

Ban Samkha

Community that Learns



United Nations Educational,
Scientific and Cultural Organization

Ban Samkha: Community that Learns

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Forward

UNESCO's message has been consistent for the last 3 years we should be trying to "build Knowledge Societies". This concept is based on an empowering social vision that encompasses plurality, inclusion, solidarity and participation. It goes beyond the technology and connectivity issues that often dominate discussions on the Information Society. For UNESCO, the use of information and communication technology (ICT) must take into account universally recognized human rights, with special attention to the principles of freedom of expression, universal access to information, respect for cultural diversity and equal access to education.

There is a significant angle with the current reflection on creative societies that has implications for UNESCO's support of cultural diversity. Increasingly, researchers are pointing to a correlation between communities that have people of very diverse backgrounds and a higher than usual level of entrepreneurial activity. Creativity and the ability to innovate (which are more complex notions than intellectual property) have become highly valued attributes.

The experiences of the Ban Samkha community documented in this booklet show how ICT can serve local development needs by drawing upon the local wisdom and making community development a participatory as well as sustainable undertaking. Several projects were initiated and advocated by the villagers themselves, and later sponsored by their allied partners. An important result of the project was the switch of management skills for community members. This atmosphere nurtured the villagers' sense of pride and ownership and it evolved into a fountain of knowledge to be further developed.

The account in this publication should inspire other communities to follow the path of Baan Samkha. Together, we will build Knowledge Societies where learning is our second nature.

Elizabeth Longworth
Director
UNESCO
Information Society Division

Preface

Dr. Suchin Petcharak, a leading academic from the Northern Region Non-Formal Education Center, prepared this book in collaboration with the villagers, children, youths, and allied partners both the government and private sectors that contributed enormously to the community development.

The development of Ban Samkha Community started with the implementation of *Constructionism* theory of learner-centered learning, technology integrated for life-long learning, of which all activities were tailored to fit the need of the learners. The new approach was first introduced to the school children and youths. After a period of time, adults and village seniors noticed the progressive development in skills and learning ability of their children and youths, and then began to allow them to participate in community development activities along their side. Several projects were initiated by the community, and later sponsored by their allied partners. This atmosphere nurtured the community's sense of pride and ownership that evolved into a fountain of knowledge for further development of the community. For the people, many critical skills and techniques, especially management, spawned from these projects. Allied partners and staffs also learned important lessons alongside the Ban Samkha Community.

Once the project has been established, the development of Ban Samkha Community became visible, and the people showed a great deal of self-improvement that is in line with the King's philosophy of "Sufficiency Economy". This creates an understanding of "self-immunity" or community conservation and its practical use.

This book comprises enormous interesting subject matters derived from practical field experience that is particularly beneficial to those interested in learning.

Paron Israsena

Chairman of Suksapattana Foundation Board and

Vice-Chairman of Thaicom Foundation Board

Summary of the Development of Ban Samkha Community Mae Tha District, Lampang Province

By Suksapattana Foundation and Thaicom Foundation

The development began in 2001 when Ban Samkha schoolteachers attended a Constructionist training program based on Constructionism theory¹ at the Northern Region Non-Formal Education Center in Lampang Province. The teachers were convinced that the Constructionist learning approach would be beneficial for the development of their community children and youths². They requested *Dr. Suchin Petcharugsa's* assistance to set up a computer camp for their children and youths. The project received such interest that at later stage parents were also allowed to participate in the camp activities.

After training completion, *Dr. Suchin* and Suksapattana Foundation's representatives periodically conducted a post-training survey on the community. The findings clearly indicated that the people was interested to incorporate the new techniques into the community activities that promoted a better quality of life of their children and youths. Suksapattana Foundation, therefore, donated computers, and Thaicom Foundation installed an Internet access via satellite³ at the community school, thus established Samkha Constructionism Lab within the village. The lab was open for public use since May 2001, assigning the school students to maintain and administer the lab's daily operation. The lab included various activities such as Internet services for students during the day, and the community Internet access during the evening. The Northern Region Non-Formal Education Center has arranged for courses covering computer programming, basic computer maintenance, village website designs and information search from which data obtained may be useful for the community learning.

¹ *Contructionism theory of learner-centered learning, technology integrated for life-long learning developed by Professor Seymour Papert of the MIT Media Lab.*

² *Children refer to grade 1-6 students. Youths refer to students of grade 6 onwards.*

³ *Due to a costly Internet access via satellite, Suksapattana Foundation has later provided its financial assistance to replace it with a dial-up Internet provider. It has collaborated with the National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) on joining the SchoolNet Program.*

The application of Constructionism methodology and techniques as learning tools has brought about "knowledge and wisdom" for problem solving and planning. Highlights of the community development carried out between 2002 and 2003 are as follow:

1. Analysis of Non-Performing Loan (NPL) problem: Recording each credit-debit transaction and performing appropriate analysis have identified the underlined issues with NPL. This leads to communal problem solving sessions which in turns, creates a better understanding of the banking system resulting in a debt relief program of Ban Samkha. In this program the community has gained management, finance, and banking experiences through conducting a community-banking project known as "Ban Samkha Community - Krung Thai Bank".
2. Development of academic skills and foreign languages: The community children and youths development is enhanced by the organization of learning camps such as homework camp, English language camp, and computer camp.
3. Conservation of Thai cultural innovations and preservation of native dialect: This sentiment is highlighted by activities centered on the studies of local remedies and ancient herbal medicines written in Lanna dialect taught by a village elderly. This leads to a Lanna language curriculum in the local schools and intense studies of the ancient herbal medicines and remedies. Since there are a vast variety of herbal plants growing naturally in the nearby forest and on the surrounding hills, there has been a thorough research in herbs and herbal medicines that have a potential for the future development into a small scale commercial product, generally known as "OTOP" (One Tambon One Product)⁴.
4. The establishment of "Brain Bank" by the community children and youths: This is one of many ways that Ban Samkha's children and youths display their appreciation of their parents and the village elderly. A low interest loan program is made available to those who have contributed to the local community and are under tremendous stress due to debt related issues.

⁴ Inspired by the One Village One Product idea of Oita Prefecture in Japan, the Thai government has been promoting the local industry through the manufacturing of attractive specialty products based on the abundant native culture, tradition and local wisdom. This campaign is called? One Tambon One Product (OTOP) in Thailand because the target area is the administrative unit called ?Tambon, which is the equivalent of sub-district in English. (source: Thai-OTOP-City.com)

5. Improving learning skills: It is believed that a person can become a good learner by attending a Buddhist Meditation (Vipassana) camp which focuses on mindfulness practice, self-realization, and reducing or eliminating individual ego. This leads to a new school development idea of forming a Community Meditation (Vipassana) Center.
6. The study of retail business: The development of Community Retail Store Project⁵ has expanded to include the development of small animal farms, organic vegetables cultivation, new career development, and a long-term career planning
7. The study of community lodging management: An Extended Visit (Long-Stay) Project⁶ focuses on the exchange and sharing of knowledge among the visitors, researchers, guests and villagers, giving the participants an enhancement of mutual relationship and friendly lodging service skills development.
8. The study of water source management, reforestation and forest fire prevention: A research and study of Ban Samkha Forest and Hills Project⁷ bring about a community learning of herbs and forest by-products that can be used as a building block for future eco-tourism and the Extended Visit Project.
9. News service and information management: The Community Radiobroadcasting Program run by the community youths serves as the information center and a source of local and national news.

⁵ The Community Retail Store has received professional assistance from the Siam Cement Co., Ltd. (Lampang) in accounting and from the C.P. Seven Eleven PLC in retail store administration.

⁶ An Extended Visit or Long-Stay Project received a financial aid from Suksapattana Foundation in construction, while the Siam Cement Group donated all construction materials and equipment.

⁷ NECTEC, Huai Hong Krai Royal Development Study Center, the Siam Cement Group and Suksapattana Foundation have supported research and study of Ban Samkha Forest and Hills Project.

Based on 2-years experiences of the Foundation in a co-operative task of Ban Samkha development, the learning process and knowledge can be summarized as follows:

1. Children, youths, and the community as a whole have proved that they are capable of learning if given an appropriate environment: By giving them an opportunity to review their thoughts, encouraging them to question themselves and apply technology to enable them to gather and/or search for data, they are able to transform the raw data into useful information which eventually leads to knowledge, wisdom and innovations worthwhile for each individual as well as the whole community.
2. One shall neither judge the subjects using one own standard, nor force them to accept one's thoughts without offering them the opportunity to discover it for themselves. On the contrary, it seems more appropriate for the Foundation to meet the demand of the community whatever that may be. Because the need is based on the subject not the developer, the subjects are more likely to acquire the feeling of ownership that they will always carefully look after and sustain the project for the future.
3. The exchanging and sharing of knowledge among people of different background and ages are valuable. Learning from new or different aspects and "thinking out side the box" are important, though they are not easy implemented. Moreover, generosity, fraternity, friendship, gratefully helping others and sharing knowledge among mutual friends from the government and private sectors, regardless of classes and groups segregation, are crucial for the current development of globalization.
4. The Ban Samkha Development Project owes its success to the application of Constructionism concept that encourages the children, youths and villagers to acquire a knowledge through self-learning to develop their community according to their needs under the leadership of the Northern Region Non-Formal Education Center and the generous sponsorship of Suksapattana Foundation and private company partners.

Introduction

This book of "Ban Samkha: Community that Learns" is well documented by passing on the past experiences gained from the "Village that Learns" project conducted by Suksapattana Foundation, based on a tendency towards the development of human being and learning society for sustainability of self-reliance. Ban Samkha represents a prototype of its kind focusing on learning improvements and solving community youth education problems utilizing a new approach to learning under the Constructionism theory, developed by Professor Seymour Papert of the MIT Media Lab. Constructionism concept places a special emphasis on learner-centered learning, of which learners use their learned experiences from real life practices and acquired knowledge to solve problems. This approach is an effective development of human resource and enhancement. It is proved to promote a knowledge-based society, and enhance the quality of life of people in the rural communities i.e. the development of "knowledge" and improvement of "human resources" leads to a sustainable development of learning community in Thai society.

Ban Samkha Community locating in Hua Suea sub-district, Mae Tha district, Lampang province is an example of strong and stable community involved intensively in applying Constructionism theory to its community activities. For the people, it is more like a lighthouse encompassing ideas of self-learning from the cause of problem, together they can find solutions to their problems, undauntedly think and learn from each other past experiences. This version of "Ban Samkha: Community that Learns" has been carefully compiled and edited by the National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) based upon a book of "The Learning of Ban Samkha Community" for more complete and up-to-date information on a drastic development in many areas of the community. Moreover, there is an evidence of new learning such as water management and wildfire prevention which include the construction of check dams, firebreak, usage of the applied technology, transfer of local wisdom which includes making use of herbal remedies in treating the sick, the Lanna dialect, traditional massage and local classical music, learning about community database system and individual life plans preparation.

For more complete information, this book is reedited to document data and information recorded earlier by Ban Samkha villagers, including further

information obtained from an exclusive interview with each individual people in the community. It is a collaborative effort made by Suksapattana Foundation, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute (HAI) with main objectives to find and develop a prototype for learning and applying ICT to suit Thai ways of life, to promote changes towards a knowledge community as well as to disseminate the knowledge and experiences acquired from this project to all interested parties. Last but not least, it is to maximize the use of this information in fundamental learning to conduct the future project "Community that Learns: Knowledge Community".

We, as an editorial team, would like to express our gratitude to *Mr. Paron Israsena, Dr. Suchin Petcharugsa, Mrs. Srinuan Wongtrakul*, Suksapattana Foundation's representatives and Ban Samkha Community for their great effort and cooperation in making this publication possible, and for the enormous distribution of their keen intellects and experiences to develop a prototype of its kind for great recognition and acceptance nationwide and worldwide.

Sumet Tantivejkul

Chairman of Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute Board

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Ban Samkha Community

The Name "Samkha"

Ban Samkha was founded around 1757. According to the community folklore, the area was once abundant with wild animals and games. One day, a large barking deer was hunted down by one of the village members, who was unable to carry the whole deer home. He, then, decided to remove one of the legs and carried it home. At first, he thought he would return with other villagers to claim the rest of the barking deer. Surprisingly, when they returned, they discovered that a giant snake ate the 3-legged deer corpus. Their attempt to reclaim the deer corpus from the giant snake resulted in a serious disaster of Ban Samkha Community. Thus, the name "Ban Samkha" refers to the 3-legged deer (i.e. Ban = village, Samkha = the 3-legged). Some villagers believe that the name "Ban Samkha" refers to the minimum of 3 pillars or blocks used to hold a pot firmly in place. Or, for others, it represents the 3 key elements of Buddhism: the Lord Buddha, the Dharma and the Buddhist Monk.

The General Condition



Ban Samkha is located in Moo 6, Hua Suea sub-district, Mae Tha district, Lampang province, 45 kilometers southeast of Lampang city limit. Multiple gradient plains surrounded by hills and forest dominates the landscape of Ban Samkha Community. The major occupations are rice and fruit farming, animal farming, woodcarving, forest products collecting, government officials,

state enterprise officers, merchants and manual labors.

The background information on Ban Samkha Community can be summarized as follows:

- It covers an area of approximately 16,200 rais. 12,000 rais of which are well-irrigated land.
- It comprises 159 families, 161 households, 314 male and 337 female (the total population of 651, referring to data taken on May 4, 2005). The majority of people are rather well educated with 100% potential rate of continuation to secondary school.
- It consists of 1 primary school and 1 health center.
- Currently, there are at least 40 assistance groups in the community, for instance, the Savings Group, Financial Aid for the Elderly, Financial Aid for Women, the Preservation of Forest Fund, Financial Aid for Cattlemen, etc.



Wise and Brave Ancestors

Ban Samkha Community has a number of historical heroes with bravery, generosity and passion for progress. *Chaophor Tibpala (Samkha)* formerly known as *Tibpala* was one of the most respectful undaunted ancestors of the community. He was an ordained priest and a student of magic spells and alchemy. He was later appointed the abbot of Wat Samkha (a Buddhist temple in Ban Samkha Community). Based on his bravery and affection for the community, he left the priesthood and voluntarily joined a group of warriors. *Chaophor Tibpala* and his fellow warrior *Chaopor Thipchang* defeated the Burmese and restored Lampang province from Burma's possession. Their victory brought about jubilation throughout the region.

