

Formulation of Community Forest Act for Thailand

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Abstract: The constitution of Thailand B.E. 2550 has enacted on the people participation for environment and the natural resource conservation on the different sections such as in Section 67 specified that the right of people to take participation in conservation, utilization, protect and promote the quality of environment and natural resources by living without causing a harmful effect and with concerning security and quality of life. If there is any activity that might affected to the quality of environment and the natural resources of the community forest such as clearing forest for farming or feeding cow in the community forest, the community people should have a right to protect. In case of the huge project such as a dam construction, the general people or the Non-government Organization (NGO) should have the right to participate in the public hearing and to give the opinions before the project implementation occurrence. The objective of this study was to formulate the Community Forest Act for Thailand based on the people participation. The mixed method of qualitative and quantitative approaches was done. The in-depth interview with structural form was implemented for data collection from the stakeholders which included the community environmental leaders of Bann Kaeng-Ka-Arm, the Tambon Administration Organization (TAO) members of Pa-Sa-Weoy, Ampoe Somdej, Kalasin province and the NGO. The Participatory Appreciate-Influence-Control technique (PAIC) was used in the brain storming session of community peoples to formulate the Community Forest Act for Thailand. Considering to the in-dept interview of the stakeholders which included the community environmental leaders, the TAO members and the NGO, it was found that most of them agreed that there is a serious conflict problem between the community people and the governmental sector due to the Act of Community Forest is not issued by parliament until now. Most of them agree that they would like to have the following contents in the formulate act of community forest. Community people should have the right to participate and manage for Community Forest Conservation if they are living before the announcement of the Act of National Park in B.E. 2504. Community people should have the authority to collect mushroom, herb, firewood and wood for household use and public use but they can not sell timber of community forest. The people outside the community have no right and authority like as community people who look after community forest before the announcement of forest conservation area. Community people should have duty to protect the biodiversity of community forest and etc. The results illustrated that before and after the PAIC process implemented, the knowledge achievement and the environmental participation were determined. It was found that there were high statistically significant difference between pre- and post-test in $p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.01$ in two aspects of knowledge achievement, environmental participation for community forest conservation. The mean scores between self- and friend-evaluation between friend- and facilitator-evaluation and between self- and facilitator-evaluation showed statistical difference ($p < 0.05$, $p < 0.05$ and $p < 0.01$). During the PAIC was implementing, the 4 focus groups discussion were done. The overall results showed that there were at least 4 purposed projects such as knowledge given to people for Community Forest Conservation, Afforestation Conservation of Endangerus species of plants and animal and promotion people participation for Community Forest Conservation which would be implemented according to the action plans on Community Forest Conservation. These were implemented at the community. The pilot project was selected three from four proposed projects. These were knowledge given to people for Community Forest Conservation, Afforestation and promotion people participation for Community Forest Conservation. The PAIC had been urgently used to prevent the loss of biodiversity of community forest during they were waiting for the issuing of Community Forest Act. The recommendation from the finding is that the community people in each community forest all over the country

should make a consensus in order to propose to the government and the parliament members for making a decision of issuing the Act of Community Forest as soon as possible. Finally, researchers can conserve the community forest with the real people participation.

Key words: Formulation, Community Forest Act, TAO, self-evaluation, parliament, Thailand

INTRODUCTION

Community forests have long been a part of Thailand's rural communities. Forests are considered life-supporting in terms of community settlement, socio-cultural development and life maintenance. Simultaneously, forest systems are sustained by community practices, e.g., respect and reciprocity. Villagers believe that community subsistence is not possible if the forest is not well taken care of. In Thailand, community forestry was officially recognized as a tool for sustainable forest management about two decades ago (Wichawutipong Jr., 2005).

One of the keys to securing livelihoods bases in the sustainable use and management of natural resources (soil, water, trees, shrubs, crops, herbs, grass, animals, fish, etc.). Innovative approaches such as community forestry are playing an important role for addressing livelihood challenges, particularly rural livelihoods. At present, the Asia and Pacific region is facing with the different pressures for community forestry maintenance. These are poverty, high rate of population and economic growth combined with rapid urbanization; therefore, it needs a forestry products and agricultural land for production to support their livings. Meanwhile, millions of rural people still live in and around forests and they depend on them, wholly or in part as essential resources (Johnston *et al.*, 2010; Molla, 2010).

