

Chapter 27

Assessment of Capacities of TAOs and CBOs for Local Development in Thailand

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Abstract Under the decentralized development planning process, the role and contributions of local governments as well as local institutions are becoming more important in each and every country irrespective of their overall economic development. Thailand, as a middle income and newly industrialized country, is no exception. Over the past several decades, efforts are being made to decentralize the planning and development process with a participatory approach and strong focus on people-centered development. At the local level, the Tambon Administrative Organization (TAO), as local self-government, and a number of community-based organizations (CBOs) are currently engaged in the local development process and development consequent on the introduction of decentralized development planning for more than 15 years. The development goals of these two institutions at the local levels in rural areas are primarily the same, but the roles, contributions, and processes are different. An attempt is made in this chapter to assess their capacities and contributions in catalyzing local development and also fulfilling the needs of the people within their areas of operations as well as limitations. In terms of their capacities and contributions, CBOs are better placed than the TAOs. CBOs work more closely with the people and try to meet the social, economic, and environmental as well as natural resource development needs.

Keywords Local development • Community-based organization • Tambon administrative organization • Thailand

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27.1 Introduction

Development planning in Thailand is under the supervision of the central government. The National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) is the main factor in setting up guidelines and directives for development of the nation as a whole. The first National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDP) was implemented between 1961 and 1966, with an emphasis on infrastructure improvement for economic activities. Between NESDP 1 and NESDP 6, Thailand has been modernizing to respond to new industrialization process. The National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) has reinstated poverty alleviation as a major focus of its efforts under NESDP 7, 8, and 9, and has placed emphasis on developing poverty alleviation strategies based on community empowerment experiences. Plans to tackle poverty must take into account the considerable amounts of experience from projects of community empowerment during recent years. Poverty policies should endeavor to build on social capital investments and community strengths, and the importance of improving access to land and other natural resources, as key strategies of poverty alleviation.

Thailand has now implemented its 11th plan (2012–2016). For six decades, Thailand has encountered unbalanced development because of the influx of capitalism (Bello et al. 1998; Pongpaichit and Chris 2002). It is obvious that the government and market mechanisms have failed to equally distribute income and public goods to the poor, resulting in so-called government and market failures. Apparently, the government not only does empower the community and make investment in social capital but also focuses on local institutions more rigorously. The capital cities are the center of economic resources and these resources are not equally distributed. People living in rural areas are most vulnerable because they are living far away from the capital (Wattanasiri 2001). Thailand's poverty profile in 2008 showed that 5.2 million people were in the rural areas, constituting about 90 % of the total poor. The Northeast is the poorest region in the country. According to the Thailand Millennium Development Goals Report 2009, Thailand has met the MDGs target very closely in an overall perspective with only less than 10 % poor remaining to be covered in 2015. However, the poverty incidence remains highest in the northeast part of Thailand. The poorest of the poor are elderly and farmers. As a result, rural communities have lagged behind other social sectors in terms of development, employment, and income, and there has been a continuous migration of rural people to Bangkok and the large cities. At the same time, the widening income gap, poverty, and the deterioration of natural resources and the environment have contributed to increased social conflicts and tension.

The country's development may become distorted if the government concentrates only on the industrial sector. Any solution to Thailand's development problems must address the problems at the grassroots level as a large proportion of people still live in abject poverty. Balanced development and sustainable economic growth obviously require alternative models. Local institutions are therefore important to help the central government achieve its development goals.

Local institutions have been in existence for many years in Thailand. Doungkaew (1999) has clearly explained the constraints of local institutions in Thailand. She argues that (1) the majority of rural institutions are small with limited activities in scope; (2) they induce impacts on a very small section of the society; (3) funding remains a constant concern of these organizations; (4) the majority of rural institutions are not registered; and (5) only some of the initiatives undertaken by these have succeeded. Vichit-Vadakan (2001) further explains that most of the community-based organizations (CBOs) in Thailand are struggling for sustainability. Many were helped initially with “seed money” from external sources, including government agencies. Moreover, CBOs also have various problems in management and financial skills, so their management has not been effective. It has been found that their manpower skills are not properly developed and therefore they have a low level of professionalism (Boonyabanha 2004).

Tambon (sub-district) Administrative Organizations (TAOs) in Thailand have been providing certain development functions and administrative services. They are responsible for encouraging public participation and ensuring decentralized patterns of rural development in Thailand. As a form of local government at the lowest level in rural areas, TAOs promote democracy at the grassroots level among the rural Thai communities to provide public services for improving the quality of life, and implement development projects, thus fulfilling the needs of the local people. Generally, the government has full authority to make political decisions with regard to the decentralization process from the central to local levels. In the case of Thailand, the decentralization policy as stipulated in the new Constitution aims to devolve the authority as much as appropriate to local governments. In accordance with the new Constitution of 2007 and the decentralization laws, local government units such as the TAOs have become stronger and expanded their responsibilities in line with their resources, and they are functioning as local institutions. To date, most of the functions and responsibilities will be or are in the process of being devolved to the local governments. Moreover, the government has also allocated a large portion of its budget and manpower to the TAOs. The government continues this move as necessary, considering that the revenue and budget for the TAOs are essential elements for rural development. Thus, effective budget management within the TAOs would enable the people in their respective localities to initiate and implement meaningful development projects for improving their quality of life.

CBOs also complement and supplement the activities of the TAOs by promoting the people’s active participation and engaging in development projects. There have been various studies on the role of institutions in rural community development in many countries by the Asian Productivity Organization over many years. However, little research is carried out on TAOs and CBOs in Thailand with reference to their effectiveness in rural or community development.

There are linkages between the central and local governments for the overall development of the country. The self-reliance of each local institution depends on its ability to sustain development projects despite limited/inadequate funding support. Effective links between development activities/services and other groups/institutions within the village are also important when capital pooling is needed for

self-help groups, housewives' groups, etc. In this case, the relationships among local institutions—TAOs and CBOs vis-à-vis the central government—are absolutely essential to run the development projects efficiently. TAOs are local legal bodies financially supported by the central government, whereas CBOs are locally autonomous and are financially supported mostly by members and rarely by nongovernmental sources. The central government can also allocate some financial support to CBOs but to a limited extent. In general, financial support from the central government is spent to promote better livelihoods in the community.

To develop at the grassroots level, local institutions are required to provide strategies, programs, and activities to empower local people. Local institutions apply the Sufficiency Economy concept. Therefore, TAOs and CBOs shed light on the deep-seated problems of local people. Providing services and meeting people's expectations are two important challenges commonly faced by the TAOs and CBOs. People's expectations and the capacity of local institutions need to be analyzed by indicators covering economic, social, natural resources, and environment development aspects. The ultimate goal of such institutions in the context of rural development is the protection of people's welfare.

With this backdrop, the objective of this chapter is to assess the capacities of the TAOs and the CBOs in fulfilling the needs and expectations of people at the local level in the context of overall rural development.

