

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE WAY OF LIFE OF LOEI RIVER COMMUNITY BASED ON THE SUFFICIENCY ECONOMY PHILOSOPHY IN THAILAND

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ABSTRACT

This research was the Participatory Action Research (PAR). The aims of the research were 1) to study the current status of the way of life of people living in Loei River communities. 2) to study the Gross Village Happiness of the community, 3) to develop the community's living in accordance with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy, and 4) to create the learning package of the community's living in accordance with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. The research found that most Loei River Community people were agriculturists; they lived their lives by the nature; seeking for food from the natural sources like rivers and forests. In addition, they normally passed and inherited their traditional cultures and had their faith in Buddhism. The Gross Village Happiness of the community was at the high level. There were nine developing the community's living in accordance with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy gained from the participatory workshop of the stakeholders. The community could decrease their expenses and increase their incomes, learn, conserve their natural resources and environment, and be magnanimous to each other more. The community's satisfaction was at the high level and the learning package was consisted of the household accounts, brochures, and posters having the text attracting the community to live in accordance with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy.

Key words: *Participatory Action Research, the ways of life of Loei River community, Sufficiency Economy, Philosophy, Gross Happiness, the learning package*

I INTRODUCTION

Changing throughout the world has affected the development of all countries, and then Thailand has to be developed to be able to sustainably survive by strengthening the system and other national infrastructures as well as following the sufficiency economy philosophy. The importance of the national "capitals" should be focused. In addition, the advantages of the nation's identity and value including social capital, economical capital and national and environmental resource capital should be integrated together to urgently improve Thai people's capability in all aspects: physical, mental and intellectual development. This is to prepare them to be

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ready for changes could be found within their family, society and country to create warm family, strong community and national stability.

According to the Ninth National Economics and Development Plan (B.E. 2545-2549), Thailand has applied the “Sufficiency Economy Philosophy” to be a principle guideline for developing the country together with realizing the importance of “Human Centered Development” to be integrated as holistic development in which the result is satisfy successful with satisfaction. Later, during the Tenth National Economics and Development plan (B.E. 2550-2554), Thailand has been facing the changes occurring inside and outside countries; however, following the visions of development based on the sufficiency economy philosophy of the King Rama 9, Thailand has been strongly prevented that all Thai citizens could live more happily. The results of the development were found successful with satisfaction and in the eleventh National Economics and Development Plan (B.E. 2555-2559), Thailand has turned in to the period of changes which are more rapid and more complicated both inside the country and outside the country. It is provides both risk and chance at the same time, therefore, it is needed to speed up the process of development to improve the quality of life of people in the country to be self-reliant and to have better self-protection system in order to lift up their quality of life, to enhance warmness into family and to live happily in their family as well as to make their communities stronger [1].

Human beings need natural resources such as water, soil and forest for living their lives. These natural resources are importance for all living things on earth including those humans prey and eat for living their lives. Consequently, humans need water for living. Historically, people lived along the rivers since the riverside was rich and plentiful and convenient for transportation. In addition, it helped prevent being attacked by the enemies as evidently found in the studies of the human civilizations along the world important riverside communities [2].

Loei Province is located in the Northeastern Thailand. There are many rivers including the main rivers that separated between the countries. For example, the Huang River separates Thai and Laos and Khong River separates among Thailand, Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia. Other contributory rivers which are originally started from Loei Province are the Loei River, Man River and San River, etc. Loei people usually settle down along the both sides of the river and live their lives by the river as their sources of occupations as food

Loei River is the main river of Loei province. It is a river of life for Loei people in the past until present and for the future. Loei River is originally draining from Phu Luang Mountains, in Loei Province. The river is about 1,500 above the sea level and 231 kilometers long. The river runs through 74 villages, Phu Luang district, Wangsapung district, Muang Loei District and drains downward into the Mekhong River in Kokmad village, Paktom subdistrict, Chiang Khan district [3] which runs through Kang Pla Village. Kang Pla village is a well-known as a Buddhist golden land village. The people in the village have been living their simple way of life depending on the natural resources such as water and forests since long time ago. The villagers have strong belief in Buddhism. However, because of change interfering toward communities, the communities have to change their way of life in order to make them able to live their life on their own and have strong life-protection for themselves. Accordingly, the researcher becomes interested in studying the way of life of people living in Loei River communities, gross happiness of people living in Loei River communities and developing the way of life of people living in Loei River communities based on sufficiency economy philosophy and constructing a

learning model of living based on sufficiency economy philosophy. The results of the research will be implemented and applied appropriately for improving behavioral plan for the way of life of people living in Loei River communities to create “a community of happiness” as much as possible.