Son of *Mrs. Pa* and *Mr. Peng*, *Phorlung Som Yaso* was born on January 3, 1899. At the age of 13, he was ordained and began studying the native dialect of Lanna until he could fluently read and write. When he was 14, he began to learn the art of traditional medicine man, local remedies, and witchcraft from his grandfather *Mr. Wong*. When he was 21, he was enlisted

in the armed forces and stationed at Pitsanulok Military Base, where he had a chance to learn Thai language. He was able to pass the examination and promoted to lance corporal. After spending 2 years at the base, he resigned and returned to continue his study seriously in herbal plants and traditional medicines. He was an excellent medicine man who had great proficiency in treating the sick with herbal medicines. He knew every kind of herbs very well by just touch and smell. He took special care of his patients, some of whom came from long-distance provinces e.g. Chiang Rai province, Phrae province, Chiang Mai province, etc. Some patients traveled a long way by wagons and stayed at his house for treatment. Some stayed for a week or two, but some stayed for months or years, depending on each individual illness. Some even built small shacks near his house, where the whole family moved in. He recorded his findings in his notebook of herbal medicines and witchcraft, to which he included the local remedies inherited from his ancestors hundreds of years ago, and the complete volumes of which were very well kept by his descendants. Although at a later date he had a hearing problem, his patients kept on coming for treatment till the day he passed away from a natural cause in June of 1998 at the age of 101.

In the past, after the annual harvest season, rice fields were normally left unused. *Phrakhru Kaew Praphaklo*, the former abbot of *Samkha Temple*, taught and transferred many kinds of useful knowledge to the villagers, for instance, cultivation of vegetables and fruits. He himself grew so many flowering plants and fruit bearing trees around the temple that the people of Ban Samkha Community had plenty of fruits to munch on all year round.

In those days, children kept coming to the temple where they found shady spots for playing games and plenty of naturally grown munchies for snacking. While kids enjoyed participating in the group activities, *Phrakhru Kaew Praphaklo* taught them useful and essential tasks. For instance, the girls learned how to clean up the temple, wash dishes, cultivate crops, prepare food for the monks and preserve fruits and vegetables for later consumption. The boys, on the other hand, were busy with the construction work and cultivation of crops. Parts of cultivated fruits and vegetables were given to their parents and other villagers. After the completion of work, their parents and the elderly rewarded them for their efforts and working so hard with sweets and naturally dried bananas.

In the evening, *Phrakhru Kaew Praphaklo* enlightened these children. He taught the Dharma, arithmetic and Thai language to them by applying

the real life situations into lessons. They learned how to write Thai very neatly. For arithmetic, they worked on problems derived from their morning activities e.g. how many banana trees were cut, how many banana bunches were there, how many banana fruits were there in one bunch, how many bunches were ripe, and how to ripen bananas, etc. Furthermore, he taught them how to cook and give the surplus of bananas as gifts for friends and relatives. The children learned these things seven days a week during their school break, and only after school during the semesters. Some came to the temple very early with slates for writing. They ate naturally dried bananas while learning the lessons and playing games at the same time. They raised up subject matters confronted in their classroom and worked those through together. *Phrakhru Kaew* guided them how to tell a story and how to write. Then, the children exercised and worked in groups on writing and story telling. From time to time, he integrated the Dharma into lessons. As a matter of fact, he was a good storyteller. Whenever the children shared their experiences with friends, he always added the Dharma stories. He also taught the villagers to cultivate peanuts, garlic and red onion, utilizing the method he had learned from the people in his homeland, Phrae province. Most of the cultivated crops were consumed within the village, and the excess of produce was transported to the city for sale. Unfortunately, transportation of products by car was not so convenient due to the condition of local roads. Therefore, he led the villagers to build a better road directly from Ban Samkha Community to the national highway using any available equipments and materials such as pickaxes, spades, large knives, etc. They did not receive any assistance from the government. *"The Buddhist temple always teaches people to become self-reliant".*

Besides his expertise in agriculture, food preservation, mechanic, carpentry, design, construction, civil engineering, etc *Phrakhru Kaew Praphaklo* was capable of curing the sick with the extraordinary coupling of natural herbs and modern medicines. He particularly passed along his efficacious recipes of herbal remedies for diarrhea and high fever to the villagers. He also provided them with hands-on experience of carpentry. Those who learned from him could apply the acquired knowledge to becoming the professional carpenters (e.g. making closets, showcases, windows, doors and houses). During his time, *Phrakhru Kaew Praphaklo* was well known for his carpentry skills, and therefore, whoever wanted a well built house had to hire him. A few of his masterpiece seen today are: the Ban Samkha Temple, and the wooden building of Ban Samkha School.



The Elderly Community Developer

Historically, the people of Ban Samkha community must rely totally on the Ban Samkha Creek, the only major water source in the area. They walked quite a distance to the creek many times a day in order to fill up their buckets, big or small depending on each individual capability. Then, they carried the bucketfuls of water home with a shoulder-pole. While walking along the embankment of paddy fields they must take necessary precautions and fully concentrate, otherwise their buckets would be half empty when they got home. For special religious ceremonies which water was desperately needed, the villagers had to begin filling the buckets and carrying them home ahead of time i.e. as early as the middle of the night prior to the events, using typical lanterns or flashlights to guide their way home. Since it was rather scary and really creepy at night along the creek due to the fact that the area was thick with huge trees, the stream was strong, some aquatic creatures, probably fishes were making creepy loud noise, etc, getting water from the creek at night had to be done by a group of at least ten people. In those days, no one dared step foot near the creek at dusk, if not necessary. Even during the day, the villagers usually asked their neighbors to walk along together to get water from the creek. Although the darkness and creepy horror feelings frightened the people, they still need to get water there. This is simply because water is essential to life.



In 1979, *Mr. Tawn Yaso* had an idea to bring water into the school and every individual house, a long distance from the creek, using a "*bamboo irrigation*" method. He recalled that he had once seen the hill tribes laid bamboo pipes for plumbing from the creek to their village. Since the water source of Ban Samkha Community is at higher elevation and

closer than that of the hill tribes, it must be possible to adopt the same irrigation method for the community.

At the beginning, there were only 6 interested volunteers: *Mr. Noi Injan Wongpomla, Mr. Tawn Yaso, Mr. Srinuan Uttiya, Mr. Kham Inmapan, Mr. Mool Wongpanya and Mr. Chum Wongpanya.* They received little to none of cooperation from the community leader. *Mr. Tawn* once said, *"We proceeded with a strong commitment and carried it out with our local innovation and wisdom. We worked and kept consulting one another. The situation forced us to be plumbers."*

Mr. Tawn and his team started making a survey for laying the bamboo pipes from the top of the hill to Ban Samkha School, which was about 1,300 meters in length. As their work progressed, the community leader as well as the majority of villagers decided to join them. At the later date, the community received a grant from the government to purchase tools and materials required for the development of "the soaking water supply system", while the villagers still engaged in manual labor required for the completion of work. As a result, the substantial water supply system of the community was established ever since.



Mr. Chum Wongpanya has long been committed to the community forestation. He has a dream and passion for growing large trees, particularly those with commercial and construction values, in Ban Samkha Community. As the empty land turned into a large wooded area with thick growth of big trees and plants, a healthy forest would be

able to retain an adequate water, purify the air, and soon became suitable for large and small animals to live in. The big trees were planted in the garden and plots of land occupied by the villagers as evident by the surrounded cattle fences. Once the trees were planted, they belonged to the landowners who would be informed of the types and its benefits. Most of these are enduring and fast growing trees like teakwood, hardwood and bamboo trees.

The great ideas and generosity of these ancestors have been continuously passed onto the next generations. Therefore, Ban Samkha Community seems to possess much culture, a modest way of life based on patience, perseverance, diligence, wisdom and prudence, and self-immunity for sufficient protection from the impacts arising from internal and external changes. It is something that the community can be proud of.

The Nature of Problems

Unstable Mind

Although Ban Samkha Community is rather strong, stable and enduring, misleading advertisements that extensive and rapid socio-economic, environmental and cultural changes in the world could bring them greater opportunities in the future. This has made a tremendous impact on the whole community leading to more serious issues that required a brilliant mind, modern knowledge and community collaboration to solve.



Mr. Kamoldej Wansuwong described what he had been through in the past. "We once lived happily in a rural community. Though we lived in the remote countryside, we were contented and proud of our way of life. We worked on rice fields and plantations during the planting season and had just enough food to feed our families. We were simply happy with our lifestyle without the need to struggle or compete with others. We were not in soaring debts as we are

today. While living in a rural community, we ate whatever we could find in the forest. We normally ate vegetables we planted ourselves. We were healthy because we consumed only our freshly grown, organic and toxic free product. Whenever we got a fever, we took herbal medicine made up of the soaked grass roots and rice in fresh water. For food poisoning, we took a certain herbal remedy known as "Kae See Ton", the best and oldest efficacious remedy consisting of Mai Nom Wua roots, Mai Nang Jom roots, Mai Marid roots and Mai Mafai Tuo Pu roots, all of which were soaked in water with some rice. Witchcraft was another choice for villagers in the past, of which a medicine man or a priest would drive away evil spirit, misfortune and bad luck by using ritual charms or sprinkles of holy water above the person's head. This was considered one of the oldest remedial options. In those days, we did not know much about the current scientific medication. We could only take our local herbal medicines, or performed a ritual ceremony in order to strengthen the spirit of the sick, or performed the special ceremony known as "Poo Ja Tian", which is now virtually extinct in our culture. The extinction of this ritual ceremony was due to the fact that the villagers were fooled and infatuated with the new things, so that they had completely forgotten their old ways of living."

Mr. Tawn reflected proudly on the old traditions of Ban Samkha Community that *"It used to be a rich natural food source with plenty of crabs, fishes, shrimps, frogs, toads and snails in the water. There were vegetables, herbs and fruits in the forest throughout the years. The forest was rich in various kinds of games for hunting and food preparation. We would eat whatever available without any problem whatsoever."*

Roads, Electricity and Loans

From casual lifestyle and living without debt to carelessly adopting new ideas and following the trend of external social changes has created many community problems, especially debts. This is why they must review the situations and circumstances in order to make the right decisions and adopt a new lifestyle.

Forty years ago, traveling into Lampang downtown was not easy. Travelers must wake up at the crack of dawn and walk as far as 7 kilometers to catch a bus at the bus station located in another village. By the time they returned, it would be dusk. Some families would not make the trip into town for years. As time went by, a community road was constructed, and more routes



among villages were well connected. So, it was possible for automobiles to come into the village. The first car ever traveled to the community belonged to one of the district VIP. It was an old model, which required cranking to start the engine. Public buses and small private cars followed. Children were so excited that they could not help from running after the moving vehicles. They said that, "the vehicles' smoky exhaust smelled nice." Soon, there were also motorcycles. And more importantly in 1962, one-man push mechanical tiller (so called *Iron Buffalo*) was introduced for the first time. In those days, the village farmers used a buffalo driven plough in rice farming. For a young man, training inexperienced buffalos was not an enjoyable chore because they must get up at 4 am to walk the buffalos to the rice fields. The animals loved to splash muddy water all over young trainers.

Controlling buffalos to the right directions was rather difficult to achieve. These might be one of the reasons why many people decided to borrow money from an outside source of capital to buy the so-called *Iron Buffalos*. Though many of them were trying very hard to preserve the tradition of using a buffalo driven plough, their customary practice was defeated at the end by very speedy performance of the *Iron Buffalo*. Finally, buffalos were rendered useless, and replaced completely by mechanical tillers. This made rice planting more commercialized i.e. turning the original purpose of domestic consumption to sales. They began to add more fertilizers and pesticides to their rice fields, which in turn increased the production cost, while the sale price remained the same. Therefore, they fell into a vicious cycle of debt where they had to borrow more and more money, and at the end becoming heavily in debt.

In 1974, a community leader introduced electricity to *Hua Suea* district for the first time. At that time, electricity was stored in the form of a battery. There was only a 12 inches black-and-white television set manufactured in Thailand under the brand name "*Thanin*". For the first introduction of mass distribution of electricity, the community leader recruited his fellow villagers twice to cut down large trees from the forest for electrical poles. A large number of hardwood trees were cut away from Ban Samkha forest, hoping that the electricity would be available very soon. But in the end, those cut down timber either decayed or were stolen, so that what was left was of no value.

By 1986 electricity was finally made available for the village. It was fully equipped with standard cement poles. Everyone was overwhelmed with great joy after the long wait. No one was aware of the impact the new technology would make on the community. They fell deeply into materialism, e.g. replacing black-and-white television sets with colored TVs, purchasing new refrigerators, electric fans, electric irons, etc. Many people started a loan with the outside source of capital to purchase new electrical appliances. Instead of giving them the financial management skills, the bank provided a grant to fulfill their materialistic needs. As a result, the villagers accumulated more debts.

Many families decided to support their children in higher education for a potential appointment in government offices with more security and better income compared to farming. Having convinced that their children would receive more benefits in the future from a worthy investment in their education, many more families followed the same pattern. Instead of

achieving their ultimate goals, they over exceeded the demand and many failed to receive the government commission. Many were unemployed and their parents had to endure more debts.