27.2 Methods and Materials

The study is primarily based on secondary and primary data sets embedded with both qualitative and quantitative research methods. The descriptive type of research has been applied to describe the role and function of local institutions in the context of rural development in Thailand. To understand local institutions clearly, this research has attempted to describe the principles and activities of local institutions undertaken and linked with their achievements and contributions for rural development. The exploratory type of research was applied for the assessment of local institutions' activities in Changwat Phirsanulok. First, it has attempted to assess the socioeconomic impacts of local institutions measured through their performance. Second, it has analyzed the people's expectations and the capability of local institutions in fulfilling their needs in relationship to rural development. Eventually, this research has been conducted to answer how local institutions are able to contribute to strengthen rural development in Thailand.

The reconnaissance survey helped in gathering basic data and information about the sample Tambons chosen for the study, and provided insight into the research issues more deeply than initially conceptualized, further strengthened through key informant interviews. These two steps helped to refine the questionnaire. After pre-testing, the questionnaire was finalized and employed for primary data collection for interviewing the target samples. Simple random sampling was used for the two sets of samples for data collection.

According to the sampling formula, the total sample household size of TAOs was 142 and the sample size of the members of the CBOs was 129. The selected CBOs for sampling the respondents were chosen primarily with one important consideration: that they were very active in savings and occupational, social, and microfinance group activities.

The data were analyzed by applying both qualitative and quantitative tools. The analytical techniques used were descriptive statistics and analytical statistics. The weighted average index (WAI) was the main statistical tool used following the scaling techniques. Normally, a 5-point Likert scale with a value from 0 to 1 is used for computing the WAI. The five points refer to “very high, high, moderate, low, and very low” according to the specific context, and issues that addressed this were modified according to the subject of investigation. The issues were analyzed with the WAI.

$$WAI = (W_1F_1 + W_2F_2 + W_3F_3 + \dots + W_nF_n) / (F_1 + F_2 + \dots + F_n)$$

where WAI = weighted mean index

W = assigned weight for a particular class under the 5-point scale (very low, $W_1 = 0.20$; low, $W_2 = 0.40$; moderate, $W_3 = 0.60$; high, $W_4 = 0.80$; very high, $W_5 = 1.0$)

F_1 = corresponding frequency of that class

The criteria used for interpreting the results are given below:

Criteria for assessing weighted average index:				
Very high (VH)	High (H)	Moderate (M)	Low (L)	Very low (VL)
0.81–1.0	0.61–0.8	0.41–0.6	0.21–0.4	0.00–0.20

27.3 Profile of the Study Areas

Changwat Phitsanulok was purposively chosen as the study area because it is a pilot province for decentralized planning and development. It is located between the central and northern regions of Thailand. Phitsanulok is one of the northern provinces that serves as a center of commerce, transportation, and communication between two regions. There are 82 Tambons and 374 CBOs in the province. Three Tambons in three districts were selected purposively for intensive field research. These Tambons are categorized as small, medium, and large following revenue criteria, excluding grants from the central government (more than 20 million baht is large, 6–20 million baht is medium, and less than 6 million baht is small). The purpose of selecting study areas into various classes is to understand the relative dynamics of Tambons in terms of their activities for fulfilling the needs of the people and contributing to overall development in the rural areas.

Table 27.1 General information on the Tambon Administrative Organizations (TAOs)

	Tambon Administrative Organization		
	Chumsang Songkram (Large)	Wang Nok-An (Medium)	Sanamkhli (Small)
General information			
Geography	Floodplain area	Hilly area	Plains area
Area (km ²)	120.39	523.55	31.12
Population (persons)	7,955	16,788	2,669
Density (persons/km ²)	66	32	86
Number of villages	11	20	6
Number of households	2,349	5,746	708
Main agricultural production	Rice, soybean, corn	Cassava, corn	Rice, corn, green bean
Commerce and service	3 gas stations	2 PTT gas stations	18 small gas stations
	14 small gas stations	4 resorts	

Source: Basic Information on TAOs and Basic Minimum Needs (2010)

Among the three Tambons taken for this study (Table 27.1), the largest area and the most populated Tambon is Wang Nok-An, but it has the least population density. On the other hand, Sanam Khli Tambon, which is the smallest in geographic area, has the lowest population but the highest population density. Being in the plains area, Chumsang Songkram and Sanam Khli have fertile soil, suitable for agriculture due to the presence of the Nan River with an irrigation canal and many swamps. Although Tambon Wang Nok-An is hilly and mountainous, it supports the cultivation of cash crops such as corn and cassava. One of the serious problems in all three Tambons is flooding in the rainy reason and lack of water during the dry season. Surface water is scarce during the dry season, but the villagers can still tap available and high-potential groundwater in the area for agricultural use.

27.3.1 Social Profile

Social information on the TAOs in the three Tambons is categorized into *education*, *health*, and *security* (Table 27.2). Generally, the educational services provided by the three TAOs are almost equal, but the adult literacy rate of the household members in Tambon Sanam Khli is comparatively lower than the other two Tambons. Public health services rendered by the three Tambons are equal; the number of police stations provided for security purposes varies according to the number of people residing in each Tambon.

According to the Basic Minimum Needs (BMN) Report and Annual Report of the TAOs in 2010, the percentage of educational services provided by the three

Table 27.2 Social profile of the Tambon Administrative Organizations (TAOs)

Social information	Tambon Administrative Organization					
	Chumsang Songkram		Wang Nok-An		Sanam Khli	
	(Large)		(Medium)		(Small)	
	Number	(%)	Number	(%)	Number	(%)
Educational service						
Children 6–15 years of age receive 9 years of compulsory education	851	100.0	1,040	100.0	244	99.6
Household members 15–60 years old are literate	3,413	99.9	4,356	99.8	1,119	99.6
Public health						
Pregnant women receive prenatal care	7	100.0	14	100.0	7	100.0
Pregnant woman receive birth-giving services and postnatal care	13	100.0	11	100.0	14	100.0
Children under 1 year of age receive the necessary vaccinations	29	100.0	41	100.0	25	100.0
Children 6–12 years old receive the necessary vaccinations	568	100.0	689	100.0	170	98.8
Households with sanitation facilities	2,181	100.0	5,312	100.0	662	100.0
Security						
Number of police substations	1		3		1	

Source: Basic Minimum Needs (2010) and Annual Report of TAOs (2010)

TAOs is quite high, considering that 100 % of the children 6–15 years of age in Chumsang Songkram and Wang Nok-An, and 99.6 % in Sanam Khli, receive 9 (nine) years of compulsory education. Generally, pupils who have completed their primary education go to secondary schools in the district or in any part of Phitsanulok Province. There are, however, a few illiterate persons in these three Tambons, but most of the 15- to 60-year-olds are literate (more than 99 %). Moreover, 100 % of pregnant women in the three Tambons have received prenatal care as well as birth-giving services and postnatal care. In addition, 100 % of the children less than 1 year of age also have received the necessary vaccinations. In addition, 100 % of children 6–12 years of age in two Tambons have received the necessary vaccinations, except in Sanam Khli, which has registered a slightly lower percentage (98.8 %). Thus, generally, the educational and public health services in the three Tambons are being carried out effectively.