Fig.1 Map of Loei River in Loei Province, Northeast part of Thailand

II OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

- 2.1 To study the current status of the way of life of people living in Loei River communities.
- 2.2 To study the Gross Village Happiness of the community.
- 2.3 To develop the community’s living in accordance with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy.
- 2.4 To create the learning package of the community’s living in accordance with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy.

III Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

3.1 Theoretical Framework

The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy has been initiated from His Majesty the King Rama 9’s for Kasetsart University graduates on the 18th of July B.E. 2517. His majesty the king emphasized the importance of the development that the country needs to build up a fundamental structure with “sufficiency of income, food and household expenditure based on “sufficiency livelihood” for all citizens. Doing this they have to be self-economic and use inexpensive tools for living life based on academic principles. Moreover, before his majesty the king’s birthday celebration, on the 4th of December B.E.2517, at Dusitalai Palace, His majesty the King gave his speech to those joining the celebration and wishing him with an emphasis on “sufficiency economy” again. It can be said that “Sufficiency Economy” initiated by His Majesty the King in B.E.2517 is the beginning of “Sufficiency Economy Philosophy” which is the philosophy guiding people with the way of life, starting from family to society and country. Moreover, the

development of the country should be held on the middle path which means being sufficient, being reasonable and having life preventing system together when being affected by changes of objects, society, environment and cultures. To do this, it needs virtue principles which are having royalty, morality and academic principles for planning and practicing together with diligence, endurance and intellect [4] as shown in Figure 2.

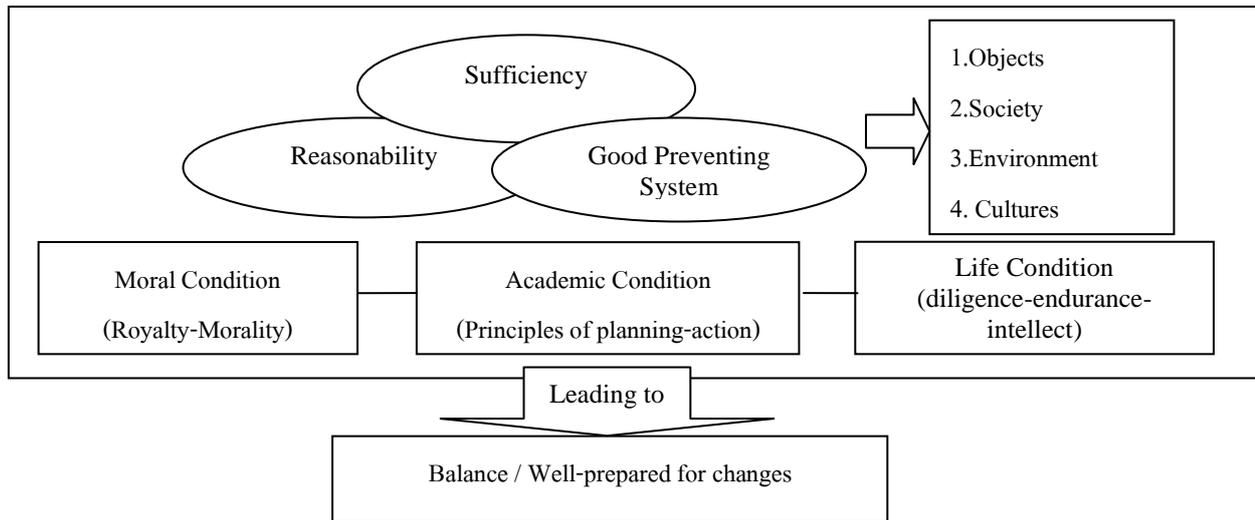


Fig. 2 Principles of Sufficiency Economy Philosophy

Source: Department of Community Development, Ministry of Interior, B.E.2549)

3.2 Conceptual Framework

According to the review on related documents and studies, the conceptual framework of the research to develop the way of life of people living in Loei River communities based on the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy using systems thinking can be illustrated as figure 3 as follows.

