahasarakarm Province; Occupational Group Network, Yasothorn Province; Community Business Network, Nakhorn Nayok Province; Financial Network, Samutprakarn Province; Dairy Cow network, Chonburi Province; OTOP Network, Nakhorn Srithammarat Province; Business Network, Pattalung Province, Ethical Rice Value Network, Yasothorn Province and KU Outlet Center, Kasetsart University.

b) **Social network/area-approach network.**

These networks have grown out of cooperation among networks of groups/organizations and co-operatives. They have the main objectives of conducting social and ethical activities as well as being a knowledge exchange forums to develop various cooperative work. They are Co-operative Network, Chiangrai Province; People Network, Lampang Province; Sri Ayudhaya Network, Ayudhaya Province; Learning Network, Ratchaburi Province; SST Alliance Network; Area-wise Network, Krabi Province; Khao Khaw Co-operative Network; Nakhorn Srithammarat Province; Saving-honesty Learning Network, Trad Province, Leader-Monk Network, Amnacharoen Province; Learning Network; Mukdaharn Province; Learning Network, Udonthani Province; Area-wise Network, Nongkai Province.

c) **Technical network.** This is a network formed by networks aiming to exchange

technical know-how to enhance technology for the networks. Among them are Business Promotion Center, Samutsongkram Province; Technical Network CAI-CAD-FSCT Network; Agri. Co-op Manager Network, Researcher Network; CAI-Village Bank Network.

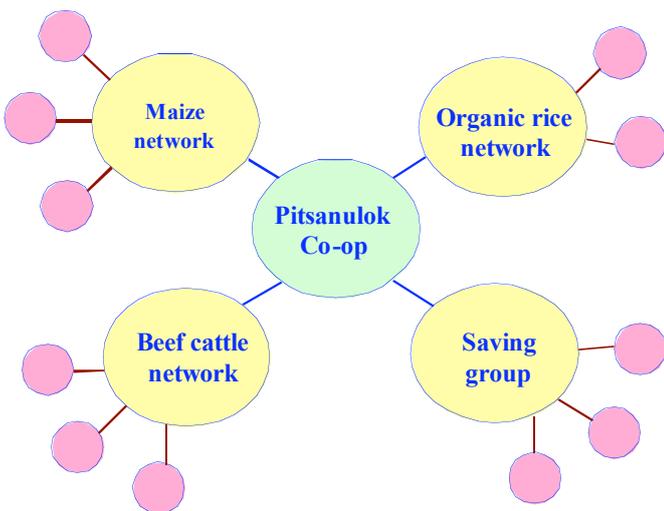


Figure 3: Dominated networks in Pitsanulok province.

1.2 Classified by network mechanism

a) **Dominated network.** A network in which network-driving responsibility is designated to a particular organization or organizations. These organizations are generally experienced in work related to

the main targets of the network. The dominated network will be responsible for management and administration designated within a given period such as Value Network, Pitsanulok Province. (See **Figure 3**)

b) **Equal-partner network.** This is a network driven by a network administration committee composed of leaders from groups/organizations/co-operatives who have been nominated from network party meetings such as Beautiful Utraradit Province Network, Home-stay Network etc. (See **Figure 4**).

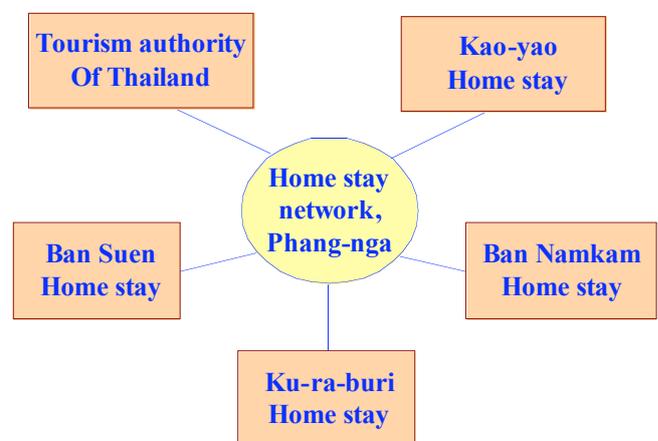


Figure 4: Equal-partner networks in Phang-Nga province.