Originally initiated in a few tropical and subtropical developing countries were experiencing with rapid deforestation. The state sponsored community forestry and it became a major form of forestry in many countries. It has been spreading rapidly in developing and temperate developed countries in both tropical and temperate (Gilmour *et al.*, 2005; Burch, 2008; McDermott and Schrekenberg, 2009; Larson *et al.*, 2010).

The initial success of community forestry in some country such as India, Nepal and Philippines in recovering deforested and degraded forestland has led to adaptation of a similar approach by other countries in the region. At present, a number of Asia pacific countries have either revised or are revising their national forest policies with provision for community forestry. The crucial elements of community forestry regulatory framework included the policy and law with secured

tenure, use rights and benefits, guidelines and institutional arrangement for field implantation, processes and approaches, capabilities and capacity. Frequently, one of the limiting factors is the gap between recognizing these important elements in a policy document and their realization in actual practice. It is with regard to the realization and transformation aspects of tenure, use rights and benefits that the experience of community forestry has most to contribute to determining a forest-based strategy (Molla, 2010).

Most of concept community forestry is stressed on the importance of participation and benefit-sharing. Perhaps, like sustainable development, community forestry should be seen as a process, a process of increasing the involvement of and reward for local people of seeking balance between outside and community interests and of increasing local responsibility for the management of the forest resource. Also, like sustainable development, community forestry should be a learning experience for all involved parties. Whether or not, it leads to better forest management is an arguable point but in some places, it may well be the last chance for the forests. Defining community forestry properly is necessary to promote public forest governance, particularly decentralized forest governance. It is also pertinent because it is high time that we have to solve all concerned issues so that the precious forest ecosystem and biodiversity is conserved for the sustenance of the human civilization itself (Rath, 2010).

Community forest means land and/or forestland which are legally permitted for the community together with forestry officer to participate in continuously managing forestry activities under the relevant laws and regulations. They also can set up their own policies which may be concerned with culture, beliefs, religious and other traditions. This management aims to provide sustainable forest use for the community.

Thailand locates in the tropical rain forest zone of the globe so it contains different types of tress and it disperses over the country. Therefore, there are various community forests have occurred for more than a century during they have started for agricultural period. There is definition of community forestry that is a social forestry and a rural development forestry are more or less equivalent and reflect Abraham Lincoln's view of

democracy-government of the people by the people for the people (J. Burley, Oxford Forestry Institute). Various meaning of community forestry is defined, however it might be concluded that it is village or community forest level with the important characteristics of community people participation for management with responsibility of planning, decision making, implementing, benefit-sharing, protecting biodiversity and ecological balancing for sustainably maintain forest based on the body of knowledge, local wisdom, traditional and cultural practice and belief in order to meet their present needs and their next generations.

Management of community forest in Thailand based on the body of knowledge, local wisdom, traditional and cultural practice and belief since, they have established for many centuries. Community forests can be categorized according to forest use and management objectives as the followings:

- Forest protection community forests (Paa Anurak) such as watershed protection community forests (Paa Tonnam), especially in highland, upland and lowland forests basically involves hill tribes, e.g., Hmong, Karen and Khon Muang ethnic groups. Indigenous traditions of management, e.g., check dams, crop rotation and homestead gardens are traditional practices that help improve ecosystem conditions and maintain its productivity
- Subsistence/utilized community forests are classified into two major types:
 - Life sustaining community forests (Paa Chaisoi, Paa Satharana) used for community food-banks, grazing and plantations. This type of community forest is common in Thailand. Community settlement depends on availability of forestlands because they are considered life-supporting systems providing food, fuel, construction materials and medicines. Communities set aside a forest zone that has easy access and use it as a community food-bank and for grazing and plantation areas
 - Spiritual community forests (Paa wathanathum), e.g., Don Phu Ta in the Northeast, Pa Duta (Karen) and Dong Seng (Hmong) in the North. These are fortified forests serving as homes of the spirits that are believed to look after community subsistence and prosperity. It is believed that if community members misbehave with the spirits unfortunate phenomena such as family sickness, drought and chaos will occur

The Community Forestry Promotion and Management Division of Thailand is responsible for:

- Planning and promoting community forestry and involving local communities, local organizations, NGOs and other institutions in community forest management
- Developing Thailand's community forest database
- Establishing, expanding and withdrawal of community forests outside of protected areas
- Improving community forestry procedures and sustainable use of forest resources according to local conditions, providing recommendations for community forestry promotion and management
- Monitoring and evaluating community forests
- Working in cooperation with other community forest agencies

Currently, >5,331 villages have registered their community forests programs with the Royal Forestry Department (RFD). The Act of Community Forest B.E. 2550 of Thailand, mentioned that community forest referred to the forest was approved to be established as community forest by management according to this act and it has the objectives as follows:

- Conservation of forestry resources and biodiversity
- Utilization of natural resource in community forest with sustainability and balance
- Promote diverse culture and tradition of community for conservation, restoration, development and control the use of natural resources in the community forest
- Promote the collaboration between government and local community including building the network of community forest
- According to Section 7 of this Act, the forest area that was established as community forest then it would be under the control of Forestry law, National Forest Conservation law, National Park law, Conservation and Protection of Wildlife law or other related law, exception this Act was enacted in other sense

Objective: The objective of this study was to formulate the Community Forest Act for Thailand based on the people participation.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The mixed method of qualitative and quantitative approaches will be done. The in-depth interview with

structural form would be implemented for data collection (Rubin and Rubin, 2004) from the stakeholders which included the community environmental leaders of Bann Kaeng-Ka-Arm, Tambon Administration Organization (TAO) members of Pa-Sa-Weoy, Ampoe Somdej, Kalasin province and the NGO. The Participatory Appreciate-Influence-Control technique (PAIC) was used in the brain storming session of community peoples to formulate the Community Forest Act for Thailand. Before training with PAIC, construction of handbook for the participatory training was constructed. It contains knowledge of community forestry law, forestry law and related law and the participation in Environmental Conservation (CEDPA, 1999; UNESCO, 1978; Went-Dse-Zel, 2002; Thiengkamol, 2004, 2009). Then, 29 participants were selected for testing of knowledge of Community Forestry law, Forestry law and related law and the participation in Environmental Conservation. The systematic operation of 29 participants was trained with Participatory-Appreciate-Influence-Control (PAIC). The brain storming included SWOT (Strength-Weakness-Opportunity-Threat) analysis (Langly, 1988; Weiss, 1995; Sproull, 1995).

The pre- and post-test one group design is used to test for before and after training process with Participatory-Appreciate-Influence-Control (PAIC) and the Three Dimensional Evaluation (TDE) was used to determination the congruence of three aspects evaluation; self-, friend- and facilitator-evaluation for training participation (Thiengkamol, 2011b).

RESULTS

In-depth interview: The in-depth interview with structural form was implanted for data collection from the stakeholders which included the community environmental leaders of Bann Kaeng-Ka-Arm, the Tambon Administration Organization (TAO) members of Pa-Sa-Weoy, Ampoe Somdej, Kalasin province and the NGO. The results of in-depth interview of stakeholders which included the community environmental leaders of Bann Kaeng-Ka-Arm, the Tambon Administration Organization (TAO) members of Pa-Sa-Weoy, Ampoe Somdej, Kalasin province and the NGO revealed that most of them agree that they would like to have the contents in the formulated act of community forest as follows:

- Community people should have the right to participate and manage for community forest conservation if they are living before the announcement of the Act of National Park in B.E. 2504
- Community people should have the authority to collect mushroom, herb, firewood and wood for household use and public use but they can not sell timber of community forest

- The people outside the community have no right and authority like as community people who look after community forest before the announcement of forest conservation area
- Community people should have duty to protect the biodiversity of community forest, etc.

PAIC implementation: PAIC technique was implemented for community people to make a brain storming for problem solving of Community Forest Conservation and facing problem with the Act of Community Forest B.E. 2550 including discussing about lacking knowledge of law and Environmental law. The finding of PAIC implementation illustrated, one group pre- and post-test design was used to determine the training achievement of 29 participants with PAIC technique for knowledge achievement and environmental participation.