There were only a few families who managed persistently to refuse the temptation of materialism and were able to live within their means i.e. carefully managing their family expense, avoid creating unnecessary debt, and contented with their limited possessions. This represented a good comparison between the two different ways of thinking. Mr. Tawn, based on his experience, concluded that the real cause of those abovementioned problems was purely in the minds of people in the community. As illustrated earlier, *"Upon the first introduction of electricity, outside source of loans, and television sets followed by heavy advertisements on TV programs, villagers were lured into needing electrical appliance and other possessions. This resulted in the total debt of 20 million baht, of which over 700,000 baht was classified as bad debt. The debts were from purchasing land, automobiles, houses, electrical appliances, and from investment in education. Some of the debts were from the untraceable causes. All of these, however, were the result of materialism."* Mr. Chan Uttiya, one of the community leaders, concluded, *"We did not realize that the materialism could cause disasters, on the contrary, we misunderstood it to represent prosperity and ways of the future."*

Concentrate, Review Situations and Together Find Solutions



Mr. Chan Uttiya, one of the current community leaders, expressed his ideas based upon the fact of distant location and unique wisdom of the elderly of Ban Samkha Community that *“before asking others for help, we must show others our self-reliance.”* Moreover, once confronting problems, we must unite in fighting and solving the problems. We must take advantages of our

united community and use it as a tool in tackling and solving our problems by common consent. For instance, at the general community meeting we all agreed to reduce an interest rate on loans granted to people facing difficulties in paying off their debts, or even agreed to eliminate total moral depravity and stop sinking into a life of vice, etc.

Facing more and more serious problems, the people of Ban Samkha Community started to analyze each problem thoroughly and prioritize them very carefully. Their first priority in 1996 was to tackle the issue of narcotic drugs. The initiative to solve youth drug problems began between 1997 and 1999. First, they organized a Buddhism program called *Buddha Descendants Camp* lead by a preacher Buddhist monk from Bangkok, teaching teenagers the essential of morality and ethics. Then, 50,000 baht of community savings was spent in sending drugs addicts (8 in 1st group and 3 in 2nd group) to a rehabilitation center in Chiang Mai province for a 21-day session. Having recognized the great value of Buddhism program, the Sub-district Administrative Council granted funds for the reorganization of *Buddha Descendants Camp* in 3 consecutive years.

By July 11, 2003 the people of Ban Samkha Community were certain that their community was free of drug traffickers and drug addicts, they declared their village a drug free zone. They celebrated this special occasion and proudly put up the sign, "Drug-free Village".

Between 1997 and 1998 they started to take action in the NPL issues within the community by establishing a Savings Group (credit union) and a Community Retail Store.

In 2000, they conducted a survey of family debts and estimated the total debts to be 18 million baht. During the year 2002-2003, Ban Samkha Community received a grant from Thailand Research Council to carry out a research on debt relief program to solve the community debts issue.



ข้อมูลบัญชีครัวเรือน หมู่ ๔ (5)			
ปีงบประมาณ ๒๕๕๑		ปีงบประมาณ ๒๕๕๒	
ร.ร.	บัญชีครัวเรือน	ร.ร.	บัญชีครัวเรือน
1.	เงินเดือน	1,000.00	1,000.00
2.	เงินบำนาญ	450.00	450.00
3.	เงินเบี้ยหวัด	100.00	100.00
4.	เงินสวัสดิการ	1,200.00	1,200.00
5.	เงินกองทุน	5,000.00	5,000.00
6.	เงินช่วยเหลือ	1,000.00	1,000.00
7.	เงินช่วยเหลือ	2,000.00	2,000.00
8.	เงินช่วยเหลือ	2,000.00	2,000.00
9.	เงินช่วยเหลือ	2,000.00	2,000.00
10.	เงินช่วยเหลือ	2,000.00	2,000.00
11.	เงินช่วยเหลือ	2,000.00	2,000.00
12.	เงินช่วยเหลือ	2,000.00	2,000.00
รวม		12,777.77	12,777.77
รวม		278,111.11	278,111.11

Mr. Chan reported to Prime Minister Dr. Taksin Shinawatra during his official visit to Ban Samkha Community on June 20, 2003 that "Actually, our debts are not arisen from occupations, but resulted from our poor family financial management instead. We do not know how to manage our available budget. Though funds and group supports are made available for us, we feel that we still need proper knowledge of money management. As a result, the community database was initiated, thus enabled us to understand our own problems more clearly. And through proper procedures, we could analyze the collected data. Hopefully, this could solve the problem of lacking personal data, a main issue among the grass roots. The community household accounting would be prepared, analyzed and presented monthly in front of the general community meeting, demonstrating the current situation of each family. Therefore, your so-called Social Development Plan IX aiming for human development is headed on the right track. Ban Samkha Community could only solve its problems if and only if there are numbers of educated people with proper knowledge and problem solving skills. Above all, we must rely only on ourselves. We are convinced that we must be self-sufficient and self-reliant instead of depending on others. We should try our very best before reaching out for help from others."

The Learning of Ban Samkha Community

The Community Retail Store

After the establishment of Savings Group in late 1998, the people of Ban Samkha Community together started a Community Retail Store with objectives to provide villagers with inexpensive goods, thus help them from spending too much money on merchandise elsewhere. The project commenced on November 16, 1998. Money earned from selling goods was wisely spent on building a permanent store on its own land. The construction was completed without any government grants. The Community Retail Store is operated by a team of management, a chairman, a store manager, a salesperson, a secretary and a treasurer, all of whom are local people having the same responsibility in common.



The responsible staffs keep a full inventory of the stock of their store and figure out the annual profits on 5th of October each year. A dividend of 30% will be paid to the members of Savings Group, 30% to the buyers, 20% to the Community Retail Store, 10% to the provident funds, 5% to the public utilities, and 5% to the committee members as a bonus.

As the inventory and the total sale gradually increased, preparation of a daily accounting and calculation of an annual dividend were more difficult. The community, therefore, asked *Mr. Songkran Thongnuom*, accountant working for the Siam Cement Co., Ltd. (Lampang) for his professional assistance in developing and modifying their current accounting system.

After seeing that computer is sufficiently used by the community, he has developed new accounting software applicable for the community retail store, thus enabling them to keep and check financial accounts faster and more accurate. To begin with, *Mr. Songkran* transferred accounting knowledge such as data entry to *Miss Narisara Indrapan*, daughter of *Mrs. Naree Indrapan* commonly known as *Na Tim*, salesperson working at the community retail store.



Miss Narisara later taught and trained her mother so that she could also perform data entry of daily sales on the store computer donated by Suksapattana Foundation.

Besides supplying the people of Ban Samkha Community with food and household goods, the community retail store, later known as the Marketing Demonstration

Center, is a learning source of retail store administration and other skills for *Na Tim* and youngsters.

Mrs. Naree or *Na Tim* told visitors that she completed only grade 2 and could hardly read and write. For her, being assigned a job at the community retail store promoted her self-development in reading, writing and understanding mathematics. This automatically pushed her to learn intensively how to read, write and do math right on the job. She earned her living while learning these new things, which turned out so valuable to her economy and self-esteem. Particularly, her ability to utilize computer in preparing the store accounts brought about a significant impact on others, especially the village committee members who later asked the youngsters for computer lessons. The youths were delighted to teach them in the evening right after their working hours.



Na Tim recorded her experience in her journal that "*I was a farmer working in the field before coming to work at the community retail store as*

recommended by Mrs. Srinuan and Sergeant Chai Wongtrakul. I refused the offer at first due to my literacy, lack of mathematics and trading skills. I preferred raising pigs to commerce. As a matter of fact, I asked Mrs. Srinuan if I could do something else. The couple insisted that I should take the job since the former salesperson just resigned. Both convinced me that I was the right one for the opened position because of my forwardness. Although I could not speak sweetly, I was rather frank and outspoken. I told them that I might not be as good as they thought I would be. They would not accept my refusal, on the other hand, insisted sincerely that I should take the job. I had no alternatives. So, I started working there ever since. I opened the store at 6:00 am and closed it at 7:00 pm. At first, I was terrible. I could not even use the calculator correctly. My fingers were not right for this kind of job, since they were used to holding digging tools like a pickax, spade and knife, etc. I could hardly use a pen. At the beginning, there were two salespersons working in shift. When I took turn, mistake was always found. I was in big trouble that money earned from the sales was never matched with items sold. I could not sleep at night, and kept on worrying. My husband comforted me by saying that people could make mistakes. Perhaps, I gave too much change to the customers, thus the store account was imbalanced. I undoubtedly admitted that this was due to lack of mathematic skills. I felt so stupid, but why Sergeant Chai still insisted that I worked there."

Later, Mr. Paron Israsena, Chairman of Suksapattana Foundation, suggested that we should renovate and redecorate the store. After convincing the committee, he asked the C.P. Seven Eleven PLC for professional assistance, especially in retail business administration, inventory and store management without aiming to transform the community store to one of its branches.



The representatives of C.P. Seven Eleven PLC came to the community and study its general conditions, status of the community store and store improvement requirements. After preliminary studies, a working team came to the community to help rearrange shelves and furniture in the store. They worked on a new display, remodeled the stockroom and salesperson's

counter. *Na Tim* and her customers were greatly satisfied with such renovation. The place looked nicer and it was easy to locate merchandise. Another working team came into the community to train *Na Tim*, youths and the students of Ban Samkha School in the principles of store administration. This was a hands-on training with the experts in retail business management. It is considered a joint research that has continually been monitored and developed until the end of 2003. The operational results are valuable and applicable for retail stores in other communities.

Computer and Internet Access

Computer was first used for the Buddhist activities at *Samkha Temple* where the office of Sub-district Chief Abbot was located. It was not used only for the Buddhist Sunday School, but also for other activities of students, youths and the community as a whole. On July 8, 1998 Ban Samkha School Committee proposed an idea to allocate certain fund for the establishment of student computer center. The initial funding came from the interest accruing from the principal of the community education fund. On December 15, 1999, an Australian donated a computer for grade 5 and 6 students of Ban Samkha School. It was considered their first computer lesson i.e. first experience with computers. The computer was useful for Household Accounting Forms preparation and data entry. After recognition of the usefulness of computers, the whole community began to appreciate its value.

During April 16-17, 2000, six youths and a teacher of Ban Samkha School together with a group of teachers and youths from Ban Fon Wittaya Community School attended a computer camp held at the Constructionism Lab in the Northern Region Non-Formal Education Center. They all had a chance to use the learning tools under the Constructionism theory, for instance, Micro Worlds, LEGO-Logo and Electronic Magazine. This was the initial collaboration between Ban Samkha School and the Constructionism Lab.

Later, on June 24, 2001, the school board, the Village Committee and the teachers unanimously voted to purchase one computer with the community grant. Once the computer was purchased, Internet connection became the next community issue. Initially the majority of community members were not quite aware of the Internet value and usage. Only a few had prior experience with the Internet, and many were against it.



Mr. Jamnong Janjom revealed his feelings that at first he did not appreciate the usefulness of computer and Internet, in fact, he was convinced that it was another symbol of capitalism which might bring about a disaster to the community the same way as many electronics did in the past. However, once he properly experienced with the computer, he admitted that the new generation must definitely learn how to use it. He concluded at the end, *"The new generation must be able to plant the rice and use the computer."*

A community meeting was held on August 8, 2001. The School Board and the Education Fund Committee voted to continue the school computer program. The whole community showed a strong interest and inquired more about the Internet. Mr. Jamnong requested the schoolteacher to explain once more in details about the Internet inclusive of its use. After several meetings, they started to discuss more about the pros and the cons of Internet, based on what they had heard from the people outside the community and from the secondary school and college students.

Finally, the meeting unanimously voted to obtain an Internet access for the community under the following restrictions.

1. The Internet service center must be set at Ban Samkha School. It should provide services for students during the school hours, but after school hours and on weekends youths and the community will have access to the Internet.
2. All concerned parties, especially schoolteachers and the School Board, must take full responsibility for the proper use of the Internet by their students. It is considered a major concern of the community.
3. Systematic management must be executed to allocate service fee for public utility bills, repairs and maintenance bills generated by the Internet service center.
4. It must be the learning center for everyone in the community. Children and youths must take full responsibility for collecting the service fee of 10 baht/hour. They must take turns supervising the center, especially on weekends, where there are three different shifts per day: a morning shift, an afternoon shift and an evening shift (ended at 8 pm).

Forty-five participants comprising of students, youths, and teachers from Ban Samkha School attended a computer camp held at the Constructionism Lab between October 8 and 17, 2001. They were exposed to Micro Worlds Pro, LEGO-logo and website design programs. *Mrs. Srinuan Wongtrakul*, in charge of Ban Samkha Computer Center, pointed out that having the opportunity to attend the computer camp brought about critical changes to the community as a whole. The children, youths, and villagers could improve their holistic approach to learning, systematic thinking, and logical thinking that lead to knowledge of self-development and community developments. In addition, the children who could learn faster than adults are catalyst of encouragement to apply the technology as learning tools to improve their learning ability. As a result, they were able to organize and fully run many projects such as Ban Samkha Constructionism Lab, English Camp, Homework Camp, the Lanna Dialect Camp, Brain Bank, Buddhist Meditation Camp, etc. For Ban Samkha Constructionism Lab, in particular, the children and youths were allowed to use the computers only after class and on weekends, while schoolteachers and students were given access to computers during regular school hours. By allowing children to take full responsibility for these projects, adults and the elderly recognized and accepted their capability as well as their ability to keep their commitment. The children development interested many friends, allied partners and foundations. For instance, Thaicom Foundation provided its support by installing an Internet access via satellite. Suksapattana Foundation delivered to the community computers, essential materials and equipment donated from many sources, and more importantly, gave a new approach to learning, focusing on technology of learning and knowledge application (especially management), leading to the ultimate wisdom.



Having its own computer center, the community children and youths could continually improved their Internet navigating skills and their computer skills, which are important fundamentals of many community activities e.g. bookkeeping, designing community websites (<http://samkhaschool.haii.or.th>) sponsored by Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute or HAI, recording the translations of local herbal remedies from the Lanna dialect into Thai, setting up Samkha Temple and Ban Samkha School libraries, intercommunicating between Ban Samkha Community and other villages, searching and broadcasting useful information, self-maintenance and repair of computers and electronic equipments, etc. The Siam Cement Co., Ltd. (Lampang) assisted with bookkeeping of the community retail store. The National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC) under the National Science and Technology Development Agency, the Ministry of Science and Technology supported the household and credit union bookkeeping. Krung Thai Bank PLC supported the bookkeeping of Ban Samkha Community-Krung Thai Bank. Above all, the children and youths taught adults to use computer with great enthusiasm and participation.