2. Assessment of impacts of the network on poverty eradication.

Due to time constraints, the assessment of the impact of the network on poverty eradication was limited. This is mainly because the networks are in the early stages of development and businesses are not yet operating according to the framework of the network. Nevertheless, some networks have achieved tangible results in poverty eradication. Some of them are discussed below.

a) The case of Udonthani province network.

Within one year, the Udonthani research team provided support for networks in the province to link. This resulted in 6 linked networks, Co-operative Network, Animal Feed Network, Paddy Network, Sugar Network, Paddy and Rice Network and Chemical Fertilizer Network. There are 65 organizations with 106,635 members of the networks. Of the total, 9,815 persons are registered as poor. These 6 networks aim to help members expand their businesses. The Animal Feed Network

could help reduce expenditure of members. The Paddy Network could help increase income and opportunities. The Paddy and Rice Network could help increase income, reduce expenditure and enhance opportunities for their members. The Sugar Network and the Chemical Fertilizer Network could help reduce expenditure and enhance opportunities.

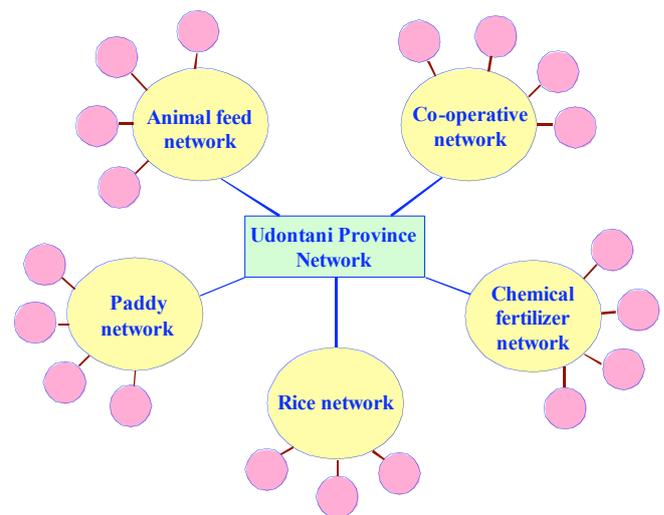


Figure 5: Udonthani Province Network

b) The case of Pattani province network.

The Pattani research team has provided support in linking networks in the province for one year. This has resulted in the development of networks such as Budo Peace Network and Pattani Co-operative Network. These networks emphasize business links especially for consumer products and

savings. The Saiburi Co-operatives Limited is the driving force in the activities of the groups/organizations in the network. From July to October 2006, the Budo Peace Network had a total income of 206,000 baht from providing goods to members. The Muslim Dress Making Group members had an average income from dress making of 1,000 baht per member and the Pattani Co-operative Network had commodity trading activities in the region of 45 million baht. In addition, cooperation in money deposit activities was also generated by the network parties as planned.

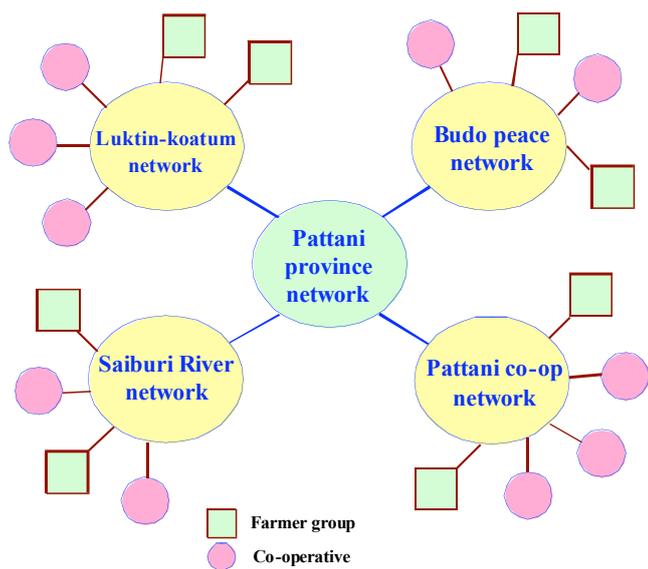


Figure 6: Pattani Province Network

c) The case of Phuket network.