It should also be noted that the TAOs in these Tambons also provide the necessary budget to set up projects to support school activities as well as those in the public health centers. Moreover, promotion of sanitation can be judged as successful, considering the fact that 100 % of the households in these three Tambons have toilets. This is one factor that could help prevent the spread of diseases such as diarrhea and food poisoning and some forms of contamination in the drinking water that causes other diseases.

27.3.2 *Economic Profile*

The economic information shown in Table 27.3 reveals that there is a remarkable variation in the average income per year per person between the rice farmers and the other crop farmers in the study area. As mentioned earlier, Chumsang Songkram and Sanam Khli are plain areas that are suitable for raising a variety of crops and obtaining high yields. In fact, some areas are reported to be available for rice cultivation, even two to three times per year, especially when the water resource is abundant. On the other hand, cassava and corn are the most important upland crops cultivated in Wang Nok-An. Cultivation of fruit trees and vegetables are generally undertaken either on homesteads or in fields near the farmers' homes.

Household income is one of the most important indicators for measuring the standard of living of the population, and is also an important component for economic planning. Based on the target of BMNs, the average annual income to be able to meet the basic needs of a person should not be less than 23,000 baht/person/year. In 2010, the three Tambons therefore surpassed the target and achievement of the BMN. As shown in Table 27.3, Chumsang Songkram has the highest average income person/year at 64,306 baht and Wang Nok-An had the lowest average income at 49,374 baht/person/year.

27.3.3 *Infrastructure Development*

The major infrastructures in the three Tambons, such as transportation, water resources, and households with e-communication, were also studied. The results (Table 27.4) show that Tambon Chumsang Songkram has improved its roads whereas the other two Tambons still have soil roads. Although all Tambons have laterite roads, the condition of these roads is subject to deterioration during the rainy season. Therefore, the TAOs need to maintain and improve the surface of the

Table 27.3 Economic profile on the Tambon Administrative Organizations (TAOs)

	Tambon Administrative Organization		
	Chumsang Songkram	Wang Nok-An	Sanam Khli
Economic information	(Large)	(Medium)	(Small)
Main occupation	Rice farmer	Upland crops	Rice farmer
Average income/person/year (baht)	64,306	49,374	55,774
Main production	Rice, soybean, corn	Cassava, corn	Rice, corn, green bean
Commerce and service	3 gas stations	2 PTT gas stations	18 small gas stations
	14 small gas stations	4 resorts	

Source: Basic Information on TAOs and Annual Report of TAOs (2010)

Table 27.4 Infrastructure profile of the Tambon Administrative Organizations (TAOs)

Infrastructure information	Tambon Administrative Organization					
	Chumsang Songkram		Wang Nok-An		Sanam Khli	
	(Large)		(Medium)		(Small)	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Transportation						
Soil road	0	0	50.0 km	46.3	4.0 km	7.1
Laterite road	250 km	94.8	27.8 km	25.8	22.0 km	39.3
Asphalt road	11.68 km	4.4	15.6 km	14.4	10.0 km	17.9
Concrete road	2.11 km	0.8	14.5 km	13.5	20.0 km	35.7
Total	263.8 km	100.0	107.9 km	100.0	56.0 km	100.0
Water resources						
Reservoir/irrigation	0	0	2	1.7	1	2.9
Pool/pond	4	4.0	35	30.2	0	0
Artesian wells	30	29.7	33	28.5	19	55.9
Weir/dike	9	8.9	15	12.9	1	2.9
Village-water supply	19	18.8	26	22.4	6	17.7
Mountain-water supply	0	0	5	4.3	0	0
Natural water resources/ brook/canal/marsh	39	38.6	0	0	7	20.6
Total	101	100.0	116	100.0	34	100.0
Households with electricity	1,985	98.0	4,853	95.0	643	97.0
Communication						
Post office	1	–	1	–	0	–
Public telephone	5	–	20	–	15	–
Broadcasting tower	44	–	17	–	7	–
Households with telephones	1,520	75.0	850	17.0	50	8.0

Source: Summary Report of TAOs (2010)

roads with asphalt or construct concrete roads. Based on the TAO information, infrastructure improvement has been its main task since the TAOs were established in 1997. In fact, the majority of the expenditures of the TAOs is for road maintenance and the improvement of road quality. However, because of budget limitations, it has become quite difficult for the TAOs to improve all roads, specifically by asphaltting or changing to concrete roads. The asphalt and concrete roads are shorter in Chumsang Songkram and Wang Nok-An as compared to Sanam Khli, which has slightly longer roads.

All Tambons have abundant natural water resources, giving an advantage to the Tambons to grow various crops and fish for domestic use. All the villages in the Tambons get their domestic water supply from the village water systems. However, the villagers in Wang Nok-An are also able to avail themselves of the mountain

water supply system. Underground water is abundant in Tambon Chumsang Songkram but it has no irrigation reservoir for agriculture.

More than 95 % of the households in the three Tambons have electricity supply, although it is much less in some mountainous remote areas in Wang Nok-An. Furthermore, as for household communication systems, the situation in Tambon Chumsang Songkram is much better than in the other two Tambons. Nevertheless, all Tambons have public phone systems, household phones, and broadcasting towers. The broadcasting tower has been an important channel for local communications, where the villagers can receive reports, announcements, and other relevant information through government news broadcasts by the village headman.

27.4 People's Expectations and the Capacity of Tambon Administrative Organizations in Rural Development

The study analyzes the degree of people's expectations and the capacity of TAOs in rural development covering three dimensions: social, economic, and environmental and natural resource development.

The people's expectations regarding the TAO rural development activities are shown in Table 27.5. The need for vocational training has received top priority. The field survey revealed that 35.9 % of the respondents need vocational training in food preservation, food processing, flower growing, dressmaking, and cattle farming. The major reason behind this is that the local people like to have supplementary occupations to increase their job opportunities and income, especially during the dry season (the farm off-season). People's expectations regarding vocational training from the TAOs were the highest (40.9 %) in Sanam Khli, as compared to the two other TAOs, Chumsang Songkram with 34.8 % and Wang Nok-An with 32.7 %. Sanam Khli is the smallest Tambon but has the highest population density. The local people there need a budget allocation from the TAO for vocational training.

The other expectation is the demand for social welfare (26.8 %). For example, TAOs must provide pensions for aging persons, the disabled, and AIDS patients. It was found that people's expectations in promoting social welfare such as pensions for aging persons, pensions for the disabled, and pensions for AIDS patients in Chumsang Songkram were dramatically higher than in the other two Tambons, as people in Chumsang Songkram have a much more advanced vision of the social safety net, particularly for vulnerable groups.