Mr. Paron Israsena, on behalf of Suksapattana Foundation, was the first to introduce to Thailand the Constructionism theory of learner-centered learning, technology integrated for life-long learning, of which was developed by the media lab of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Mr. Paron worked in cooperation with Dr. Suchin Petcharugsa to develop a new approach to community learning for further development of unique local knowledge. Both were the key men in finding computers and

delivering them to Ban Samkha Computer Center. Having their own computers could shorten the time required for accomplishing their ultimate goals of applying computers to the community education and development. The objective is to provide every child with a computer for daily use. The children in turn become so proficient with their computer skills that there is no need for them to take computer lessons in school. Each teacher will be provided with a computer for the school activities. Each individual family must take part in maintaining the computers as well as learning to use them properly alongside their children.



In this regard, all devices and technology brought into the community could enhance their learning ability and create Constructionist learning environment suitable for not only computers but also, the most crucial of all, life-curriculum. All learning is from the actual execution of community projects under the collaborative efforts between the children and the adults, between the school and the community and between the community and their allied partners both Thai and foreigners. As a result, the acquired knowledge will be imparted widely and intensively to others, thus lead to better quality of life.



The Brain Bank

Normally, villagers must put up collaterals when applying for a bank loan. Good ideas and commitment are not considered collaterals, as far as a banking institute is concerned. *Dr. Suchin*, therefore, suggested that if the people could submit their favorable ideas to the so-called Brain Bank, and borrow some money from the bank to modify their original ideas applicable for a small project, then start the project in a small scale. If the project proceeded well, they should increase their investment. On the contrary, if

it does not work, then other alternatives may be required and they can adjust their plan accordingly. For the community welfare, the villagers must help one another all the time not just when someone is ill or dead.

The Brain Bank Project was initiated after the youths of Ban Samkha Community had successfully and jointly organized an English camp at the school between October 8 and 23, 2002. On this special occasion, to support the camp *Dr. Suchin Petcharugsa*, *Mr. Thaweesak Chai-ongkarn*, *Mrs. Paowana Wongsom* and *Mr. Anusorn Kaewkumlerd* donated all together 30,000 baht, the sum of which they earned by conducting training courses for the Siam Cement Co., Ltd. (Lampang) employees under the C-Cement project. At the same time, parents and other villagers donated 27,500 baht.

After the camp, 34,500 baht remained in the account. Therefore, youths gathered together to figure out how to manage and make the most use of the aforementioned donations. A majority agreed on the final decision that there should be an establishment of certain funds (initiation of the "Brain Bank" Project) available in an emergency for those parents assisting the children and youths activities, from which the parents could obtain a loan as needed for their investment. A group of 42 youths appointed 15 committee members to lay down concepts and guideline together with an advisory team comprising *Mrs. Srinuan Wongtrakul*, *Mr. Songkran Tongnuam*, a former employee of Siam Cement Co., Ltd. (Lampang) and *Dr. Suchin Petcharugsa*. Criteria for obtaining a loan were based on the project feasibilities, creative ideas and good intentions, all of which could be considered and put up as collaterals. As a result, they all agreed to call it the "Brain Bank" project.



Children and youths were deeply grateful for tremendous support from their parents who were heavily in debt but always cared enough to provide the best support. The first loan from the Brain Bank program was granted to the adults who took parts in setting up of the English camp. These adults were facing a financial problem either from their career or in paying off their debts (from illegal high interest loans). They were allowed to submit a request for loans to spend on things they deemed necessary to them without setting a fixed interest rate as normally applied for other community loans. Instead of commercial assets, acquaintance, trust, caring and relation (brotherhood) could be considered as collaterals.

Once the loan was granted, the youths would join in and work together with adults. For example, they worked alongside the adults planting garlic. This provided them with a chance to learn from a hands-on experience, and at the same time, understand the adult's ideas and real problems confronting the community. Pressing for repayment of the loans was carried out with great understanding and sympathy, and more importantly without any fear of not getting back the money. Besides the abovementioned spiritual values, money and valuables returned to the Brain Bank by the adults were much more than expected.

Apart from the business of lending money, youths involved in the Brain Bank project had some ideas of investments. For instance, they experimented with growing organic vegetables. They invested in a store called "Yaovachon.com" selling goods to the visitors. Their parents and their networks made and sold these merchandises to the store. They also invested in the Extended Visit or Long Stay project. Youths participated as co-communicator and co-manager in all programs. Parts of their money were invested in a Dehydrated Banana Factory.

Miss Vararat Indramapan, a villager who borrowed some money from the Brain Bank Project to invest in her Dehydrated Banana Factory, expressed her feelings towards the project that "Brain Bank is a truly valuable project which enormously benefited the whole community. It does not only provide villagers with occupations, but also provide youths with great opportunity to learn about new careers and operation involved. They will be able to learn all about businesses and professions from those borrowers, leading to the exchange of new knowledge and share of new ideas. They can apply the learned experiences for their future opportunities."



Miss Vararat Indramapan and her Dehydrated Banana Factory built from a loan granted by the Brain Bank Project

On September 5, 2003, former Minister of Culture, *Mrs. Uraiwan Teintong*, and her team consisting of *Professor Dr.Pravase Wasee, M.D., Dr. Somchai Wuttipreecha, Dr. Srisak Walliphodom* and *Dr. Nichet Soonthornpitak* visited Ban Samkha Computer Center where students gave an official presentation to the distinguished visitors on status of the community in general. The students reported on how they modified the community accounting system to suit their requirements, and proposed this alternative for the adults. Her Excellency Minister of Culture asked, *"Is doing so many things for the community a burdensome to you?"* The children replied, *"Not at all. Honestly, we are so delighted to help."* Besides, the children and youths considered this the best opportunity for them to practice the entrepreneurship at an early age. After graduation, they could apply their early business experiences to find appropriate ways to make a living in the community instead of moving elsewhere.

Their idea of Brain Bank Project attracted tremendous attention of the people visited the community. On December 12, 2002, *Dr. Chaovana Nasyavanta*, the Royal Privy Councilor, and his team visited Ban Samkha Community. While listening to the presentation on Brain Bank Project, *Dr. Chaovana* asked the children, *"Aren't you afraid that the adults may cheat you, if you lend them some money?"* One of the children replied, *"No, we are not afraid, because we'll monitor each case closely, and check up on how they spend the money. We even work and learn alongside the adults."* The visitors were very impressed with the answer. This, in fact, implied that it was easy to sell a great idea. As a consequence, there were more donations made to the Brain Bank Project. For example, *Mr. Paron Israsena, Mr. Siwawong Jankhasiri* and *Dr. Chaovana Nasyavanta* each donated 10,000 baht. Later, *Prime Minister Dr. Taksin Shinawatra* donated 30,000 baht,

Mr. Praphat Panyachatrat donated 10,000 baht and lastly Mrs. Uraiwan Teinthong donated 5,000 baht. The interested visitors who appreciated the valuable accomplishment of this Brain Bank project gave more and more donations.



Miss Phornnupphan Wongtrakul, youth leader of the Brain Bank Project, described her feelings that *"We now invest in the adults' activities and help them solve their problems. Although before we supported only those parents who helped us in the camp, now we feel that other adults should not be overlooked. As a result, we have extended our aid to all who require certain funds for investment e.g. youths, government officials, monks, etc. We've been asked what we've invested so far. Honestly, we invested efforts and energy in gaining more experience, knowledge and morality. We could guarantee that we do not need profits from high interest loans. As a matter of fact, getting high interest is not our major purpose. After hearing this, people showed through their eyes how grateful they were to what we've done for them. The emotion was so overwhelming to many people, particularly Mr. Thom, who almost cried."*

Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation Practice (Vipassana)

Dr. Suchin Petcharugsa recognizes the essentials of Buddhist mindfulness meditation practice, which would always be crucial to our everyday life. He is convinced that a good learner must be a person with modest self-esteem. He consulted with Mrs. Srinuan Wongtrakul in regards to this matter. After a long discussion, they agreed to setting up a Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation Practice Camp during school breaks. An establishment of Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation Practice Center in Ban Samkha Community

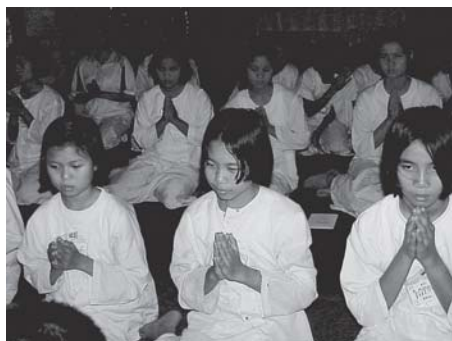
could lead to the development of an International Psychological Service Center focusing on people's spiritual rehabilitation. This would be a special service center for any visiting tourists who could apply this meditation practice to their everyday life and continual self-improvement.

On December 12, 2002, *Dr. Chaovana Nasylyanta*, the Royal Privy Counselor, came to Ban Samkha Community. For the occasion, he admitted that he was very pleased to hear that the community as a whole appreciated the great importance of having the mindfulness meditation practice, resulting in the success of organization of the Buddhist Meditation Practice Camp for the people. And, he himself was most impressed with their understanding



and awareness of trouble and disaster caused by the penetration of western civilization, from which they normally think highly of its advantages rather than disadvantages. As the people have come to their senses that everything possesses both the pros and the cons, they will eventually be fully aware of the reality of everyday existence.

Mr. Bangkok Chaokwanyen from Suksapattana Foundation said that mindfulness meditation practice does not require any prerequisite. As long as a person is mindful of oneself, there is no need for training before meditation practice. Moreover, one must possess spiritual merits and divine power to achieve the practice goal. He proposed to select volunteers to study and actually practice their learning wherever possible. After practicing and having understood how the different groups of people meditate, upon their arrival they could share their experience with other villagers. Then, the villagers should get together, analyze and decide on how to proceed. The reason for experiencing other meditation practices was to find out whether or not it was suitable for the community. In addition, it could be a good opportunity for them to observe the practice of each meditation master who seems to be the most important person to assist the practitioners of mindfulness meditation practice for self-development. The master could tell us whether or not the practitioners of mindfulness meditation are mindful of themselves, and point out to some people why they are sometimes mindless or even those who are always mindless.



Referring to the community past experiences, youth activities always had a social impact on the community. The people of Ban Samkha Community felt that it might be easier to begin the meditation program with the children and youths rather than the adults who often had no time to spare and had enormous life problems in hand. Moreover, the

youth meditation program should be continuous and progressively proceeded. If the children and teenagers kept on practicing, they would eventually become excellent contributors to the society when they are grown up. Therefore, everyone was convinced that if the meditation program were initially launched at the school and proceeding well, Ban Samkha School would soon become a Dhamma School or D-School aiming at forming socially decent yet productive persons. Nevertheless, it is of the utmost importance that the program must be executed on a voluntary basis. The teachers, as a good role model, must guide the children and youths through the mindfulness mediation practice, and they themselves must keep on practicing frequently and seriously to become the meditation masters.

With regard to the aforementioned facts, vision of developing intelligent, skillful and happy persons is much clearer. Not only modern sciences and western knowledge like English language and computer, but also the native knowledge and wisdom such as the Lanna dialect, local herbal remedies, art, culture and classical music are considered to be very important. As a result of the formation of productive persons with absolute consciousness and self-esteem who can mindfully choose what is appropriate to their requirements and avoid sinking into a life of vice resulting in truly happy persons contented with their decision, the children and youths of Ban Samkha Community ought to be economically and psychologically healthy and competent enough to live in the new globalization era. This is a genuine education reform as seen in a small rural community school of which *“environment is more appropriate for learning”* than that of city schools.

The villagers continue to seek for suitable meditation retreats in the North in order to bring their children and youths up to attend the mindfulness meditation practice. Finally, they found a Buddhist sanctuary called *Tum Tong House of Buddhist Monks* situated in Chom Thong district,

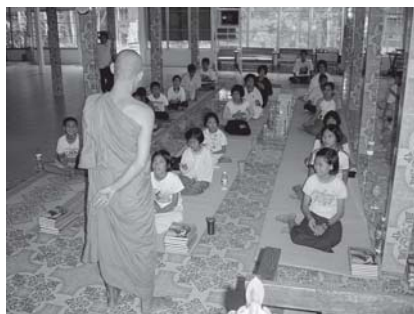
Chiang Mai province. They picked the place very carefully for their first meditation camp. The program was held between March 23 and April 2, 2003 comprising of 43 participants. The parents tremendously supported the program by packing plenty of dried and ready to eat food for their children. They could hardly wait to see some improvement of their children.



Mrs. Srinuan noted while participating in the meditation program that the children and youths benefited greatly from the program. For example, they could pray to the Lord Buddha every morning and evening without the leading monk or nun. Everyone could memorize all eight Buddhist precepts with the complete meanings. They were able to pay their great respects to the Lord Buddha, the Dharma and the Order of Buddhist Monks by lighting candles and incense and by meditating while walking, sitting up and sleeping. They understood each religious ceremony very well and confidently took parts as churchmen and churchwomen in every ceremony. Their performance was highly recognized, thus a 4,000 baht reward was given to those with the outstanding conduct. On their return, the participants' behaviors have changed positively. For instance, they spoke and paid respects to the elderly in a proper manner. They participated actively in more community work. They wake up early in the morning. They are more frugal with their money. Although they are not at the sanctuary, they still get together and pray to the Lord Buddha every full-moon evening. They all agree to continue practicing the same mindfulness meditation as learned from their master.

The parents enjoyed seeing their children doing the right things. *Mrs. Srinuan* noted further *"There was once a grade 6 student who wanted to pursue his studies at one of the distinguished private schools in the city with a prior consent of his parent although their family was poor and heavily in debt.*

The parents wanted their child to have the same right, privileges and opportunity as the others, although both father and mother had no formal education. The teachers and the community leaders tried very hard to give them rational explanations and many suggestions. They felt quite satisfied with the conclusion that instead of going for the best private school, their child should attend a common private school for which they paid lower tuition fees. Moreover, the commuting expense between home and the city school would cost nearly three times more than that of the secondary school in the neighborhood. Apart from these, the boy's academic performance was not outstanding. But, he was a conspicuous consumer. After several attempts at convincing the boy, while attending the meditation course he still insisted on going to the city school. His teachers and the community leaders accepted the fact that if the boy should decide to go to the city school, he would learn his lesson through real life experience. For example, his parents currently owned 6 cows, which could probably be sold for cash within two years. Surprisingly, the child changed his mind on his return trip home from the meditation camp. He decided to go to the secondary school nearby.