The Phuket research team generated 7 networks in its network linkages. 125 groups have participated in the 7 networks of Community Business Network, OTOP Network, Farmer Network, Service Co-operative Network, Credit Union Network, Tourism Community Network and Business Network. They have been named the Andaman Phuket Tourism Network, which has an important role in reviving the traditional lifestyle of Phuket people which integrates races, religions and Thai indigenous knowledge. The operational framework of this research comes from participatory processes which stimulate common activities according to co-operative forces, forming networks to reduce expenditure, increase income and expand opportunities for its members. In addition, it aims to raise the power of the community network to exchange in-service learning experiences to develop a self-sufficient economy. Over the one-year research period, the Community Business Network formed Allamana Co-operatives with an evolving community fund of more than 300 thousand baht. In 2006, the network had income over 1.5 million baht

and the income of the Muslim Spa Group increased from 150 to 800-1,000 baht/day. For other networks such as Service Co-operative Network, after developing service standards and preparing business plans to the entrepreneurs of the network, income from businesses increased from 1.5 million baht to 7 million baht in 2006. For other tourist community networks in Phuket, improved products, outlet locations and home-stays resulted in higher income.

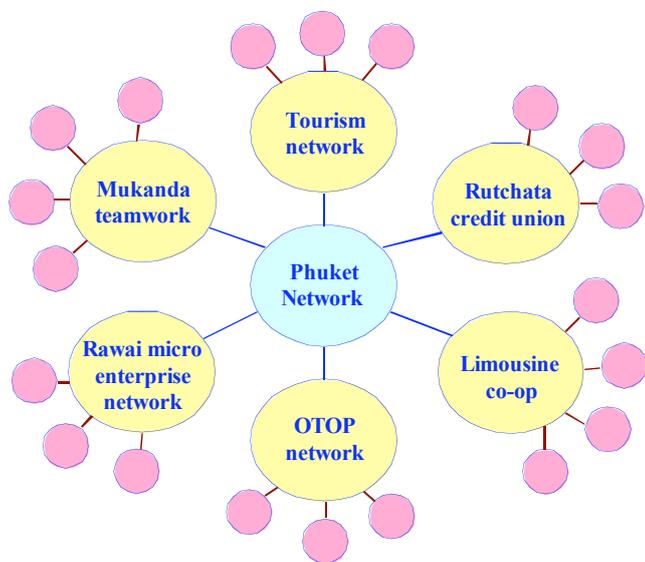


Figure 7: Phuket Network

d) The case of Phang-nga province network.

The Phang-Nga research team provided support in linking value networks within the province in one year. This has resulted in the growth of five networks, i.e. Fruit Network, Fertilizer Network, Rice Network, Rubber Network and Home-stay Network.

Now all networks have completed their operation direction framework, which has increased income and reduced expenditure for groups that are part of the network. Among these are Fruit Network, Fertilizer Network and Rubber Network. For Home-stay Network, in addition to the benefits of increased income and reduced expenditure, the network parties also gain opportunities to expand their businesses through cooperation in organizing business activities.

Synthesis and Extensions

The network linking of research teams under the “Development of Co-operative Movement for Solving Poverty Problem in 36 Provinces Project” resulted in 117 networks of 872 groups, organizations and co-operatives. Portfolio matrix

analysis demonstrates the relationship between the outcomes of network linking. In **Figure 8**, the x-axis represents the intensity rate of the research team factor and the y-axis represents the intensity rate of the group.