In addition, 28.8 % of the respondents also expected to receive effective support in terms of educational assistance, public health, and healthcare services such as first aid for the locality. Even though public health and healthcare activities are the responsibility of the Ministry of Health, the TAOs still have budget allocations to support relevant activities such as training the villagers to be health volunteers. In this respect, there is no difference among the three Tambons as people in each

Table 27.5 Level of people's expectations for social, economic, and environmental and natural resources development

People's expectation	Size of TAOs						All TAOs	
	Large		Medium		Small			
	(CSSK)		(WNA)		(SMK)		F	%
	F	%	F	%	F	%		
1. Social development								
1.1 Vocational training by the TAOs	16	34.8	17	32.7	18	40.9	51	35.9
1.2 Promoting social welfare such as pensions for aging, pensions for the disabled, and pension for AIDS patients	15	32.6	12	23.1	11	25.0	38	26.8
1.3 Supporting the basic educational system	5	10.9	7	13.5	5	11.4	17	12.0
1.4 Promotion of public health and healthcare such as first aid	7	15.2	10	19.2	7	15.9	24	16.8
1.5 Promotion of people's participation in local administration	3	6.5	6	11.5	3	6.8	12	8.5
Total	46	100.0	52	100.0	44	100	142	100.0
2. Economic development								
2.1 Infrastructure development such as construction and maintenance of roads, repair of water supply systems, irrigation for the agricultural sector	23	50.0	28	53.8	22	50.0	73	51.4
2.2 Financial support by TAOs such as providing budget/capital for the groups, creating job opportunities for the people in the locality	16	34.8	17	32.7	17	38.6	47	35.2
2.3 Income generation such as ability to generate income in the community and be able to increase employment opportunity for villagers	7	15.2	7	13.5	5	11.4	22	13.4
Total	46	100.0	52	100.0	44	100.0	142	100.0
3. Natural resources and environmental development								
3.1 In conservation of natural resources and environment including forest conservation and solving the problems of forest encroachment	18	39.1	25	48.1	20	45.5	63	44.4
3.2 In natural disaster management in the form of flood prevention, flood relief, flood recovery, and forest fire control	28	60.9	27	51.9	24	54.5	79	55.6
Total	46	100.0	52	100.0	44	100.0	142	100.0

Source: Field Survey 2006

F frequency

Tambon have been benefiting equitably from the health- and education-related services provided by each TAO, although the largest size Tambon showed the higher interest because of its size in covering more beneficiaries within the Tambon as compared to other two Tambons.

The last in the ranking of the people's expectations (8.5 %) concerned the promotion and motivation of villagers to participate in every local administrative process, such as participation in public meetings specifically regarding the formulation of guidelines for general Tambon planning as well as the monitoring and evaluation process by the local people. In this case, a similar scenario was mentioned for the public health sector and basic education system. There was no difference among the three Tambons as people in each Tambon have been benefiting equitably from the health-related services provided by each TAO. However, the larger Tambons still need to mobilize the people's participation in its own local administration system.

As far as social development is concerned, the results show that except for the component of vocational training by Tambons, all other components such as social welfare, basic education, and public health, and people's participation in local administration, are included in the higher expectations of people in general, with the exception of the large Tambon, Chumsang Songkram, in terms of population size.

The most important aspect of local people's expectations regarding economic development (51.4 %) is for the construction and maintenance of infrastructure, including the construction and maintenance of roads, water supply systems, and irrigation for the agricultural sector. The second need is for financial support (35.2 %), such as subsidizing a certain amount of budget for the groups and creating job opportunities for local people. The third need is generating income and increasing employment opportunities for the villagers (13.4 %). According to the observations of people's expectations for economic development, three Tambons have shown no significant difference, as the people were equally interested in their basic needs, linked with economic development.

Referring to natural disaster management by the TAOs, the people's perceived first priority (55.6 %) focused on flooding problems, which occur every year. The TAOs cooperate with government agencies in providing relief assistance to households affected by severe flooding. In this case, after the TAOs survey the damage, they report to the government agencies to obtain a certain amount of emergency budget to help the people affected by the disaster. At the same time, the TAOs also take responsibility for alleviating the impact of the disaster on the lives of the affected people in the Tambon by responding to basic needs such as food, medicine, and drinking water. Therefore, Chumsang Songkram, where a flood occurs almost every year, embodies the highest people's expectations, whereas the people of Wang Nok-An have expressed the highest expectations for conservation of natural forests and the environment because that area is mountainous with substantial forest coverage.

27.4.1 Capacity of Tambon Administrative Organizations in Social Development

Concerning the capacity of the TAOs in the area of social development, the study has focused on three aspects: (1) the capacity of TAOs to provide social welfare to local people, (2) the capacity of TAOs to promote people's participation, and (3) the capacity of TAOs in terms of human resource management. The degree of TAO capacity is at medium level (WAI is 0.60) but more than the average situation. Table 27.6 shows that the degree of TAO capacity in providing social welfare and in promoting human resource development/management to villagers is at a medium level, whereas the degree of capacity to promote people's participation in planning, monitoring, and evaluation is rather high (0.7).

Regarding the capacity of TAOs to provide social welfare to local people, four out of eight items exhibited medium levels with respect to the level of promotion for vocational groups, such as allocating budgets for training, field study, workshops, the ability to provide pensions for the disabled, and the ability to provide vocational training and to manage nursery centers in the Tambon. The other aspects of social development, such as the ability to promote public health and healthcare, for example, first aid, the ability of TAOs to provide pensions for aging persons, and the ability to prevent and control contagious diseases had reflected higher index value where as it was for providing pensions for AIDS patients; because the expenditure for curing these patients is very high, the TAOs are unable to supply sufficient money for them. Although overall assessment of the capacity of TAOs to provide social welfare to local people was shown at a medium level in average, Chumsang Songkram was weighted at a high level, whereas the other two were weighted at the upper medium level because the larger TAOs have greater capacity to provide social welfare to the local people than the smaller TAOs.

In terms of comparing the specific items under the capacity of each TAO in providing social welfare to local people, the capacity to promote public health and healthcare for first aid, to provide a pension for aging persons, and preventing and controlling contagious diseases were at the same high level in all three TAOs because these items were fulfilled by all TAOs as the most fundamental and important issues for the social welfare improvement of the local community.

However, regarding the capacity to promote vocational groups and to provide a pension for the disabled, it was also found that the larger-size Chumsang Songkram was weighted at a high level, while the other two were still at a medium level, as the larger Tambon had a larger budget for implementing those specific items.

The ability to promote democracy in terms of elections and public hearings had a high level of TAOs in human resource management, whereas the integration of various resources for rural development had a low level. The TAOs act as the center of several resources (such as the local media, local healthcare centers, nurseries) so that they are able to establish mutual aid groups, healthcare services, and educational and recreational activities and utilities for the people who have no chance of creating job opportunities in the society.