It was a great relief to know that the child changed his mind. His mother said that the boy made the decision three hours after coming back from the meditation retreat. Thus, the meditation practice could indirectly lead to the decision which eased the stress on their financial situation in the future."

Miss Jaruwan Wannasuwong, a girl participating in the mindfulness meditation program at Tum Tong House of Buddhist Monks, reported to the Prime Minister on June 20, 2003 "While attending the program, we gained better understanding of Dhamma including consciousness, the Buddhist precepts, mindfulness and wisdom. We learnt to work together, live in harmony, look after one another, have patience with others, and above all to love one another. Buddhist morality and ethics, especially the gratitude to parents, were taught and instilled to every individual. After the program, there were notable signs of behavior improvement. For example, I myself before attending the program felt slightly embarrassed when paying my respect to my parents. But, after attending the program and instilling the sense of Buddhist morality and ethics, I feel terrific every time I pay respect to my parents. Not only I, but also my friends have positively changed for the better." While making the report to the Prime Minister, she showed pictures taken from the mindfulness meditation camp, and said "We'll soon organize a similar program for our parents. We hope that they will understand the meaning of meditation practice (vipassana) and be able to apply it to their lifestyle."

The Prime Minister suggested, "The Buddhist precepts, mindfulness and wisdom are relatively similar to information, knowledge and wisdom. That is once we have enough information and knowledge to differentiate between right and wrong we can maintain in balance. The acquired useful information will be transformed into knowledge and eventually developed into wisdom. This is similar to what has happened to the development of new globalization era. There is a new book called "The Power of Mind at Work". If we compare this process to mindfulness meditation practice (comprising of the Buddhist precepts, mindfulness and wisdom), we can see that data is processed into information (or useful information) then transformed into knowledge and eventually developed into wisdom.

"Or, finally led to innovation" said Mr. Paron.

Mindfulness meditation practice is comparable to a layer of rocks. The more rocks are tidily laid, the higher the layers will be. If our mind is strong and stable, we can tidily and mindfully lay more rocks higher and higher. On the other hand, if our mind is weak and unstable, we can only

mindlessly and untidily make layers of rocks that soon will collapse. According to the Pali language, there are two ways of liberation from ignorance and self-deception, liberated wisdom and super spirits. It simply means that once a person could acquire useful information, knowledge, and eventually wisdom, he could be liberated from anything. However, at an early age, a person might not have enough data to be transformed into useful information and knowledge, he might be required to start with mindfulness meditation practice. Hopefully, this could lead him to absolute liberation through practice i.e. super spirits."

The development of Ban Samkha Buddhist Mindfulness Meditation Practice Center will proceed indefinitely and focus especially on forming the school meditation masters who can help the children and youths to develop at all time. As a result, Ban Samkha School is always involved in activities related to the meditation practice, for instance, organizing the meditation camp on every school break and integrating the meditation practice in other camp activities. Students are urged to meditate at least for half an hour every Friday.

The Community Broadcasting



The students of Ban Samkha School took the initiative in broadcasting news and useful information for general listeners. At the beginning, to broadcast their programs the children must head for *Mr. Jamnong Janjom's* house, where radio broadcasting devices were installed on the news-reporting tower. The problem was a great distance between the school and the tower.

Mr. Paron Israsena and Dr. Thaweesak Koanantakool, Director of National Electronics and Computer Technology Center (NECTEC), were particularly inspired after acknowledgment of the aforementioned issue. They both agreed

on the idea of simple radio station utilizing wireless broadcasting devices. This was carried out as a feasibility study on transforming a simple

news-reporting tower into a standard community radio station. Such remarkable study might reveal certain valuable secrets to the community-broadcasting program of Thailand.



A serious problem of such simple news-reporting tower is often found in the process of broadcasting on radio via wiring equipment i.e. defects in the wiring system may cause certain problems. Therefore, radio frequency modulation or the FM band seems to be most suitable for the case. Due to the fact that such frequency is not normally applicable for the rural areas,

many unoccupied channels are most likely available for the community-broadcasting program.

As required by the law, the radio transmitting apparatus or transmitters must be legally certified and approved. After a thorough examination, it is apparent that only 0.01 watts needed for transmission, which is absolutely below legal limit. Though such low-wattage requirement seems to be insignificant to others, it has a great impact on the remote areas and their people. As a matter of fact, this minimal wattage enables the people to transmit the news and useful information throughout their tiny community.

A team of NECTEC researchers led by *Mr. Sutat Pathomnupong*, attempted



to develop a simple system, based on the requirements of community users. They added certain technology like a remote control to make it more stylish. Children could now turn their broadcasting system on and off right at the school, instead of having to make a long trip to the news-reporting tower at *Mr. Jamnong Janjom's* house as they have been doing in the past.

Equipment and apparatus required for this purpose were inexpensive and easily obtained. Some were recycled, and some were brand new, all of which were put together. For example, the radio transmitter installed at *Mr. Jamnong Janjom's* house was taken from a used car radio. Antennae

were also recycled from the ordinary inexpensive telephone wires cost only a few hundreds baht. These electronic devices were modified to suit their requirements.

The people of Ban Samkha Community could listen to the broadcasting program at FM 108 MHz. All live programs from Monday thru Friday were produced and controlled by the students. The people could listen to the programs either directly from the news-reporting tower or at FM 108 MHz. They were satisfied with the services because they could listen to the program while attending their housework. Furthermore, should the sound transmitting from the tower was breaking up; they could also listen to the program at FM 108 MHz. Parents were excited to hear what their children had to say live on the air. They had the feelings that their children were just talking right at the house. Besides spreading the news and useful information, the students are now utilizing their community broadcasting as a tool to promote and extend their local wisdom and classical music to the public.

The broadcasting of Ban Samkha Community is an example of learning to apply technology in order to acquire new knowledge of communications and to disseminate useful knowledge to the rural people. The new knowledge can promote their quality of livelihood and guide them towards becoming more self-reliant with the total confidence in making final decision on their local activities. This is a truly community broadcasting genuinely designed, operated and owned by the people of community.



The Extended Visit (Long-Stay) Project "Tip-Pa-La-Pan-Ya"

Since 2001 there were numbers of visitors who came to Ban Samkha Community to learn new things and share their experiences with the villagers. Most people who ever visited Ban Samkha Community were often impressed with the community great hospitality, its ways of thinking and its community management. They had the opportunity to see some of the community works such as woodcarving, cloth weaving, and artificial flowers made from mulberry by-products. The most impressive things were the preservation of local wisdom and beautiful scenery of the community, comprising of rich forest and well-conserved natural water sources. The entire aforementioned are considered the community "social assets" essential to the initiation of Long-Stay project suitable for tourists craving for temporarily staying at homes of the villagers. Those who ever had a chance to use this service are always impressed. However, this eco-tourism business is still pending, since the community feels that it may have tremendous adverse impact on its teenagers and its everlasting gorgeous nature.

In December 2002, American volunteers helped Ban Samkha School set up a short-term English Camp, and suggested the new idea of a short-term lodging for visitors interested in the community. They also convinced their American friends to visit Ban Samkha Community and stay at the villagers' home. By doing this, teenagers and villagers could earn money and gain opportunities to learn and speak the English language. This initiated an idea of building a temporary accommodation for general tourists interested in a long-term stay. *Mr. Paron*, in particular, was in favor of the idea and delighted to provide financial aid (in term of loan) for the project construction. He was convinced that it would be a valuable investment for the community, which enabling the villagers to learn an unfamiliar subject of hotel management. The money received from lodging rental could partially be paid back to him and partially be saved up for their future investment.

In April 2003, at the general community meeting, the people of Ban Samkha Community decided to construct a building to serve travelers and visitors coming to visit the community either for pleasure or business i.e. education. It designated to be built on a piece of land given to the school by the community. *Mr. Sahass Polpattapee* was appointed to draw a design and supervise the construction work. The Siam Cement Group donated construction materials, items taken from its old building as well as other

necessary equipments. Suksapattana Foundation hired the villagers as construction labor and also provided other construction materials and equipments. The building was named "*Tip-Pa-La-Pan-Ya*", meaning courage and dare to take the initiative of unfamiliar tasks for the enrichment of wisdom and benefits of the community. The building was completed and used as a place to welcome the Prime Minister on June 20, 2003.

The Extended Visit (Long-Stay) Project "*Tip-Pa-La-Pan-Ya*" could bring together all kinds of community activities and resources, including occupations, cultural arts as well as community knowledge, wisdom and disciplines. It serves as a common intellectual source for visitors, the children and youths of Ban Samkha Community to exchange knowledge and share ideas. It is a truly "service place on learning ground".



Sergeant Chai Wongtrakul, Deputy Supervisor of the Construction, reported to the Prime Minister on June 20, 2003 *"Our children and youths can benefit from the Extended Visit Project, the so-called Long-Stay, by exchanging knowledge and sharing experiences with the visiting tourists. They can learn foreign languages directly from the native speakers, and consequently, gain more confidence. It can be a place for selling community goods, learning rural lifestyle and unique culture of Ban Samkha Community. Apart from this, the conservation in term of eco-tourism program can be developed into a part of OTOP (One Tambon One Product) project since there are various components such as domestic herbal medicines, local wisdom and forestry products in the community. We really want our youths to learn about management and community service through the Long-Stay model. This may create a number of jobs available for the villagers, thus eliminate the need to move into town for work. As a result, the community can then be as strong and sustainable as the cities."*

Responding to the abovementioned report, the Prime Minister said, *"During a school break this could be an ideal place (i.e. summer camp) for parents to bring their kids in on camp activities. Demonstrations by teenagers could lighten the visiting kids' imagination and ideas. All people from other villages are also welcome to join in the so-called Long-Stay program from which they could learn many things together. For instance, the children and youths of Ban Samkha Community could demonstrate how to proceed with their activities to short-term visiting guests, who could eventually learn together with them (i.e. Ban Samkha youths could teach the children, teenagers and adults from other villages). This could lead to the community knowledgeable tourism. Ban Samkha Community possesses many interesting characteristics that can possibly spawn a passion for learning and doing. For those who wish to inspire their children with an ideal place for learning or want to learn new things themselves could consider this rural community, of which the people are capable of engaging in many activities, besides their living together in a harmonious community and their interesting creativity."*

Currently, a group of community members volunteered to look after the lodge that welcomed all visitors and tourists interested in their community activities. After visiting the Regent Resort Hotel in Chiang Mai province and learning about its business ideas, the community representatives began to show their understanding of hotel management. They planed to work closely in coordination with the River View Lodge in Chiang Mai province.

Mrs. Duenshy Wanasuwong, caretaker of the Long-Stay Project, expressed her feelings towards the project management that "At present, the community has appointed a committee to jointly manage the place. The committee has assigned each of us certain part in the project, for example, housekeeper, finance, construction maintenance, etc. We all agreed to set a standard service charge enough to cover the cost and leave some profits for maintenance and improvement works. The committee receive no income whatsoever i.e. their attendance is purely voluntary; everything is done purely for the benefit of community. I myself started working here since the place was under construction. I have learned many things ever since. I love working here and always feel like I am working at home."

The Ban Samkha Community - Krung Thai Bank

Ban Samkha Community has always put a lot of effort into solving their debts problems. For example, *Sergeant Chai Wongtrakul*, one of the community leaders, attempted to save 6 hopeless families who were heavily in debt. He took them to *Chiang Rai Asoke*, a religious sanctuary, in order to find an inspiration to quitting their bad behaviors or vices leading to inappropriate and extravagant use of money. At *Chiang Rai Asoke*, they learnt how to breed native pigs, grow organic vegetables for personal consumption and for commercial sales, formulate a household accounting system, collect, analyze and modify data to suit their daily income and expense.



Mr. Paron Israsena commented that there was a small chance to make enough money from their current occupations to repay their debts. Therefore, they should seek new descent careers to generate more income such as purebred cattle farming, pigs and poultry farming in conjunction with the Charoen Pokphand (C.P.) Group. The crucial issue, however, is the high initial capital needed and time required to recover the investment. *Mr. Paron*, then, negotiated with *Krung Thai Bank PLC* for special financial supports to Ban Samkha Community. The negotiation was successful, and the total fund of Baht 3,000,000 was granted to the community.

This provided an opportunity for the community bank officers of *Krung Thai Bank PLC* to work closely with the villagers. It is the start of "*Ban Samkha Community - Krung Thai Bank*" Project, the prototype for a unique community bank providing a full-service banking similar to an ordinary commercial bank.

Ban Samkha Community endorsed the establishment of community bank as a pilot project in February 2003, making it a collaborative effort between the representatives of Krung Thai Bank PLC and the villagers to learn about investment and financial management of the community. The bank representatives spent sometimes with the villagers to find the ways and gain experiences to handle community funds, and helped them set up a corruption-free, self-supporting and permanent financial institute, which could continually strengthen the community and improve capability of its people. It enabled the community committee, comprising of villagers and youths, to take the role of "community bankers" in more appropriate manners. Both the bank representatives and the community committee together would make the final decision and monitor their investments.

Besides the members of Lampang Circuit, *Mr. Supachai Wancham* from the Siam Cement Co., Ltd (Lampang), *Mr. Thaweesak Chai-ongkan* and *Mrs. Pawana Wongsom*, both from the Royal Brain Bank Project under Her Majesty the Queen's patronage, also joined in the board of directors of the community bank. More importantly, the youths had a chance to participate in the board from the start in order to learn closely alongside the other directors.