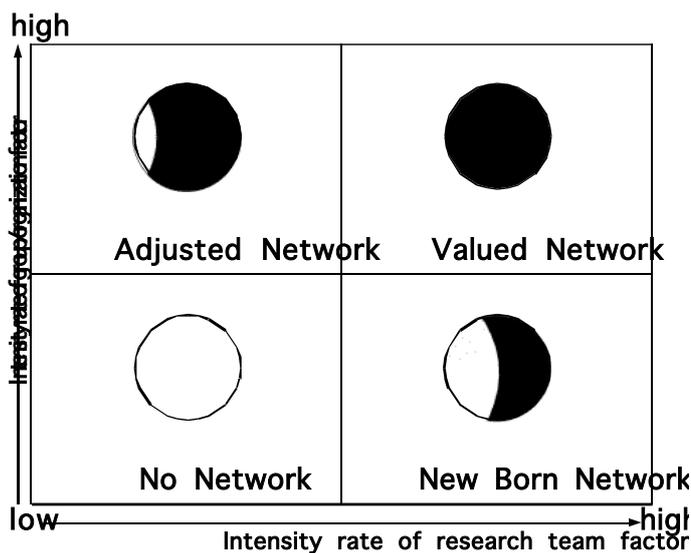


Figure 8: Portfolio matrix to demonstrate the relationship between network outcomes and intensity.

Research team intensity factors which affect the success of linking networks consist of 4 components: understanding the concept and the network linking process of the research team; the development spirit of researchers; participatory

action research skills; and, the ability of the researcher to follow the research process guidelines.

Group/organization intensity factors which affect the success of linking networks consist of 4 components; co-operative awareness among the group leaders, trust among the group leaders, recognition of the importance of value networks, and credibility of the network member group.

The outcome of **Value Network** resulted in network linking processes that consist of high research team and group intensity. The research team understood the conceptual framework and the network linking process, had developer's spirit and participatory research skills as well as following research guidelines. After developing the process with the cooperation of group leaders, creating trust among them, recognizing the importance of value networks and having an image of credibility, the network linking could generate outcomes according to the conceptual framework of the project. It could establish management administration that aims to meet the common network goals of reducing expenditure, increasing income and expanding

opportunities for members, both collectively and individually. Such tangible benefits to the network parties and their members would ultimately help to eradicate poverty.

The outcome of the “**Adjusted Network**” resulted from network linking processes of groups, already established networks, and group leaders with an awareness of cooperation or those who had already had activities related to collective purchase/sale. When the research team had established a learning and exchange forum according to the project’s conceptual framework, the “adjusted network” was created. The higher intensity of the research team, the larger potential of the network could be adjusted to adhere to the conceptual framework of the project.

The outcome of “**New Born Network**” resulted from the network linking process consisted of research teams who have consistent and intensive research efforts. The teams were able to support groups/organizations and co-operatives to form networking within one year. The new born network might not be in the position to conduct economic

business as expected, but it started to establish learning and exchange forum, from common direction of the network. If regular supports are given, this group could develop to be value network in the future.

The outcome of “**No Network**” resulted from the network linking process in some areas where groups/organizations were not interested in joining networks. At the same time, if no researchers are working in these areas, the support would not be sufficient to develop network linking. Nevertheless, the research team established a learning and exchange forum for the group leaders related to the concept of value networks and aggressive management administration processes.

The co-operative eradication of poverty using a value network formation emphasizes the process of homing in on the core problems of poverty. Three aspects of poverty are focused on: **economic poverty; idea poverty; and, relationship poverty.** (See **Figure 9**)

These three aspects of poverty have mainly been caused by globalization and policies which have ignored traditional norms and social values, such as cultural ecosystems, community ways of life and ethics. They have however promoted the behaviors of consumption, competition, power relations and a system of dependency. The public have had a lack of opportunity and ability to access modern economic and social systems, causing poverty in economics, thinking and relationship.

The linking of value networks aims to systematically address the issues as follows:

- a) To solve “**Economic Poverty**”, value networks will use the power of cooperation to realise the potential and capacity of the groups that are part of the networks in business planning to reduce costs, expand markets and increase income for the benefit of their individual members.
- b) To solve “**Idea Poverty**”, value networks will create a learning society for the network community through continuous learning and

exchange forums. This will educate the community by linking existing cultural, indigenous and contextual knowledge with the sufficiency economy philosophy, to bring about ways to solve “Idea Poverty” and reaffirm co-operative values in society.