Table 27.6 Capacity of Tambon Administrative Organizations (TAOs) in social development

Items	Size of TAOs			Degree of capacity	
	Large	Medium	Small	Total	OA
	(CSSK)	(WNA)	(SNK)	WAI	
Capacity of TAOs in providing social welfare to local people					
1.1 To promote public health and healthcare for first aid	0.7	0.7	0.6	0.7	H
1.2 To provide pension for aging persons	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	H
1.3 Preventing and controlling contagious diseases	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	H
1.4 Promotion for vocational groups such as budget for training, field study, workshops	0.7		0.6	0.6	M
1.5 To provide pensions for the disabled	0.7	0.6	0.5	0.6	M
1.6 To provide vocational training	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	M
1.7 To manage nursery centers in Tambons	0.6	0.6	0.5	0.6	M
1.8 To provide pensions for AIDS patients	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	L
Aggregate (WAI)	0.7	0.6	0.6	0.6	M
Capacity of TAOs in promoting people's participation					
1.9 Promoting people's participation in planning	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	H
1.10 Promoting people's participation in monitoring and evaluations	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	H
Aggregate (WAI)	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	H
Capacity of TAOs in human resource management					
1.11 To promote democracy in terms of election and public hearings	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	H
1.12 To integrate various resources for rural development	0.5	0.6	0.6	0.6	M
1.13 To protect local arts, culture, and tradition	0.5	0.5	0.6	0.5	M
1.14 To provide community learning centers	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	M
Aggregate (WAI)	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	M
All components (WAI)	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	M
Criteria for assessing weighted average index					
Very high (VH)	High (H)	Medium (M)	Low (L)	Very low (VL)	
0.81–1.0	0.61–0.8	0.41–0.6	0.21–0.4	0.00–0.20	

Source: Field Survey 2006

WAI weighted average index, OA overall assessment

27.4.2 Capacity of TAOs for Economic Development

Based on Table 27.7, it can be observed that the ability to provide and maintain the infrastructure of the TAOs, such as constructing and maintaining basic infrastructure and repairing water supply systems, had a WAI of 0.7, which corresponds to a high-level capacity. The respondents explained that they were highly satisfied with the capacity of TAOs in providing and maintaining infrastructure services because the villagers could take advantage of the good transportation facilities and roads from their area to the city. It is evident that many roads in the Tambons have been improved, from laterite to concrete roads, using the TAO budgets. In the capacity of TAOs for economic development, all three TAOs have been assessed overall at a high level on average, but the capacity of Chumsang Songkram (large) showed significantly that the people's perception of the TAO level of capacity regarding construction and maintenance of roads was very high, although the other two were only at a high level.

Comparing the financial support capacity of each TAO, all three TAOs showed a large capacity in providing capital/budget for their members, and Chumsang Songkram (large) was significantly high in providing financial training to its members, whereas the other two were not yet satisfactory in this regard. Apart from that, the Wang Nok-An TAO (medium) showed a capacity to promote tourism dramatically better than the other two, and all three TAOs were a bit weak in promoting industrial development at the local level as well.

The ability to generate income was perceived as low with a WAI of 0.4, which means that the TAOs were unsuccessful in generating income and increasing employment opportunities for the villagers, and the people do not expect to get much assistance from the TAOs in income generation. As the overall average assessment regarding the capacity in support of income generation by each TAO is at a low level, the TAO's capacity to encourage locals in the community to propose development programs was weighted at a better level compared to the other items, and it was also found that the capacity of all TAOs to decrease the villagers' current debt was low.

27.4.3 Capacity of Tambon Administrative Organizations for Natural Resource and Environmental Development

The levels of the TAO capacity for natural resource and environmental development are shown in Table 27.8. The capacity of TAOs regarding natural disaster relief was at a high level, with a WAI of 0.7, which reveals that the TAOs attempt to respond to the real needs of the people and resolve natural disaster problems directly. The level of TAO capacity in terms of garbage collection management was low, although it should be the responsibility of the villagers to collect and properly dispose of their garbage.

Table 27.7 Capacity of Tambon Administrative Organizations for economic development

Items	Size of TAOs			Degree of capacity	
	Large	Medium	Small	Total	OA
	(CSSK)	(WNA)	(SNK)	WAI	
Infrastructure					
1.1 Construction and maintenance of roads	0.9	0.7	0.7	0.8	H
1.2 Ability to maintain, improve, and repair water supply systems	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	H
1.3 Watershed management for agricultural sector	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	H
1.4 Providing and controlling markets	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.6	M
Average (WAI)	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	H
Financial support					
1.5 To provide budget/capital for members	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	H
1.6 To create job opportunities for members	0.6	0.5	0.6	0.6	M
1.7 To provide financial training	0.7	0.5	0.5	0.6	M
1.8 To promote industrial development at local levels	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.4	L
1.9 To promote tourism	0.3	0.6	0.3	0.4	L
Average (WAI)	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	M
Income generation					
1.10 Encouraging locals in community to propose development programs	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	M
1.11 LIs are able to establish saving groups in the community	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	L
1.12 Villagers are able to create income opportunities after receiving capital from TAOs	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	L
1.13 LIs are able to increase employment opportunities for the villagers	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	L
1.14 Villagers are able to decrease their current debt	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.3	L
Average (WAI)	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.4	L
All components (WAI)	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	M
Criteria for assessing weighted average index					
Very high (VH)	High (H)	Medium (M)	Low (L)	Very low (VL)	
0.81–1.0	0.61–0.8	0.41–0.6	0.21–0.4	0.00–0.20	

Source: Field Survey 2006

WAI weighted average index, OA overall assessment

Table 27.8 Capacity of Tambon Administrative Organizations (TAOs) for natural resource and environmental development

Items	Size of TAOs			Degree of capacity	
	Large	Medium	Small	Total	OA
	(CSSK)	(WNA)	(SNK)	WAI	
Conservation of natural resources and the environment					
1.1 Natural disaster relief such as flooding	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7	H
1.2 Conservation of natural resources and environment	0.5	0.7	0.5	0.6	H
1.3 Solving forest encroachment problems	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	M
1.4 Inspection of environment and regarding pollution	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.5	M
1.5 Forest fire control	0.4	0.5	0.4	0.4	L
1.6 Garbage collection management	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.4	L
Average (WAI)	0.5	0.4	0.4	0.5	M
Criteria for assessing weighted average index					
Very high (VH)	High (H)	Medium (M)	Low (L)	Very low (VL)	
0.81–1.0	0.61–0.8	0.41–0.6	0.21–0.4	0.00–0.20	

Source: Field Survey 2006

WAI weighted average index, OA overall assessment

The capacity of the TAOs regarding conservation of natural resources and the environment can be considered to be at a moderately important level. However, the overall capacity of the TAOs in natural resource and environment development was satisfactory at a medium level, with a WAI of 0.5. By comparing the capacity of each TAO for conservation of natural resources and of the environment, the large TAO from Chumsang Songkram was a bit better than the rest on average; however, the TAO from Wang Nok-An showed a better capacity for conservation of natural resources and the environment as that Tambon has the potential to do so.