Krung Thai Bank PLC allocated funds to the project of Ban Samkha Community - Krung Thai Bank. Baht 3,000,000 were allocated to support the project on special interest rate loans, and Baht 150,000 were granted for the project management. The representatives from Krung Thai Bank

PLC also gave advices and guidelines on organizational arrangement of the community bank, specific roles and responsibilities of everyone concerned. Together they amended the draft of its business manual, developed the computer programs on bank deposits-withdrawal transactions and loans recording system. Moreover, they organized training courses for the community bank committee, granted a financial support for the development of entrepreneurs, and sponsored a research on learning process and learning point's analysis. The community bank committee laid down rules and regulations of the bank. The first deposit was made on May 5, 2004, followed by granting a loan and debt collection, respectively.

Apart from being a financial management-learning field for the people and teenagers of Ban Samkha Community, the project of Ban Samkha Community-Krung Thai Bank is a learning institute for employees of Krung Thai Bank PLC and Siam Cement Co., Ltd (Lampang), where they work in cooperation with the villagers based on their ideas, attitudes and learning process.



During the official visit to Ban Samkha Community on June 20, 2003, the Prime Minister expressed his feelings towards the project of Ban Samkha Community-Krung Thai Bank that *"This could be used as a model for transformation of village funds into a micro-credit bank. Some capital investment from Krung Thai Bank PLC and some from the Government*

Savings Bank will be granted to a community bank like the Ban Samkha Community-Krung Thai. We will adopt the old system of personal benefits and apply it into the new community welfare functioning the same way as non-profit organization. Instead of doing for the personal benefit, all profit will belong to the community. This becomes a linkage between the bank and the community, thus expanding the bank's foundation. The most important thing is that the villagers developing in a capitalist economy will have enough money to invest in a business with proper management techniques according to the principles of capitalism. This has proved to be an appropriate pilot site."

The Ban Samkha Community-Krung Thai Bank Project represents a community financial institute offering services in money savings and credit lines to each individual person with fairness, efficiency, transparency and accountability. It gives the people of Ban Samkha Community and the Krung Thai Bank's representative an opportunity to learn together the financial business administration and management in line with objectives of the establishment of a bank for sustainable development of the community.

The Ban Samkha Community-Krung Thai Bank

Ban Samkha Community has gained the following.

- ◆ A financial department to mobilize funds and grant a financial aid to members of the community.
- ◆ Banking and financing skills enabling them to deal financially with financial institutes.
- ◆ Disciplines in keeping credit and money savings
- ◆ Funds available for business investment
- ◆ Youths and the community members have gained some knowledge of banking and financing.
- ◆ Learning alongside their allied partners.

Krung Thai Bank has gained the following.

- ◆ Learning financial system of the grass-roots community.
- ◆ Help promote financial disciplines in the community.
- ◆ Help improve a quality of life of members of the community by granting a credit line for their business operation.
- ◆ Help improve and strengthen the grass-roots economy.
- ◆ Money allocation skills to distribute funds to other capital sources.

The Preparation of Life Plan

Ban Samkha is no different than other communities who face the most serious problem of lacking a good knowledge of management, which requires a considerable amount of time and efforts to solve the problem.

Currently, Balanced Scorecard (BSC) has become an important tool in management modifying strategies into real practice. It is most effective and favorable in the business cycle due to the fact that BSC includes performance evaluation in all areas of any organization. Scores may not be the same in every field. The organization specifies which areas are more important than the others, and definitely finance is not the only area the organization places its special emphasis on. On the contrary, it focuses specially on components such as acquirement of knowledge and skills of employees in the organization. Although such acquirements may not be visible, they are the most significant motivating force in strengthen the value of any organization.

If a rural family is considered as one unique organization in our society, it is necessary that this family must have an effective management technique so that all family members are able to live happily together with high hopes in the future. As a result, the Northern Region Non-Formal Education Center, the Siam Cement (Lampang) Co., Ltd and the people of Ban Samkha Community agree to an application of management technique to all families in the community.

It is not easy to make the rural people understand the application of management technique used in the business. Therefore, the easiest way to approach them is to take any real situation as an example. At the beginning, a representative from the Siam Cement (Lampang) Co., Ltd introduced to those interested families his own long-term life plan. He starts out by asking himself what is going to happen to his family in the future in terms of occupation, education of his children, family welfare, housing, vehicles, vacation, social contribution, and investments, etc, considering the approximate expenses of each category in a year, sources of income, amount of income needed to cover such expenses. The more details included, the easiest ways to foresee when the expenses exceeded his income, resulting in debts accumulation, thus signals him to find the solutions to such problem. On the other hand, if the family income is greater than the expense, he could deal with family savings and investment properly. Once family credit-debit estimation is completed, then monthly or

even weekly estimation can be prepared.

After seeing examples and asking questions, the villagers seemed to understand the concept quite well. The volunteered housewives and their children then decided whether or not they would prefer using the same method as the Siam Cement's representative. If they are interested, then they must prepare their own "future life plan" by describing vaguely on a piece of paper and grouping items in one list. The children themselves should also prepare their own life plans. Agendas such as occupations in their community, of which required some discussion of the family members, should be specified in the group future plans.

Next step is to prepare an estimation of credit-debit for one, two or more years, then detail it on a monthly basis. One must ask oneself what he/she is going to do today or tomorrow, what needs to be done in order to achieve his/her life plan. Making a comparison between the child and the housewife plans on child welfare and education estimation builds up a better understanding among the family members. It helps them adjust their daily expense in line with monthly and yearly estimation. By writing a personal journal enables them to review their daily expense thoroughly. At the end of each month they can conclude their total expense and see the difference between the actual credit-debit account and their prior estimation. Finally, all families can give their reflection or share their experiences with friends.

Mrs. Naree Indramapan, known as "Na Tim" one of the housewives admitted that she got a bad headache while preparing her family debit-credit account. The more details, the more headaches she got. For example, making an estimation of her daughter's education in a 4-year college, she realized that it would take more than 300,000 baht for her daughter to finish college. She did not know how to get that kind of money since her main income was from growing rice, raising pigs and cows, planting onions and making paper flowers, all of which were absolutely not adequate to support her daughter through college. As a result, she had an idea of borrowing some money from a financial source. Furthermore, another son of her is now studying in a secondary school where more money is needed, she had even worst headache. However, by preparing a thorough plan like this could enable all family members to understand their situation well, and all together could find the solutions.

The preparation of a simple family plan, occupation plan and finally a long-term environmental investment plan of a whole community may lead to the specific process of solving a basic problem facing all community members.

This may create new exciting careers for youths interesting enough to attract them to still live happily with high hopes in their economical community atmosphere. The answers and solutions to the aforementioned matters rely on a complicated management scheme. Villagers must always seek proper knowledge to deal with particular problems, follow their previously prepared plan and readjust themselves according to different situations. Thus, the so-called "life curriculum" has gradually appeared from a simple life plan of each individual household. The villagers learned something from their experiences, but some complicated matters required special assistance from their allied partners within a common learning environment rather than giving and taking approach as typically applied in the past. The new life curriculum focusing especially on both the present and the future, the acquirement of useful knowledge must not be restricted by others, but rather linked among individuals and integrated to family planning.

A case of interest is *Mrs. Chandee*, leader of a housewife group. After learning about the BSC, she was able to manage and readjust her family plan. For instance, she was able to cut down unnecessary daily expenses. She reduced the size of her rice-farming area after facing the problem of loss i.e. the money spent was greater than the amount earned. Finally, she decided that making enough rice for family consumption was plenty and collecting forest products or being a middleman to deliver such products to the market would earn more money. In addition, investing some money in the Dehydrated Banana Factory with her sister would bring more income to the family. She revealed her hidden experiences to her married daughter who worked at a factory in Lamphun province earning over 10,000 baht a month, but never had enough money for savings due to high expenses in each month. After hearing, her daughter quit her job and came back home. She followed her mother's footstep by preparing a careful household accounting and life plan. She worked in the rice fields with her aunt and selling food. Although she did not earn much from both activities, she had enough money for her savings. This was because she did not have to pay for food and rent a house. She added that even though she received only 100 baht as wages, she was absolutely happy. However, it was not a happy ending, as it seemed. Her son-in-law still worked for the other factory, therefore, their family expense was still high. It would be awkward to ask him to resign and move into his wife's house.

Furthermore, he was not comfortable with working for his wife's parents. Changing his way of life was not that easy. At the end, the couple went back to Lampoon province and worked at the factories.

Apart from experimenting with the families and school, this approach may be applied to other business units e.g. the Ban Samkha Community-Krung Thai Bank and the Extended Visit or Long-Stay Project. However, it would be easier to proceed step by step to gain more experiences through simple cases, and then expand the program further.

This simple case may lead to clearer visions which in turn bring about the most important lesson for the villagers to effectively manage their own families as well as their community business. The effective management is useful for solving the problem such as debt, which the community has confronted long time ago. This may guide the villagers how to improve their family management and minimize their debts to zero at the end. This guides them to learn vigorously, possess intangible assets for later usage in creating more tangible assets, lastly, to live happily together in harmony.

Water Management and Wildfire Prevention



Ban Samkha is situated in a valley adjoining the mountain range that separates Lampang province from Phrae province. The said mountain is a major water source for the community. The stream of water flows from the top of this mountain to feed the villagers and agriculture downhill. After a company with logging

concessions seriously destroyed the forest twice in the past, the deteriorating forest began to restore slowly in thirty years. However, the villagers still kept on burning it while hunting wild animals. They also believed that mushrooms and a plant in the family Euphorbiaceae grow well after deforestation. As a result, amount of water supply is severely depleted and eventually become short. As the moisture decreased, wildfire became the enemy of the reforestation cycle. Moreover, the villagers kept on starting forest fire based upon their previous belief. Thus, wildfire became even worst and worst problem as years gone by. The people of Ban Samkha Community are now well aware of the significant impact of wildfire and begin

to make every efforts to reforest with high hopes of having a perfect forest as seen in the past.

For the solution of this problem, *Mr. Paron Israsena*, *Dr. Suchin Petcharugsa* and *Dr. Royol Chitradon* suggested several visits to the Huai Hong Krai Royal Development Study Center locating in Chiang Mai Province. The center was established to conduct studies, researches and experimentations on appropriate development methods in rehabilitation of the woodland upstream and wildfire prevention. The most impressive idea being that although it seemed rather difficult to stop people with bad habits from starting forest fire, they could not harm the forest only if the surrounding soil was so moist that it was impossible for them to light up a fire. Therefore, if there was no fire, both small and large trees would not be destroyed, and then the forest could be replenished so quickly. This absolutely inspired the villagers to a future initiative in implementing the idea.

Check Dams

The people of Ban Samkha Community and their allied partners led by Suksapattana Foundation visited the Huai Hong Krai Royal Development Study Center many times, and together learned about the methods in rehabilitation of the woodland, according to the Royal Initiatives of His Majesty the King known as "check dam". It is proved to be the most effective tool to prevent wildfire and solve the problem of deteriorating forest and water shortage during the dry season. And, at the same time, it enhances the balance of our nature, so rich that wild animals and various species of birds migrate to and live in the forest as seen in the past.

Generally, check dam is a small construction made of natural materials such as bamboos, soil, rocks, pebbles and wood particles, most of which



can be found locally. To strengthen the dams, linked wire, sand, fertilizer bags and cement are added to other construction materials. Check dams can retain adequate amount of water in different reservoir descending in steps from hilltops, thus reducing the velocity of water flowing downstream. As a matter of fact, check dams help maintain sufficient moisture in the soil adequate to nourish trees during the dry season, and provide channels of water through the fish bone system to supply cropping areas or maintain the moisture in a larger area.

Construction of check dams retard the water flow, maintain soil moisture in the areas upstream, collect silt and prevent it from flowing downstream, thus act as effective blockage. Falling leaves collected before the dams are good natural fertilizer when mix well with wood particles for certain times until their decomposition. Water reservoir resulted from the construction of check dams is also a good source of food like fishes and water bugs. Villagers can even breed and raise fishes in floating baskets within the water reservoir. Furthermore, bamboos can be used for transporting water from the reservoir to the remote area away, thus spreading so much moisture throughout the forest that it seems impossible for wildfire to occur. In conclusion, construction of check dams is one of effective means of wet firebreaks to prevent wildfire, leading to great benefit to the growth of trees and herbal plants.

As a matter of fact, the idea of check dam construction was initiated right after the incident of wildfire which happened to continue spreading out closer to the Ban Samkha School and their Long-Stay lodge. After visiting both the Huai Hong Krai Royal Development Study Center and Ban PaSakNgam, Doi Saket district, Chiang Mai province, the youths of Ban Samkha Community applied what they had learned from both places to real practice in their community. They agreed to construct check dams at a creek near the school and Long-Stay lodge.

While the children and youths were busy with the construction of check dams, their mothers felt so worried about their coming home late. Therefore, they often followed their children to work and at the beginning brought with them some snacks, meals and water. As times passed, they were so impressed with their children performance and strong commitment. They, consequently, recruited more people from the community women group to help the children with the construction work. At the end, they finally completed 20 check dams.



Upon completion of 20 dams, Suksapattana Foundation noticed and valued the strong commitment of both youths and women. The Foundation, therefore, suggested that Ban Samkha Community could write a project proposal and submit it to the Siam Cement Group for a financial aid in building more check dams.

Soon after submitting their project proposal, Ban Samkha Community received a grant of 400,000 baht for the construction of more check dams. To complete this project, many groups of people in the community were involved. For instance, the men group built a number of dams from top of the mountain downward, while the youths and women groups started from the bottom upwards. This demonstrated the significant impact of a small and simple task engaged by the community youth group, from which later extended further to more important and larger projects like wildfire prevention and preservation of the forest upstream with full cooperation from the adults.

Firebreak



At the general community meeting, a group of people proposed a certain measure to control wildfire, most of which was often caused by the people of Ban Samkha Community. One proposed a maximum penalty of 10,000 baht, on which everyone agreed. They accepted this particular agreement because they all realized the significance of wildfire prevention, the impact of water

shortage in the dry season, and the thickly forested areas as major natural resources for the community forever.

Apart from the aforementioned measure, firebreak seemed to be another alternative to wildfire prevention. The representatives from the Huai Hong Krai Royal Development Study Center organized seminars and training courses for the people of Ban Samkha Community in order to provide them with general knowledge, usage and benefits of firebreak.