- c) To solve “**Relationship Poverty**”, the value networks will develop cooperation among groups, i.e. network parties that hold “co-operative values” as the contact point to link their relationship. Such network relationships, in addition to solving the “relationship poverty”, also generate economic, social and cultural power which supports the development of a harmonious society.

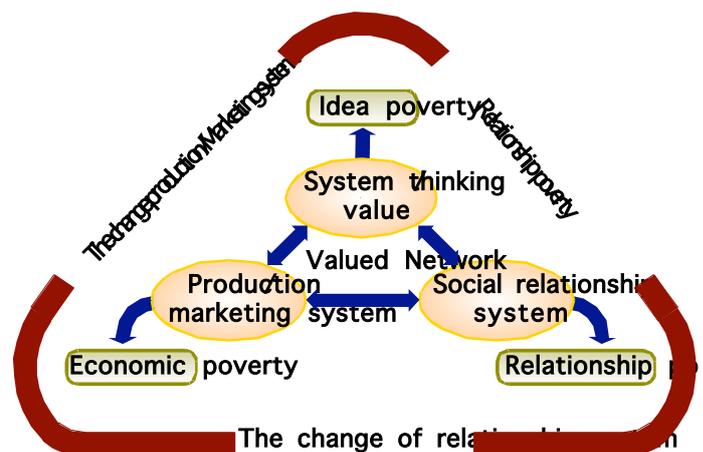


Figure 9: Value network: the systematic approach to solving the problem of poverty.

Perspectives on factors affecting the establishment of networks

Perspectives of researchers on factors affecting the establishment of networks and the approaches for co-operative movement development are as follows:

- 1) Continuous meeting forum to develop relationships;
- 2) Trust among organization leaders;
- 3) Acceptable coordinators;
- 4) Information exchange;
- 5) Credibility of the organizations;
- 6) Core-competency of organizations; and,
- 7) Contractual agreement.

The approaches for expanding value networks for the development of co-operative movements and poverty eradication are represented in **Figure 9**.

The conceptual framework for linking value networks should be broadened to cover the systematic development of the value of a co-operative/sufficiency economy to the public; the development of co-operative leaders/stakeholders at all levels; the development of administrative mechanisms for the change to co-operative systems and the establishment of linking mechanisms for inter- and intra- co-operatives.

At present, the results from the value networks are being introduced to workshops in the Second Co-operative Movement Development Plan for 2007-2011 Project. This will be used as a master plan to implement policies in co-operative development in all relevant sectors in the future.

The framework to expand the results of value networks for co-operative development and for drafting the master plan starts from constricting the co-operative value system in society. Under the strategic process of the plan, co-operative values will be the key linking point in driving the development of co-operative systems. This will reduce weaknesses and constraints caused by

registered and non-registered co-operatives present lack of knowledge of each other. Experiences in the targeted provinces indicate that people were willing to work together under “co-operative values”.

The development of co-operative systems to promote a “harmonious society”, which is the goal of the 10th development plan, should consist of four operational strategies:

First strategy: Systematically building co-operative values and a sufficiency economy philosophy for the nation. This strategy would include 3 development mechanisms: the creation of people power to systematically drive the operation of co-operative systems; the development of learning and an ethical society; and, the creation of people power to supplement the development of ethical unity of the nation.

Second strategy: The development of leaders/stakeholders at all levels to recognize co-operative values and the importance of value networks in co-operative development as an

important mechanism driving the operation of co-operative systems.

Third strategy: The creation of mechanisms to administer the change by expanding the value network linking process of the project would broaden the contribution to capacity development of co-operative systems to the registered and non-registered co-operatives that are parties to the network. This would respond to the need of the parties, community and society in assisting the policies of economic, social and cultural development to meet the goals of a harmonious society.

Fourth Strategy: Creation of inter-co-operative and intra-co-operative mechanisms to accommodate the development of fair trade. It is essential for the value network linking process to generate a worthy and valued co-operative system for the members, community and society. The linking process of goods and services supply chains to be developed as a fair trade and service system would contribute to fair and equitable income

distribution and hence solve the poverty problem in a co-operative way.