27.5 People's Expectations from Community-Based Organizations (CBOs) in Rural Development

The results of the study also have shown that people have a very high level of expectation of the CBOs (93 %) in either facilitating or arranging vocational training programs for them. Similarly, 63.5 % of the respondents expected that the CBOs should be involved in promoting public health and healthcare-related issues (Table 27.9). The purpose of vocational training is to enhance skills in livelihood-related activities that generate alternative occupations and supplementary income.

Table 27.9 Expectations of members of community-based organizations (CBOs)

Items	Percentage of respondents
Social development	
1. Vocational training	93.0
2. Promotion of public health and healthcare services	60.5
3. Improvement of administration with transparency and financial systems	29.5
4. Promotion of people's participation in group activities	14.7
Economic development	
1. Financial support through savings and credit without interest	51.9
2. Income generation through group activities	36.4
Natural resources and environment	
1. Conservation of natural resources and protection of the environment (conserving community forests, increasing number of trees by new plantings, etc.)	36.4

Source: Field Survey 2006

Provision of vocational training is very common in Thailand through sectoral/line agencies and at the Tambon level as well. An important approach is to acquire new and upgraded skills by members through the “learning and doing” process. The members who have had vocational training are able to increase the amount of their production and to generate a marketable surplus for sale. However, the needs of the members are not only linked with vocational training but also with financial support, for which the members have a high level of expectation. For example, more than 50 % of respondents expected financial support through savings and loans without interest. Financial support was the second greatest need after vocational training. Respondents understand that these two aspects together can bring changes in economic development at the local level. More than one third of the respondents reflected on the possibility of generating income through different group activities. Similarly, an equal percentage of respondents also expressed an interest in conserving natural resources and the environment through new planting.

27.5.1 Capacity of Community-Based Organizations Regarding Social Development

The capacity of CBOs in the area of social development in the respective localities was highly correlated with different activities associated with people's participation and human resource development and management (Table 27.10). The capacity level was measured by a 5-point Likert scale and expressed through the weighted average index (WAI). This technique was also applied to other sections of this chapter. The capacity of CBOs to promote people's participation was high. A similar level of capacity was also observed for other social development activities with

Table 27.10 Capacity of community-based organizations (CBOs) in social development

Items	Capacity level			
	WAI	OA		
People's participation in group activities				
1. Promoting people's participation in election of leader and committee members	0.8	High		
2. Promoting people's participation in planning	0.7	High		
3. Attending training and other activities	0.7	High		
4. Expressing views in the meetings and public affairs	0.6	High		
5. Participation in contributing labor	0.6	High		
6. Promoting people's participation in monitoring and evaluation	0.8	High		
Aggregate	0.7	High		
Human resource management				
7. Building mutual trust and confidence among members and with the committees as well as leaders	0.8	High		
8. Feeling of ownership in group activities	0.8	High		
9. Promoting democratic process for group activity management system	0.7	High		
10. Providing occupational training to members	0.6	High		
11. Facilitating members to take a leadership role	0.5	Medium		
12. Solving problems and groups conflicts	0.4	Low		
Aggregate	0.6	High		
Total average	0.7	High		
Criteria for assessing weighted average index				
Very high (VH)	High (H)	Medium (M)	Low (L)	Very low (VL)
0.81–1.0	0.61–0.8	0.41–0.6	0.21–0.4	0.00–0.20

Source: Field Survey 2006

WAI weighted average index, OA overall assessment

minor variation, as the WAI varied from .6 to .8. The CBO roles and contributions seemed to be high in terms of encouraging peoples' participation in planning processes and activities, for attending training programs, expressing their views in meetings and public affairs, and contributing labor for different social development activities. The people's participation in monitoring and evaluation of socioeconomic project activities was well reflected among all areas of participation. This is quite obvious, as people always expect direct and indirect benefits from the project activities at the local level. As CBOs are people's organizations, they work very closely with the people in their localities. The functionaries are among the local people. They know each other and interact very closely. Hence, the CBOs' role and responsibility for encouraging different activities are relatively easy and also intensive, and this is why the capacity of the CBOs in this aspect as felt to be high level.

Human resource management-related activities were measured through mutual trust and confidence building, ownership in group activities, promotion of the democratic process-driven management system, providing occupational training,

facilitating the leadership role of members, and solving the problems arising in group activities and also resolving group conflicts. The first four items have appeared at the high level that reflects the remarkable achievement on the part of the CBOs. In terms of resolving issues and group conflicts, the capacity of the CBOs was low, which implies that CBOs have not yet been very successful in this aspect of human resource management. Local conflicting issues were more sensitive. CBO functionaries, being local, have faced difficulties in resolving local conflicting issues. A third party or a non-local organization or higher body such as the TAO may contribute more than the CBOs. Very often the success of any development project is directly linked with the absence of group conflicts at the local level, which is an indicator of equal access and ownership of the project activities.

In comparing the component of the people's participation with the component of human resource development management, there is hardly any difference between them. Whatever reflected on the CBOs, this implies more intensive and closer interaction between the communities and the CBOs to achieve the best from the social development process and outcomes.

27.5.2 Capacity of Community-Based Organizations in Economic Development

The high level of capacity of the CBOs in economic development was reflected in the areas of ensuring benefits to the members, encouraging them to save part of their income, and increasing employment opportunities through group activities in nonagricultural activities, which was directly linked with benefiting the financial capacity of the members. Table 27.11 shows that the level of CBO capacity for

Table 27.11 Capacity of community-based organizations (CBOs) in economic development

Items	Level of capacity			
	WAI	OA		
1. Ensuring benefits to the members	0.8	High		
2. Encouraging the members to save through group activities	0.7	High		
3. Increasing employment opportunities for members	0.7	High		
4. Creating income-earning opportunities through group activities with capital support from the CBOs	0.5	Medium		
5. Increasing production from group activities	0.4	Low		
6. Guidance to decrease their current debt status	0.4	Low		
Aggregate	0.5	Medium		
Criteria for assessing weighted average index				
Very high (VH)	High (H)	Medium (M)	Low (L)	Very low (VL)
0.81–1.0	0.61–0.8	0.41–0.6	0.21–0.4	0.00–0.20

Source: Field Survey 2006

WAI weighted average index, OA overall assessment

creating income-earning opportunities through group activities with capital support from the CBOs was seen to be at a medium level, as they have meager resources basically raised and contributed through memberships and shares for different economic activities, sometimes supplemented by limited external support through sectoral line agencies.