It was found that there were high statistically significant difference between pre- and post-test in ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.01$) in two aspects of knowledge achievement and environmental participation for Community Forest Conservation ($p < 0.01$ and $p < 0.01$) as shown in Table 1. The results of three dimensional evaluation of 29 community people was employed for determination the congruence of three aspects evaluation; self-, friend- and facilitator-evaluation by using one-way ANOVA to investigate the mean scores difference of three group. The results of one-way ANOVA showed that there were different of mean scores about participation in training process through brain storming on community forest management with significant level ($p < 0.01$) as shown in Table 2.

The Scheffe was used for analysis of each pair of Three Dimensional Evaluation (TDE) to determine the mean score differences of their participation in the training process of PAIC, it showed that self- and friend-evaluation were statistical difference ($p > 0.05$) while self- and facilitator-evaluation were statistical difference ($p < 0.01$) including friend- and facilitator-evaluation were statistical difference ($p < 0.05$) as shown in Table 3.

Table 1: Pre- and post-test of 29 participants

Experimental group	No. (n)	Mean	SD	t	Sig.
Pre-test of knowledge	29	21.46	1.95	10.998	0.000**
Post-test of knowledge	29	25.22	1.70		
Pre-test of participation	29	24.82	2.10	11.611	0.000**
Post-test of participation	29	28.63	1.86		

Table 2: Three dimensional evaluation of participants

Source of variation	Sum of squares	df	Mean ²	F	Sig.
Between group	76.558	2	38.294	9.339	0.00**
Within group	344.400	84	4.100	-	-
Total	420.958	86	-	-	-

**Significant level at 0.01

Table 3: Scheffe analysis of each pair comparisons

Each pair of variables	Mean diff (I-J)	SE	Sig.	95% CI	
				Lower bound	Upper bound
Self- and friend-evaluation	-1.58824*	0.69456	0.027*	-2.9847	-0.3449
Self- and facilitator-evaluation	-3.00000*	0.69456	0.000**	-4.3965	0.3609
Friend- and facilitator-evaluation	-1.41176*	0.69456	0.048*	-2.8083	2.9492

*Significant level at 0.05; **Significant level at 0.01

During the PAIC was implementing, the 4 focus groups discussion were done. The overall results showed that there were at least 4 purposed projects included knowledge given to people for Community Forest Conservation, Afforestation Conservation of Endangerous species of plants and animal and promotion people participation for Community Forest Conservation which would be implemented according to the action plans on Community Forest Conservation.

These were implemented at the community. The pilot project was selected three from four proposed projects. These were knowledge given to people for Community Forest Conservation, Afforestation and promotion people participation for Community Forest Conservation. The PAIC had been urgently used to prevent the loss of biodiversity of community forest during they were waiting for the issuing of the next proper Act of Community Forest.

DISCUSSION

Even through, during the PAIC implemented, the evaluation of three dimensional evaluation illustrated the different evaluation among self-, friend- and facilitator-evaluation because they might be have different perception but during the focus group discussion, they did brain storming to propose 4 purposed projects as knowledge given to people for Community Forest Conservation, Afforestation Conservation of Endangerous species of plants and animal and promotion people participation for Community Forest Conservation. Finally, they selected three pilot projects for implementing.

Those were knowledge given to people for Community Forest Conservation, Afforestation and promotion people participation for Community Forest Conservation. The findings of PAIC was congruent to numerous studies of Thiengkamol (2004, 2005a, b, 2010, 2011b, c) and concept of Thiengkamol (2011a) that PAIC training process is able to use for encouraging the participant to be able to make a decision on the problem solving by practicing so it is similar to environmental education process that motivate the practice in decision making of changing behavior in community forest

conservation. PAIC technique can be used for supporting and building the proper behavior of community forest maintenance.

CONCLUSION

However, it indicated they realize on the importance of knowledge given to people for Community Forest Conservation because some community people are not realize to the degradation of community forest and they also suggested to afforestation or cultivation trees in the forest. Moreover, another project was promotion people participation for Community Forest Conservation, it also implied that some of community people still people lacked of participation for Community Forest Conservation. Nevertheless during the focus group discussion, they also suggest to cultivate the awareness and consciousness to make local people to realize the value. Additionally, they would like to have the officer to look after community forest and let local government the law to protect and enforce the law effectively including limiting the forest products collecting and regulation to protect the biodiversity, not allowing forest product selling and let the animal feeding in and examining the forest area every 3 years particularly, it needs to define the clearly boundary of forest.

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