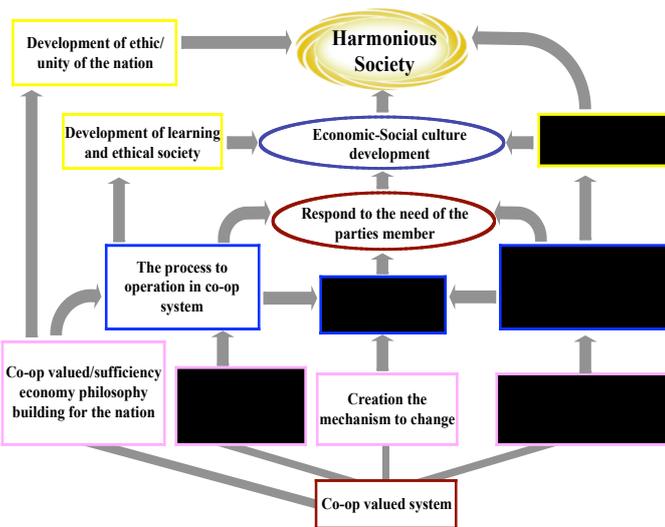


Figure 10: Approaches to expand the results of value networks for the development of co-operative movements.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The main objective of the research project, “the development of the co-operative movement for solving poverty problems in 36 provinces”, was to conduct participatory action research to link a network of groups to solve the problems of poverty.

The research was carried out under a central coordinating team and the 36 provincial research

teams of 300 people. The work resulted in 117 networks of 872 organizations participating in the project. The networks could be classified in three ways: business networks; social networks/area-approach; and, technical networks.

Although not all of the networks met expectations, this was the first step towards the development of co-operative systems which would assist in building cooperative power to solve the problems of poverty.

Due to the time limitations of the project, its impact could not be fully assessed in all provinces. Nevertheless, empirical evidence obtained from assessment in provinces such as Phang-Nga, Pattani, Phuket and Udonthani indicated that linking networks impacted on poverty reduction by significantly reducing expenditure, increasing income and expanding opportunities to group members.

Evidence from the research project indicated that with sufficient weight given to the four components of the two dimensions, network linking

would result in value networks while the lack of sufficient weight of relevant factors would result in networks with different characteristics. Nevertheless, with continuous supplementary support, the networks created could also be developed into value networks.

The experiences obtained from this research work provided recommendations for approaches to expand the results of value networks for the development of co-operative movements and poverty solutions with 4 strategies: systematic building of co-operative values/sufficiency economy to the nation; development of organization leaders at all level to recognize co-operative values and to be aware of the importance of value networks; development of co-operative power among groups; establishment of linking mechanisms for inter- and intra-co-operatives with the supply chains of goods and business to systematically return benefits to members. For approaches to address poverty, the research teams were confident that the value network was the process that would systematically address the roots of the problems of poverty at an individual level. The research team gave first

priority to building co-operative values in individual leaders so that they had the co-operative awareness to generate sustainable solutions.

Seven recommendations can be drawn from the project. First, a 1-2 year monitoring and evaluation system should be established for the networks created under the project. Beside this, supplementary support to establish learning and exchange forums as well as coordination to ensure the direction of tangible benefits to the network parties should be continued. Second, the results of the network operation should be expanded with the aim of widespread and tangible impact on society. Third, value networks under the supply chains of major economic crops and livestock should be expanded to develop systems of fair trade. Fourth, learning and exchange forums among the value network researchers should be supported for continuous learning and societal development. This is seen as the development of human capital as a mechanism for sustainable development. Fifth, lessons learned from the case studies of “value networks” should be used as examples and disseminated to the public as good practice in the

operation of value networks to solve poverty and build a harmonious society. Sixth, the linking of priests and co-operative work that has already started should be continued. Seventh, the knowledge gained should be used to benefit the 2nd Co-operative Development Plan which is being drafted as a direction framework for the development of co-operative movements for the period 2007-2011.

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