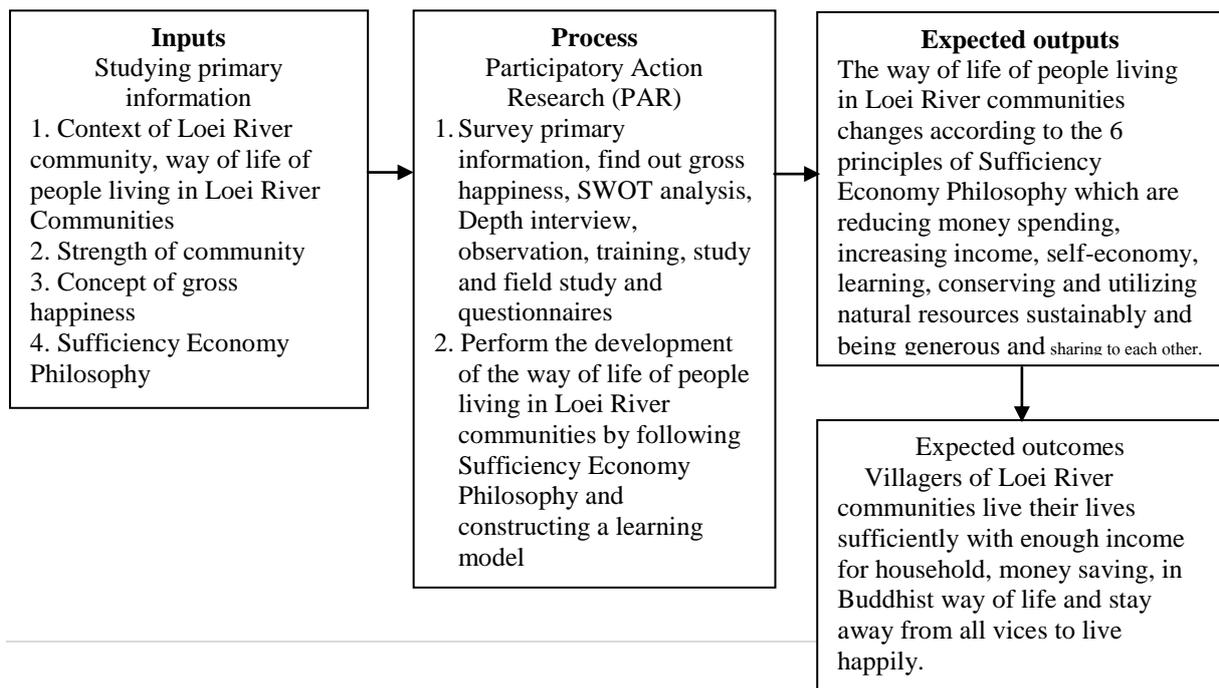


Fig. 3 Conceptual Framework

IV RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Population, samples and target group

The research population comprises the villagers of the two Kang Pla villages, Chaiyapruet sub-district, Muang District, Loei Province, located on the both sides of the Loei River, totally 1,170 people from 360 families. Family is used as unit of analysis and Krejcie & Morgan (1970) is used for setting the size of sample group. There were 186 families and one of the family's member was selected as a sample, totally 186 samples in a target group. For qualitative data collection, purposive sampling was used for selecting 66 key informants for the research.

4.2 Data collection methods

4.2.1 Operational step

Step 1. Studying the context of community, the way of life of people in community and gross happiness, summarize the result of the study, hold a stage for reflecting the information, having a workshop for SWOT analysis, brainstorming among those stakeholders to set out activities for developing the way of life following Sufficiency Economy Philosophy which be; 1) integrating local wisdom and sufficiency economy together, 2) suitable for context of the community and 3) fit into the needs of communities. There were totally 9 activities for the development.

Step 2. Performing the development, the 9 activities and constructing a learning model of living life following sufficiency economy philosophy. The learning model comprised leaflets and billboards.

Step 3. Evaluating and summarizing, the result of the development was divided into two sections; formative evaluation and summative evaluation.

4.2.2 Data collection instruments

1) Community survey, 2) the way of life survey, 3) assessing community gross happiness using Thai Happiness Indicator: THI-15 of Department of Mental, 4) questionnaire to find out the participants' opinion toward the training and 5) an interview to find out the result of the development by following sufficiency economy philosophy.

4.2.3 Data collection

The documents were sent to the organizations relating to the study in order to ask their permission for doing the study and collecting the data.

4.3. Data analysis

Quantitative data was analyzed for Frequency, Percentage, Mean (\bar{X}) and Standard deviation whereas qualitative data was analyzed through Content analysis and then Descriptive analysis was used to present the result of the data analysis.