The TAOs are positioned comparatively well in this respect. As a local government, TAOs have access to multiple sources of funding in addition to its own generated revenues through taxes. CBOs are composed of small groups with few members. Their resources are very small and are inadequate to meet their needs for investment in economic activities. Members of CBOs are not very successful in increasing their production level, which is linked with generating income from group activities. The CBOs' guidance for decreasing the debt level is reflected at a low level. Without a larger production and substantial income from the group activities, it is impossible to cut down the indebtedness. In these two aspects, CBOs have demonstrated a low level of capacity.

27.5.3 Capacity of CBOs in Natural Resources and Environmental Protection

The levels of the CBO capacity to educate members to conserve natural resources and convincing them to realize the importance of forestry are shown in Table 27.12. The highest level was observed for persuading members to participate in conserving natural resources and the environment. Generally, CBOs are aware of the real situation of the environment in their localities and of the problems with which they are confronted. Therefore, CBOs are able to encourage the members in the locality to cooperate in solving the problems properly. For this reason, the level of CBO capacity regarding the conservation of natural resources was high, as they could fulfill the

Table 27.12 Capacity of community-based organizations (CBOs) in natural resources and environmental protection

Items	Level of capacity			
	WAI	OA		
1. Participating in conservation of natural resources and environmental activities	0.6	High		
2. Managing natural disasters	0.6	High		
3. Establishment of community forestry management group activity	0.5	Medium		
Aggregate	0.6	High		
Criteria for assessing weighted average index				
Very high (VH)	High (H)	Medium (M)	Low (L)	Very low (VL)
0.81–1.0	0.61–0.8	0.41–0.6	0.21–0.4	0.00–0.20

Source: Field Survey 2006

WAI weighted average index, OA overall assessment

people's real felt needs and expectations. Managing natural disasters associated with floods, road accidents, and fire hazards at times at the local level was also reflected as high because the CBOs and local people have awareness as well preparedness at the local level through the decentralized planning process. Disaster prevention and management activities are the new agenda for the local government (TAO) at present, with support and linkages from the provincial to district level, and at the Tambon and village level. Local youth are engaged in volunteer services with some training and preparedness exposure. In establishing community forestry management group activities, CBO capacity was registered at a medium level, because those members have more diverse interests in harnessing benefits individually from the forests rather than attempting this collectively. In this case, CBOs have to make more effort in bringing members together for group activities with a focus on common interest.

27.6 Comparative Assessment of TAOs and CBOs

Most of the people's expectations regarding social development include the need for vocational training, which is the top priority. The major reason behind it is that local people like to have supplementary occupations to increase their job opportunities and income, especially during the dry season (the farm off-season). The highest expectation for economic development was in constructing and maintaining the infrastructure. The respondents were also highly satisfied with the capacity of TAOs in providing and maintaining infrastructure services. The results showed that there was no significant difference, as the people were equally interested in their basic needs, linked with economic development.

People's expectations and the capacity of the CBOs go hand in hand and are seen as strongly positive in the context of rural development. The CBOs are able to perform their roles and functions better than the TAOs, as reflected in the conservation of natural resources and meeting the felt needs and expectations of the people. The study has found that the capacities of the CBOs are higher than those of the TAOs. Basically, the CBOs are focused on the capacity building of the community in terms of addressing basic and socioeconomic needs in achieving sustainable development. The TAOs have remained focused as local governmental and political institutions to promote democracy in the locality.

It was also shown that the benefits of CBOs in economic aspects are greater than those of the TAOs. In other words, the performance of CBOs is more effective in rural development than the TAOs. CBOs are also able to fulfill the people's expectations much more than the TAOs because the majority of CBOs have been formed based on their interest in economic development. The common factor is that both TAOs and CBOs are weak in strengthening people's participation in local activities and development agenda, and lack administrative skills, participatory monitoring, and evaluation methods for sustainable rural development.

In Thailand, the local governments have the autonomy to manage development projects and to provide public services according to the needs of their constituents

and the local communities. Local administrations are therefore authorized to formulate development plans and personnel policies as well as the budget and financial policies for their respective communities. The duties and responsibilities of the local institutions include the promotion of economic, social, cultural, and environmental development within their own authority as provided by the law. The TAO is composed of a council and executive board, which are directly elected by the local people. People have become more conscious of their people's power in terms of voting for candidates who have created and implemented good projects and policies and who truly work for their respective communities.

The TAO structure is effective in Thailand because of the anticipated outcomes and processes of decentralization, as they are a function of the distribution of power in society (Duglas 2005). The main revenues of the TAOs come from the taxes and fees collected by the central government (shared taxes). Another source of revenue is regular grants from the government. Currently, the Tambons have also generated resources within their territory by using the power and authority given to them under the decentralized policy framework. The TAOs are very much dependent on the government for meeting their financial needs, even though opportunities exist for generating internal revenue, albeit to a limited extent. The internal and external revenue ratio at present is 30:70. Most of the TAO revenue cannot cover expenditures because of several community development projects under the wide range of responsibilities assigned to them. Therefore, the central government should increase the allocated budget to support the projects of local governments. The expenditure of investments, such as infrastructure creation (roads, culverts, water resources, etc.) and maintenance, along with livelihood-related activities, are at the highest level in all the TAOs. Very limited resources are available to undertake other responsibilities at the local level and therefore many remain unattended unless linked with other external sources of funding from successive upper levels of the government line agencies. Comparing the revenue structure and achievements of the TAOs, it was observed that large and medium Tambons have more external revenue through shared taxes and grants from the central government as compared to the small Tambons.

The social development activities consist of two types: (1) support by TAOs for social support and networks, primary education, and public health; and (2) people's participation in social mobilization and community development activities. People's expectations are not in accordance with the capacity of the TAOs regarding social development. However, the people's expectations in relationship to economic development are significantly related to the capacity of the TAOs. These expectations, in conjunction with the capacity of the TAOs to conserve natural resources and protect the environment, are achieved at the moderate level.

People's expectations and the capacity of the CBOs run parallel and have been seen to be strongly positive in the context of rural development. The CBOs are able to perform their roles and functions better than the TAOs, as reflected in the conservation of natural resources and meeting the felt needs and expectations of the people. The capacities of the CBOs are higher than those of the TAOs. Basically, CBOs are focused on the capacity building of the community to address basic and socioeconomic needs in achieving sustainable development. TAOs have remained

focused as local governmental and political institutions to promote democracy in the locality. It was also revealed that the benefits of the CBOs in economic aspects are higher than those of the TAOs. In other words, the performance of CBOs is more effective in rural development than that of the TAOs. CBOs are also able to fulfill the people's expectations much more than the TAOs because a majority of the CBOs have been formed based on their interest in economic issues. Obviously, many respondents were willing to participate in community development activities even if they would not gain much direct individual benefit. The reason given for their willingness to take part in community activities is because such activities responded to their social needs and that they could fully utilize their leisure time.