After training, during January-February, 2005 the villagers started to build firebreaks according to what they were taught and trained. They were divided among themselves into small groups of 2-4 volunteers to watch out for wildfire and patrol the community woodland daily. Should wildfire occur, the surveillance team must alert the villagers to the crisis facing their community. They all got together to extinguish the fire. As a result of their cooperative efforts, they were able to save their community from wildfire many times before it destroyed everything. There were 25 incident of wildfire reported since February through May of 2005, some of which were caused by the people of Ban Samkha Community, and some were spread from neighboring villages. The total loss covered an area of approximately 20% in 2005. Through their experiences, the villagers learned how to manage, prevent and preserve their forest properly. They could change crisis into advantages utilizing the community ideas and unity as motivation.



Technology and Water Management and Wildfire Prevention

As technology plays a crucial role in our everyday life, it is most likely to apply its useful application to water management and wildfire prevention, including the natural resources of Ban Samkha Community, for example, Internet GIS, satellite topographic maps, Field Server and GPS. All technologies are introduced to the community and sponsored by the specialized allied partners so that the people could learn how to make use of the said technologies in efficient management of local natural resources.

Internet GIS and Satellite Topographic Maps

Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute (HAI) brought the Internet GIS into Ban Samkha Community for learning purposes. First, HAI showed geographic and topographic maps to the children, youths and villagers for a basic understanding of signs, latitudes and longitudes, correct directions and locations.



After that, HAI showed them a satellite topographic map (IKONOS) covering 49 kilometers². It was apparent that the people of Ban Samkha Community were able to locate and point certain things on the map very quickly. This is because places and things are clearly shown on the satellite topographic maps, thus enables the people to see the real community conditions from the upper view, especially the views of deteriorating forest and natural resources. Thus promotes villagers' ecological awareness to protect the ecosystem of the uphill and downhill communities.

Having learned about LANSAT or IKONOS, the people of Ban Samkha Community are able to mark locations for the construction of check dams, draw trails for nature study, set up policies on water source management and agriculture, etc., all of which are included in the Internet GIS. Moreover, the children and youths of Ban Samkha Community learned to record all basic data of their community e.g. residential sites, locations of historical places, roads and canals, etc onto the community map for management purposes.



Field Server

It is a system used in keeping data of local weather conditions for agricultural warning purposes. The system is linked to other biological variations, influence of weather on environment and its impact on human welfare. HAI, the School Botanical Garden Program and the Preservation of Plant Genetics Project under the Royal Initiatives of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn transferred knowledge of Field Server to the students of

Ban Samkha School as being a member of the School Botanical Garden Program.



During October 4-8, 2004 HAI introduced the different components of Field Server to the children and youths of Ban Samkha Community as well as demonstrated how the system works. Having learned about the system, they divided into groups. Each group drew a diagram, including the details of usage, its benefits, installation procedures and sites, data recording, etc.

After having a thorough understanding of Field Server, they installed the device in the wood behind the Long-Stay lodge, also being a research station keeping data of the reforestation of Ban Samkha Community. They also learned how to maintain the equipment and keep track of data. They took full responsibility in monitoring and recording data monthly, and at the same time everyone must take the role of co-ownership of the system.

GPS

Between December 16 and 18, 2004 HAI came to Ban Samkha Community and transferred knowledge of a navigational system or GPS to the villagers. After getting acquainted with the system, the children and youths would be able to select certain sites for the construction of check dams. Locations of check dams appeared on the overall picture in order to set up appropriate policies on the forest management and preservation, which could be systematically extended further towards the basin of a river.

During knowledge transferring sessions, many villagers showed strong interest in the subject. One of those people was Mrs. Naree Indramapan, the current leader of women group, who engaged in the construction of check dams. Previously, a group of villagers led by Mrs. Naree drew up a map showing the specific sites of check dams by hands. After the introduction of both satellite topographic maps and GPS, the villagers and a group of youths were able to keep record of precise location of each dam. Such activity was considered an excellent example of learning process and hands-on group activity.

For a hands-on learning via the actual situation, a group of researchers comprising the children, youths, adults, women of Ban Samkha Community and their allied partners namely *Dr. Suchin Petcharugsa* and HAI team conducted a survey and kept a record of precise locations of check dams using GPS in order to find out the real problems and gain experiences in collecting data for later application.



Application of technology to the extinguishments of wildfire

Apart from knowledge of firebreak construction, the people of Ban Samkha Community applied ICT e.g. satellite topographic map, GPS and cellular phone to the extinguishments of wildfire. It was considered an impressive application of devices to extinguish wildfire, after the villagers and youths had learned about the usage of satellite topographic map and GPS in constructing check dams and marking the precise locations on a map for the management of their water source. Once wildfire was reported, the villagers could make the use of GPS to indicate the exact location of fire. The volunteers carried GPS with them while patrolling the area, and called other villagers using their cellular phone to report the wildfire including its precise location. The youths or adults who were working at the school then made a special announcement via the community radio broadcasting. Having heard the news and being informed the precise location of wildfire, the villagers could rapidly react and eventually extinguish the fire. This incident indicated that people never stop learning as long as there was a way to apply new knowledge into the actual practice.

Local Wisdom

Herbs



Ban Samkha Community is adjacent to the forest abundant in variety of plant species and herbs. The community recognizes the significance of conservation of locally grown herbal plants and transfer of local wisdom in herbs especially for illness treatment to the next generations. Medicinal herbs are considered typical, economical and suitable for the community way of life.

On July 2, 2002, *Mr. Paron Israsena* and *Dr. Sippanon Kettat* visited Ban Samkha Community. They were convinced that the community forest was still naturally rich. The villagers should keep their eyes on which herbal plants were of great demands and were purchased the most. Then, they might try to make the most use of these herbs, and prepared the community database for their own benefits. Perhaps, they could make the most popular herbal products in the future.

In September of 2003 the community started to promote growing herbal plants. Having received a financial support from the National Forest, Wild Animals and Plants Department, the villagers planted 279 species of herbs on 6.25 rais of land. They appointed 8 committee members to undertake the project. All villagers became the project members taking turn to look after their herbs. Apart from financial aid, herbs specialists from the Khao Hin Son Royal Development Study Center and government officials specialized in the forestry from the Forest Preservation Office 14th provided the technical supports.



On August 21, 2004 the youths and representatives of Ban Samkha Community attended a workshop on flora database held at Thailand Scientific Garden in Pathum Thani province. After the workshop, the participants began to keep records of their local flora. They could identify at least 46 species, parts of which were presently used as local remedies.

The students posted scientific and generic nametags and its properties at each herbal plant for learning purposes.

All children, youths and adults of Ban Samkha Community recognized the usefulness and significance of herbs as their local wisdom inherited from their ancestors. Mr. Somvorn Wongjina, one of the project supporters,



once said that *"Modern medicine has side effects, but herbal medicine causes no side effect. Moreover, the latter is so effective that it deserves a thorough study and wide dissemination of knowledge. We should urge the community to replace the use of modern medicines with our local herbal remedies, thus would preserve and extend the use of our local wisdom in herbs."*

The Lanna Dialect

Ban Samkha Community has long been involved in a research, findings and transfer of local wisdom in herbs and traditional Thai medicine. As a matter of fact, the aforementioned Mr. Som Yaso, an excellent researcher, is residing in this community. There are several notebooks on herbal medicine safely kept by the villagers. These notes are written in the native dialect of Lanna, which is not easy for the new generation to understand.

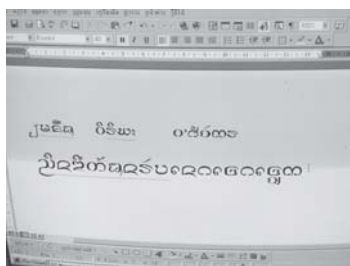
Mr. Paron Isarasena suggested that Ban Samkha School should familiarize its students with knowledge of herbs and its potential for tremendous demands of the current market. The school should place its special emphasis on teaching English language, ICT and the Lanna dialect.

The Lanna Dialect Camp was initiated after the English Camp. While attending English Camp, a group of youths and their parents had a chance to go on a hike in the wood and learn about herbal plants growing in the areas. Coming back from the trip, the children consulted the medicineman about the herbal plants they had seen along the way. The medicine man showed them his herbal remedies notebook written in the Lanna dialect. Consequently, they realized that they could not understand what was written in that book unless they could read the language. Thus inspired them to learn about the Lanna dialect in order to be able to translate it into Thai. Furthermore, they felt that by doing this they could preserve the Lanna dialect, a native language spoken in the northern part of Thailand. Hopefully, the new coming generations would inherit what their ancestors had transferred to them.

Mr. Nantongsuk Wongsakan, former chief monk of Ban Samkha Temple specializing in the Lanna dialect, was delighted to teach the language to the children free of charge. At the beginning, the children and youths learned with him only in the evening. Later, it was added to the school curriculum. However, the learning approach differed from what had been done traditionally i.e. children learned from adults, unlike the past that students learned from teachers. There were no complications involved. *Mr. Nantongsuk* guaranteed that the children would definitely understand the language without the need of academic evaluation.



Towards the end of November, 2002 the elderly started to translate herbal remedies written in the Lanna dialect into Thai with some assistance from youths in recording and making it more understandable. When time permitted, the elderly often told them stories about their village, traditions and cultures. It was considered grateful to see such cooperative efforts to transfer their unique local wisdom in a friendly manner. It was proven to be practically effective and useful for the community.



Dr. Suchin Petcharugsa ran into a word processing program called Boonkit designed specially for the Lanna dialect, for which a regular Thai language keyboard was applicable. The program enabled a user to switch from the Lanna dialect to Thai language similar to Microsoft Word program.

Mr. Martin Hosken, a Non-Roman Scripts Engineer working for Summer Institute of Linguistics (SIL), developed Boonkit Program with a special assistance of *Mr. Art Cooper*. *Mr. Martin Hosken* is now residing in Chiang Mai province.

Dr. Suchin made an arrangement to obtain a copy of Boonkit program for use in teaching the Lanna dialect at Ban Samkha Community School. *Mr. Boonkit Vacharasat*, founder of Boonkit fonts, granted his permission to the school in order that both the elderly and youths could have a chance to conveniently learn together the Lanna dialect, a computer program and the translation of herbal remedies.

Traditional Massage

Traditional massage is one branch of local wisdom that *Mrs. Srinuan Wongtrakul* was the first to acknowledge its significant impact on the community, and felt the need of transfer such knowledge to the students. She persuaded *Mrs. Sriwan Kreupang*, traditional massage expert, to transfer her expertise to the children and youths of Ban Samkha Community School.

Mrs. Sriwan Kreupang is a blind lady who attended the professional traditional massage lesson taught by a blind master, *Mr. Suvej Thongler*, at the Non-Formal Education Center in 1997. *Mr. Suvej* himself learned the art of traditional massage from the national renowned institute called Bho Temple. He was the one who initiated the traditional massage course at the Non-Formal Education Center to promote a promising career for the blind.

Traditional massage is considered to be one of the most popular local wisdom in Thailand. It has become an international favorite that attracts many foreigners' attention to coming to Thailand for services. This type of massage has turned into a profitable business creating tremendous amount of income for the massagers. For the people of Ban Samkha Community, the traditional massage does not bring in only a lot of money, but also considerable



concerns for the preservation and transfer of their local wisdom to the next generations. *Mrs. Sriwan* once said that, "Money is not an issue here, but imparting this particular knowledge as one branch of local wisdom is more valuable and worthwhile. Though, it may not be applied to their occupation, at least it brings about or enhances a good relationship among the family members."

Learning of traditional massage from *Mrs. Sriwan* implies a degree of awareness in unity of people in the community either children or adults, either the elderly or the disable. Everyone must take parts in acquiring the new knowledge necessary for the development of integrated community without leaving anyone behind. All must rely on wisdom of one another. Students with knowledge of traditional massage could relieve their friends' discomfort caused by a long meditation practice by giving them a relaxing massage. This allowed them a perfect chance to practice within a friendly and enjoyable atmosphere. They all welcomed any comments and suggestions from their friends. Both learners and the teacher are happy. Although the latter is blind, she could hear the happy laughter around her. Thus, she feels that she has certain value to contribute to the community and she is somewhat useful and capable of making other people happy. These are, according to the Constructionism theory, innumerable benefactions leading endlessly to many more activities.



Native Classical Music

Amidst the new trends of modern music influenced by the Western World, native classical music reflecting the unique culture, tradition, custom as well as ways of life of the people in each particular area attracts less and less interest of young generations. To preserve the uniqueness of their native classical music initiated by their ancestors and inherited to them, the people of Ban Samkha Community decided to resuscitate their music and transfer it to their children and youths.



There are numbers of the elderly expert in native musical instruments e.g. series of small gongs strung together, treble gamelan, small and large cup-shaped cymbals and double-headed drums, etc. They volunteered to make frantic attempts at resuscitation of their native music starting from repairing and tuning each instrument, and then teach the children

and youths of community a number of music lessons in order to transfer this unique inheritable wisdom to the next generation for conservation purposes.

One day *Mr. Somporn Ketkaew*, well-known local classical musician and headman of the village at No. 5, Bangprom sub-district, Bang Khonthi district, Samut Songkhram province, visited Ban Samkha Community. He talked to the people and sang his native songs on airs at the community broadcasting station. The people appreciated it very much, thus showed positive attitudes towards native classical music. After that, the children and people of Ban Samkha Community had a chance to visit him in Samut Songkhram province, where they saw many kinds of musical instruments. The children learned enormously about Thai classical music, thus motivated more interest in their native arts and music.

Once the community was well aware of the significant impact of their local music, *Sergeant Major Chai Wongtrakul* and *Mr. Chan Uthiya* attempted to raise funds of 14,530 baht for the community musical instruments. Money of which were from a religious ceremony, *Mrs. Srinuan Wongtrakul*, *Mr. Vanirut Charoemsuk* and the Community Retail Store. Such instruments were gamelans, fiddles, flutes, small and large cup-shaped cymbals. *Mr. Vorachet Sriwongson*, classical musician volunteered to give the children classical music lessons, coordinated by *Sergeant Major Chai*.