V RESEARCH RESULT

5.1 The way of life of the people living in Loei River communities

The results shows that the villagers living along Loei River communities lived their life by reducing their household expenditure and increasing income from different activities such as growing backyard vegetables, growing herbal plants, growing fruits, growing perennial plants, growing trees for household utility, raising ducks, raising frogs, raising fish, preserving food and using agricultural materials and natural materials. These activities helped them reduce their money spending within family. The products left from using in household were sold for generating more income. There were bamboo crafting activities and woman groups of textile weaving which is widely known in the country. There are also occupations for men such as carpenters, bricklayers, house builder and workers in farms and rice paddies.

Almost villagers saved money and carefully spent their money, they reduced all unnecessary payment by using products and consuming natural food from water and forests and they repaired and adapted their old appliances which were broken to and made them able to use again as well as their construction buildings such as their houses, barns garage and agricultural or farming machines were fixed on their own. Majority of villagers know how to apply local wisdom for living their lives. Especially, the old usually have all field of knowledge for living such as occupation, tradition, life skill along the river, forest and nature, producing tools for daily living, taking care of health, using herbs, natural phenomena like changes of soil and water, crafting and fabric weaving. These folk wisdoms have been passed from ancestors to young generations. The old people teach their children to live with sufficiency, to conserve forests and environment, not to destroy forests, not to burn out straws in the field, to keep all leftover from agricultural activities to make organic fertilizer and to help maintain Loei River community as well as the community environment. In addition, it is found that the villagers helped and shared with the others. They did not take advantage but they exchanged their farming and agricultural products such as vegetables together. They also helped each other work and sustain their cultures as well as inherited their traditions and stayed away from drugs.

5.2 Gross Happiness of the Loei River Community

The study of the gross happiness among the villagers of Kang Pla communities using GHI of the department of Mental Health found that Kang Pla's villagers were happier than the other people as shown in table 1.

Table 1 The number and percentage of gross happiness of the people living in Loei River communities (N=186)

Scores	Number	Percentage	Interpretation
51-60	120	64.52	higher than normal people (Good)
44-50	66	35.48	As same as normal people (Fair)
43 or less	0	0.00	Lower than normal people (Poor)

5.3 The results of the development of the way of life following Sufficiency Economy Philosophy

The development of the way of life by following Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of the people living in Loei River communities based on the three principles were 1) emphasizing on continuation, extension and strengthening 2) focusing on behavioral improvement and 3) activities done by following sufficiency economy philosophy in individual, family and community levels. There were totally 9 activities as follows.

5.3.1 Training. The training was held to provide the knowledge about sufficiency economy philosophy. There was a demonstration how to produce bio fermented juice, organic fertilizer and insect-free substances. The results of the training found that the villagers had more knowledge and realized the advantages of living life by following sufficiency economy philosophy very well.



5.3.2 There were 40 villagers attending the Field study at the center of sufficiency economy philosophy and Lung Khem, a wisdom teacher and owner of the center, applied the principles of sufficiency economy philosophy for living. He divided his piece of land which occupies the area of 9 Rais (1 Rai = 1600 square meters) into 2 parts; the first part covering the area of 5 Rais is for growing rice and another part is for building a house and a pond for keeping frogs, catfish and 8 floating baskets of Tilapia. There is also an area for three buildings for ear mushrooms and Sarjou-caju cultivation, 6 buckets of bio-fermented juice made from vegetables, golden apple-snails and bananas, 5 buckets of insect-free substances and plantation plots for backyard vegetables, herbs and fruits. This Learning Center is known as “Chaiyaphruek Sub-district Learning Center of Sufficiency Agriculture”.



5.3.3 The sample families lived their lives by following the sufficiency economy philosophy and the families performing the role model for sufficiency way of life based on the sufficiency economy philosophy such as living economically, conserving good environment and natural resources, teaching their children to live sufficiently and helpful to each other, inheriting traditions and staying away from all vices.



The role-model family of living with sufficiency economy

5.3.4 Backyard vegetable and herb plantation were activities promoted for all families in order to help them reduce payment and increase income. This also helps maintain good environment and promote good health for family and society. The vegetables were all chemically-free vegetables which were planted by considering the condition of the soil within their lands such as along the river and on the rice paddies. Various vegetable productions, rotation plantation, alternative vegetables cultivated provide sufficient production for each household for all year round.