Generally, the CBOs work more closely with the community compared to the TAOs, but they are limited regarding financial resources. However, the TAOs focus on multi-project activities supported by the central government. Regarding rural development under a decentralized system as in Thailand, both CBOs and TAOs are expected to work together to cater to the needs of the community, which will ultimately lead to rural development. The common factor is that both TAOs and CBOs are weak in strengthening people's participation in local activities and development agenda, and lack administrative skills and participatory monitoring and evaluation methods for sustainable rural development.

27.7 Conclusion

Under the decentralized government system of Thailand, the TAOs are responsible for a wide range of activities and projects, which could allow them to generate some revenue and create job opportunities for the people at the local level. Political decentralization offers the prospect of more efficient aid disbursement, and these accord with the neoliberal values of economic advancement, rights, and democratic values (Batterbury and Fernando 2006). In addition to that, the people's expectations from the TAOs concerning social and economic development, natural recourses, and environment management have revealed that people have more expectations of programs and activities related to basic health, infrastructure, maintenance, flooding, etc. The performance of TAOs is also high in infrastructure, financial support, and income generation activities. In contrast, the CBOs perform well in their roles and functions when compared to the TAOs and at the same time their capacities are also higher than that of the TAOs. This dynamic sector working together with the people is always a major contributor to local development (Mukherjee and Zhang 2007).

One reason for this may be the close relationship of CBOs with the local people, where the local people are actively involved, and second, CBOs do have inbuilt interests in economic and community development more explicitly than the TAOs. Above all, both the CBOs and TAOs work with their own limitations and jurisdictions, and both at the same time have goals to accelerate local development. The combined efforts and strengths of both TAOs and CBOs are essentially required to work together and to support local development strategies, assisted by the central government. As Helmsing (2001) points out, local economic development (LED) is a pro-

cess in which partnerships between local governments, community-based groups, and the private sector are established to manage existing resources to create jobs and to stimulate the economy of a well-defined territory; this will promote economic development at the local level and enhance the capacities of the communities to generate income and play their roles in rural development at the local levels more effectively. Therefore, the people at the community level are willing to engage in community-based activities when they believe that they can improve their livelihoods (Marschke and Berkes 2005).

Successful rural development requires that local institutions be further geared up to formulate development strategies, programs, and activities that would meet people's development needs, while simultaneously empowering the local people to be more proactive and to participate more intensively in Tambon-initiated programs and activities. In Thailand, the Sufficiency Economy approach, which has always been reiterated by King Bhumiphol, provides the strategies necessary for balanced and sustainable development. Therefore, following the King's guiding principle, the Thai government now emphasizes raising people's awareness and understanding the roots of every problem, with the main goal of eventually alleviating poverty, especially in the rural communities. The poverty level has decreased to less than 10 % at present in the country. The main factors that could contribute to achieving sustainable development should include a multi-faceted approach to rural development.

To be able to continue with the decentralization effort in Thailand, the process should be made multidimensional. First, to increase the quantity of financial allocation to the local level, the central government has to effectively allocate the central budget to support the responsibilities of the TAOs in the locality. In accordance with the decentralization Act of 1999, the share of local government revenue would have reached 35 % of total government revenue by 2006. However, at present the local revenue appears to have reached about 25 % (Chardchawarn 2010). Therefore, the TAOs are required to improve their ability to expand their own local tax bases wherever applicable, collect their own revenues, and generate more income at the local level. Krueathep (2008) further suggests that mobilizing local own-source revenues and improving local tax collection efficacy are key components to overcoming the burden of local revenues.

Second, as already initiated in Thailand, good local governance should be practiced more rigorously as a powerful mechanism for implementing rural development activities at the local level by the TAOs. Good governance means to be fully accountable to stakeholders such as workers, shareholders, persons of various social and economic strata, and so on, in the exercise of mandated activities and functions by all concerned, whether they are the central or local government, managers of state and business enterprises, or civic and civil society organizations (Lam 2003), thus providing equal opportunities and access to participation in the decision-making process. A more transparent and effective local government will provide scope to the people to effectively control and monitor its performance.

Third, people's participation has been widely recognized as an important aspect that facilitates the achievement of sustainable development. Fiscal and democratic decentralization has been coupled with participation that is supposed to translate into a local government that not only delivers better services but one that also

engages citizens in the design and implementation of policies, programs, and projects (Mutebi 2003). This process takes place when the stakeholders of a community equally and democratically share ideas and visions, as well as participate and take responsibilities together to steer and implement the development activities, eventually creating a sense of ownership and partnerships in these development activities.

Local institutions are very important for strengthening local capacities; as such institutions work very closely with the local people and have autonomy in discharging their respective areas of responsibility. As discussed in the previous section, the duties and responsibilities of local institutions are quite broad and mainly cover three components: social, economic, and environmental aspects. The role of local institutions in rural community development as “service provider” is crucial, for which the central government allocates the funds to local governments for providing services in the localities such as infrastructure improvement, transportation network maintenance, healthcare, and education. However, in the case of large development projects such as irrigation, the local institutions are still dependent on the central government. Moreover, local institutions provide not only a basic infrastructure but also financial support under different micro-credit schemes to individuals or group activities.

At present the workload and responsibilities of the TAOs are increasing year by year because of the transfer of many new activities, such as construction and maintenance of roads and bridges, transport terminals, and traffic control, village water supplies, social activities for children and women, the aged, and the disadvantaged, and pre-school education, etc., to the local level. It has been recognized that the TAOs are burdened beyond their capacity and the administrative skills of the staff. If this continues, the TAOs will not be able to function effectively in the future. A need has therefore arisen to review the list of responsibilities and to readjust the activities with clear terms of reference for enabling the TAOs to be functional. As Blair (2000) points out, given sufficient political will from the central government to keep a decentralization initiative in place over time, effective local governance can be achieved, as is true in Thailand. The supply of adequate central government grants to local governments on a regular basis to meet the local needs is crucial for achieving substantial results. Despite firm efforts made by the local governments to increase their internal revenue, it remains a very meager share with reference to the total amount needed for local development. Hence, central government’s commitment and responsibility should remain unchanged to achieve local development through the TAO.

The government is committed to enhancing the development potentials of both rural and urban areas to bring about a fairer distribution of benefits for development and to promote a more unified administrative system for rural development and decentralized authority in administration and decision-making processes at the local levels. Balanced development and sustained economic growth in urban and rural areas, therefore, would require meaningful and constructive models. To cope with the changing social and economic conditions, Thailand now needs new strategies and frameworks for resolving fundamental

imbalances, inequalities, and poverty issues in rural areas. Focus should be placed more strongly on internal human resources and local potentials, while maintaining cultural identity. The Thai government also responds to the demand for change, articulated within the civil society. To achieve the National Economic and Social Development Plan and Royal Thai Government Policies, the role of local institutions has become equally important, as government authorities are in favor of rural development.

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