At present, the children and youths of Ban Samkha Community can fluently play the instruments. Their performance is so good that whenever there are people visiting their community these children are assigned to entertain these guests. Sometimes they join the adult group in various ceremonies, and play the music live on airs at the Community Broadcasting Station.



Local Server

After sharing ideas with the leaders of Ban Samkha Community, HAI set up a system known as local server, containing the community data, leading to better understanding of situations and confronting problems. The database includes background information of its culture, traditions, customs and inheritable wisdom, which seems to vanish sooner or later if nobody makes a frantic attempt to keep track of them. It would be an educational value for next generations if all data is recorded, categorized and kept on the community database.

HAI set up a local server serving as a database for the community computer center. Information is kept in the form of photographs and illustrative sentences. The system is designed corresponding to the community requirements e.g. background or historical information and geographical map of the community, map showing natural resources, local culture and traditions, etc. for easy application and information search through the community website <http://samkhaschool.haii.or.th>.



Information kept in the community database is categorized and itemized depending upon their requirements. Once the conclusion is made, the villagers take parts in searching the information and recording all findings, of which will be entered into the community database by children and youths.

During September 10-12 and October 4-8, 2004 the representatives from HAI organized a training course in data entry for the people of Ban Samkha



Community. The representatives familiarized the children and youths with the usefulness of ICT, and taught them how to apply their local server system to the community management and development scheme. They also assisted the children and youths in making use of plant species data, and taught them to enter flora data into their community database.

In the past, the people of Ban Samkha Community seemed to overlook at the general matters of their community such as background or historical information, culture, traditions, natural resources and inherited wisdom. No one cared to keep records or make a compilation of this information. There was no sufficient database, thus data were scattered here and there. Once the local server is set, youths and the people of Ban Samkha Community are alert to search for information and learn about data entry. The youths of next generation or visitors would at any time be able to search for the community information, thus knowledgeable information of Ban Samkha Community would never vanish.

The Imparting Knowledge for the General Benefits

The children, youths and adults of Ban Samkha Community have had opportunities for years to learn new subject matters alongside their allied partners. Many cooperative achievements are considered "learning source" for everyone to share ideas, experiment and review their lessons. After being noticed by the outsiders through mass medias and the press, numbers of the interested people from government agencies, private organizations, nearby and distant villages contacted and visited the community. They came so often that the villagers needed to adopt a mutual relationship to welcome and entertain the visitors. They imparted their unique knowledge for the general benefits.

The significant impact of the Prime Minister's official visit on June 20, 2003 was that all concerned government agencies must find ways to extend the learning of Ban Samkha Community to other communities, as appeared on the cabinet memorandum taken on June 24, 2003.



The Prime Minister presented to the cabinet a number of programs and projects carried out by the people of Ban Samkha Community, which seemed to be very useful for other communities. Particularly, some activities led to the learning of effective management and thorough planning. He deemed it appropriate for the concerned government agencies to study and extend the following activities.

1. The Brain Bank Project:

The National Village and Community Funds Committee was instructed by the Prime Minister to study the project and apply the concept to the government program on the village funds. It might be possible to establish a community bank in every village, following by the establishment of the Community Bank Headquarter to lay down policies and the national system to enhance and strengthen the grassroots economy.

2. The Computer and Internet Training Program:

The Ministry of ICT was assigned to study the program for consideration of extending it further to other communities throughout the country.

3. The Lanna Dialect Learning Camp Program:

The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment was advised to provide its consultation and assistance to the people of Ban Samkha Community on herbs according to the principles of science and law.

Resolution of the meeting: All participants acknowledged and favored the Prime Minister's proposition.



Mrs. Srinuan Wongtrakul recalled that after the Prime Minister's official visit on June 20, 2003 and after his talk on airs via the radio broadcasting program known as "Prime Minister Taksin meets the people" on June 21, 2003, the government sector, the private sector and many people came to Ban Samkha Community every day in order to exchange ideas and share their knowledge with the villagers. The most popular and frequently asked questions are, for example, working process of the community, learning process for linking the children and adults activities together through computer and Internet usage, resulted in many more activities and achievements. The children and youths of Ban Samkha Community constantly took parts in the following activities.



The people of Ban Samkha Community started a community herbs garden on a 6-rai land where they grew all kinds of herbal plants, and used it as the community-learning place and the recreation area. Along with the gardening project, they started a program in herbal products processing. The Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment provided the community with its financial and technical assistance for the construction of check dams to retain moisture and water along channels in the community forest. In the year 2003, 33 check dams were built, and by April of 2005, 523 check dams were completely constructed with a financial aid from the Siam Cement Group.

The initiative of growing school botanical garden began after the team of teachers and students attended a training course held at Chitralada School between September 6 and 7, 2003, a workshop in flora database held at the Scientific Garden of Thailand on August 21, 2004, and after the complete installation of field server, sponsored by HAIL, storing useful information for the forecasts of weather, water, moisture and humidity in the soil of Ban Samkha Community School.

The Krung Thai Bank PLC supported the secondary school students of Ban Samkha Community by accepting them to its commerce program for youths in order to form them to become young entrepreneurs.

The Siam Kubota Industry Co., Ltd. donated mechanical plows to the community aiming to cut the production cost and promote the learning of mechanics. There was a hope that Ban Samkha Community could become a service center for mechanical plows and the authorized agent selling spare parts of the machines. It could also provide its services to its neighboring villages and create a new promising career for the community youths.

The Betagro Group provided useful information and knowledge of poultry farming to the people of community and Ban Samkha School.

Leo Food Co., Ltd. provided useful information and knowledge of eggplant and Japanese squash growing and processing for exports.

Ban Samkha School urged its students in grade V and VI to keep records of their parents' account utilizing a computer program designed by NECTEC. The school persuaded the interested housewives to attend a training course in the preparation of household accounting held at Ban Samkha Computer Center. The family members together lay down definite plans for their own household economy.

Mrs. Srinuan Wongtrakul concluded, "The people of Ban Samkha Community have frequently learned alongside their allied partners, both the government sector and the private sector. We were deeply grateful to Mr. Paron Israsena and Dr. Suchin Petcharugsa for their generosity to suggest great ideas and arrange for cooperative efforts between the community and the government and private sectors to promote the learning of Ban Samkha Community. Both were the key men who always encouraged the exchange of knowledge by providing the people with opportunities to share their ideas, to think, participate, analyze and find solutions to their own problems before asking others for consultation and assistance. The community development could proceed at a certain speed if the people themselves did it. However, it would proceed even faster and greater if the government sector and the private sector provided them with constant supports. In addition, the community development would be sustainable, only if the people of community acknowledged the value of children and youths. It was apparent that the learning force and rapid improvements of the community could occur if the children and youths were allowed to take parts in learning together and undertaking the community projects with the adults."

Apart from the aforementioned organizations and sectors, other communities constantly share experiences and exchange their ideas with the people of Ban Samkha Community. These communities are Ban Limthong Community led by Mrs. Sanit Thipnangrong (known as Na Noi), Nongboth sub-district, Nangrong district, Buriram province, Ban Bormakude Community, Ban Kong sub-district, Bhotharam district, Ratchaburi province, Ban Khayang Community under Doi Tung Royal Project, Mae Fa Luang district, Chiang Rai province, Ban Borluklang Community, Wang Nam Yen district, Sa Kaeo province and Ban Pa Sak Ngam Community, Doi Saket district, Chiang Mai province. And, many more are interested in joining the community programs in the future.

Ban Samkha is an ideal community that applied the Constructionism theory and ICT to problem solving. Suksapattana Foundation and Thaicom Foundation introduced this theory to the people of this community. It is like a lighthouse that guides them to find the cause of problems and their solutions, dare to react and learn new things. Their past experiences and acquired knowledge bring about the utmost pride to the community. The people are so proud of their strong community, local wisdom, the development of youths and the progressive expansion of their experiences and learning.

The Strong Community

Ban Samkha Community is stronger within four years. Whenever the people are in trouble, they can at least help themselves for a certain level without having to wait for assistance of others because of their strong bonds, great affection, real concern and true love among themselves. They work well together no matter who they are, children or adults, youths or the elderly, male or female. And above all, they fully respect one another. Although argument is typical when many people living together in a large community, they can mutually work well together with happiness. Therefore, Ban Samkha is an excellent example of self-reliant community able to apply a unity to problem solving.

The cooperation of people in the community is the key factor or major force to meet their ultimate goals and create a sense of full responsibility for the care, development and problem solving. The unity of people leads to better understanding, learning together between Ban Samkha Community and its allied partners. They all help finding new approaches to learning and thinking, thus lead to the development of wisdom valuable for solving problems, making plans or new inventions, thus enhances the establishment of a "knowledge-based-society" and the development of strong community at last.

The Local Wisdom

The people of Ban Samkha Community transfer to their youngster with great love and affection, the unique local wisdom e.g. herbal remedies, the Lanna

dialect, traditional massage and native classical music, from which they can learn about, and eventually become the community heritage. The computer center of Ban Samkha Community helps laying down an important foundation for the community programs such as human resources, sustainable organization, learning together with its network and among themselves, translation of herbal remedies and traditional medicines from the Lanna dialect into Thai, preparation of medicinal herbs database, and establishment of the community and school libraries, all of which lead to the Village that Learns or Knowledge Village.

The Development of Youth

The youngsters of Ban Samkha are proud to be a part of their community development, and learn how to apply the most advanced ICT to the management program of the community. They acquired new knowledge through real practice. They modified what they have learned and applied it to their projects for the improvement of their ideas and confidence. These projects are the Brain Bank, the Community Forest and the Community Broadcasting. This demonstrates that the cooperative efforts of youths are useful to the community and their accomplishment. Adults, therefore, encourage them to think and react with more confidence and attempt to build their positive attitude towards taking parts in the sustainable developments of their community.

The Progressive Expansion of Past Experiences and Learning

Currently, the people of Ban Samkha Community have learned how to transfer past experiences and valuable learning points to the visitors, including the government sector, the private sector, Thai people and the foreigners. This gives a chance to the villagers to exchange their ideas and share past experiences with others, and extend it further in greater extent towards the organization development. The community recognizes a value of opening the new world to its people by taking field trips to many interesting places, from where they can bring back what they have learned and experienced. Above all, it is the opportunity to strengthen a mutual relationship between the community and their allied partners. More importantly, Ban Samkha, being a prototype of developing community, can gain more support from the allied partners to become a strong community that is able to extend its progressive development to other communities.

Summary of the Learning of Ban Samkha Community

By Dr. Suchin Petcharugsa

With proud historical leaders who were passionate learners and possessed the ability to utilize their past experiences, has given Ban Samkha Community the intellectual pool, the social commitment and the driving force to carefully and mindfully adapt themselves to catch up with the ever changing world of today. They help one another with decisions making and alternatives selecting. Instead of being frightened by the situation, they have collaborated with various allied partners to tackle unfamiliar situations or to start brand-new tasks. These partners are specialized agencies with learning spirit. They are delighted to learn alongside the children, youths and people living in the community. Although not all attempts are successful, the acquired knowledge and experiences are the great learning lessons, identifying possible causes of failure. Moreover, people are ready to cooperate with one another in finding new alternatives to move forward with more confidence. Continuously strengthening power of wisdom is what makes Ban Samkha Community readily adaptable. It is a precious lesson for other interested communities to use as a case study. It is this continuous learning process that prevents the people from indulging themselves into a long-term misery and failure. At the same time, adherence to their old thoughts and believes enable them to break the old frame of thoughts that was practical in the past but impede their way of living in the new globalization era.

Today, technology plays a crucial part in our everyday life. Children and youths are naturally fast learners with better inclination to technology than the adults. By applying the theory of learner-centered learning, technology integrated for life-long learning into a local school community, the community children and youths are able to apply the learning process and engage in a pursuit of knowledge leading to projects that are beneficial to themselves and to the community as a whole. Adults in the community are amazed at the youths' ability to gain so much more knowledge in such little time. They, therefore, have permitted the children and youths to actively participate in activities that lead to strong, continual and sustainable development of their community.

Having gotten the opportunity to learn new things, children and youths of Ban Samkha demonstrated that their learning ability is no less than that of those living in the privileged urban community. Numbers of community activities are originated from the youths' ideas. They have been working in cooperation with adults who have come to believe in collaboration and learning together. There were times that adults started the program and proceeded without giving the youths a chance to participate. Once the opportunity was given to the youths, "the new ideas and abilities" derived from the cooperation lead to improvements of their work performance. Moreover, the children have a first hand opportunity to learn the essence of the adults' thoughts and commitment. Thus, when they grow up, they can continue these important tasks with thorough understanding. Therefore, by not separating the younger from the older children, youths from the adults, the school learning from non-formal community learning, and without abandoning the weak and underprivileged, collaboration between different ages and social status on decision making concerning the community would bring about the sense of responsibility and ownership of the community activities as well as the sense of unity. All of which would lead to a strong sustainable community driven by joint learning. It can simply be said that nothing is stagnant in Ban Samkha Community.

The Allied Partners

The people of Ban Samkha Community are grateful to all allied partners, including the government sector and the private sector whose name is listed here below, for their generosity.

1. Suksapattana Foundation
2. Thaicom Foundation
3. The Northern Region Non-Formal Education Center, Lampang
4. The Siam Cement (Lampang) Co., Ltd.
5. The Siam Cement Group
6. Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute
7. The National Electronics and Computer Technology Center
8. The TOT Corporation PLC.
9. The C.P. Seven Eleven PLC.
10. The Shin Corporation Group
11. Thailand Research Council
12. Huai Hong Krai Royal Development Study Center
13. The Krung Thai Bank PLC.
14. Villages Foundation
15. Sanctuary for Buddhist monks in Chom Thong district, Chiang Mai
16. The Betagro Group
17. The Siam Kubota Industry Co., Ltd.
18. Leo Food Co., Ltd.
19. River View Lodge, Chiang Mai
20. The Royal Brain Bank under Her Majesty the Queen Sirikit's Patronage
21. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