Backyard vegetables and herbs plantation for household consumption

5.3.5 Raising animals for household consumption such as ducks and chickens can help reduce the expenditure in household and promote sufficiency livelihood. Raising animals needs less capital for investment and the leftovers from animals can be reused in form of organic fertilizer for chemically-free vegetables.



5.3.6 Bio-fermented juice and organic fertilizer productions were activities to promote chemically-free backyard vegetable cultivation which can be adopted for household and rice paddies and agricultural farming activities with an emphasis on reducing the use of chemicals to promote good health.



Production of Bio-extract fermentation, organic fertilizer and insect-free substances

5.3.7 Activity to promote natural way of life is to support the villagers to consume non-chemical food produced by animals and plants in order to reduce household expenditure as well as promote conservation of the nature and production of natural food to for good health of themselves and of their society.



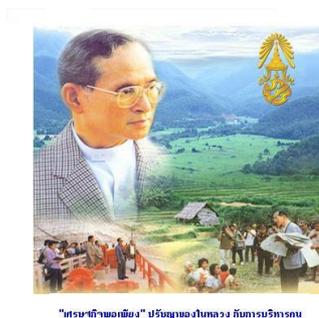
The way of life relying on natural resources, fishery and vegetable cultivation

5.3.8 Promoting and transferring knowledge within family and community by teaching their children to live sufficiently, reduce expenditure, do additional jobs, stay away from all vices, keep balancing between the nature and ecosystem, take good care for their personal health conditions as well as for their family and community, be helpful to each other and hold on noble cultures and traditions.



Living with the nature promotes healthy and long live

5.3.9 Making daily household bookkeeping for spending helps the families realize their family financial status and promote sufficiency economy philosophy-based living.



Covers (front and back) of household bookkeeping for spending

5.4 The construction of the learning model for development the way of life of people living along Loei River communities based on Sufficiency Economy Philosophy

The constructed learning model for development the way of life of people living along Loei River communities based on sufficiency economy philosophy was designed by the villagers and the research that helped in brainstorming to produce the most suitable learning media with capability of implementation in to daily life to change behavioral plan. The constructed learning media comprised 1) the household-bookkeeping for spending guidelines for reminding the family to spend money carefully, reduce household expenditure and increase income and 2) the billboard which emphasized on living life based on sufficiency economy philosophy in order to motivate the villagers to change their behaviors and hold on the principles of sufficient economy for their daily life. The 4 poster billboards, 1.5 x 0.80 meters, were positioned at both villagers.

The results of all 9 activities and the promotion of conceptual idea with the learning model provided the villagers living in the Loei River communities knowledge and understanding as well as recognition in advantages and helped make the them change their way of life by following the principles of sufficiency economy philosophy more. In addition, the community's members lived their life happier.

VI CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

According to the results of this research study, the community participated in the activity changed their way of life to be more sufficient. It's possible that the process of development comprised civil participative management which agreed with the concept [5] that every development needs people participation from the first stage which is decision making, natural resource supporting and cooperating as well as taking advantages and taking part in evaluation process. Moreover, the success of this community development found that the community leaders were strong and had high level of transformational leadership skill. This is similar to [6] that the effectiveness of the organization was influenced by transformational leadership of the leaders. In addition, this research study could be successfully completed because the communities were strong and eager to improve themselves to live with sufficiency, happiness and self-economy as stated in [7] and [8]. To sum up, Loei River communities lived their lives following sufficiency economy philosophy increasingly. Household spending was decreased. People had extra jobs for earning income and transferred their folk wisdom, taught their children to live sufficiently such as having a fish pond in their rice field, raising ducks and chickens, growing backyard vegetables. The leftovers from these animals were transformed into organic fertilizers. All of these activities could be successful with participation from the community that needs self-improvement. The results agreed with [9] and [10] the effective factors influencing people participation toward the successful development was knowledge, understanding, leaders' support, connections with the officers, expectation of advantage and opportunity of training. Moreover, the factors leading to success in development process needed various kinds of local wisdoms within the community gained from accumulated knowledge and experiences in life and society which is relevant to [11] that local wisdom is the knowledge that the villagers invented on their own and apply this knowledge for solving problems as their conceptual knowledge.

Findings from this research study could be summarized that the successful process to improve Loei River community based on Sufficiency Economy Philosophy initiated from various factors. However, sufficiency economy philosophy is the most important and valuable for living life through the current situation in the

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society. This philosophy can increase better quality of life of Thai people. In addition, it can be applied extensively for all societies to bring the entire people happiness.

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