

The Learning of Na Noi and Her Family



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The Learning of Na Noi and Her Family

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Forward

Today we have moved away from talking about "The Information Society", which was the earlier focus, to talking about "Building Knowledge Societies". The intent was a paradigm shift. By changing the language, UNESCO was trying to shift the debate. This tactic was intended to broaden the discussions and ensure that the starting assumption would be about people - their values and their vision as to what kind of society they wish for themselves and their children. But what exactly is the significance of a focus on the Information Society, as opposed to building Knowledge Societies?

Fundamental to the concept of Knowledge Societies is life long learning. Globalization and ICT advancement have greatly enhanced sharing and accumulation of information and knowledge that make life long learning inevitable. Individuals who try their best to keep up will benefit from the wealth of knowledge that is available within their reach, if not at a click of a mouse. These individuals can learn to solve their own problems, improve their own quality of life, and emerge as models, sometimes beyond the territory of their own community.

Na Noi, with her 4th grade education from a rural school in Thailand, is a living champion whose perseverance has gained her computer literacy and improved economic status. Once proven to herself that new technology was nothing to be afraid of, Na Noi went on to spearhead a computer club so that her neighbours too could benefit from technology.

Many more people like Na Noi will make Knowledge Societies a reality and not just an internationally endorsed concept.

Elizabeth Longworth
Director
UNESCO
Information Society Division

Preface

Being established with the aim of improving the education of Thai people to enhance their learning capability and competitiveness in globalization era, Suksapattana Foundation attempted to apply the Constructionism theory found and developed by Professor Seymour Papert of the Media Laboratory of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, USA, to the development of education suitable for local environment and Thai culture.

In 1998 the Foundation adopted the aforementioned theory and applied it to its Lighthouse Project carried out in many areas of Thailand. As suggested by Professor Papert, the Foundation launched a series of pilot projects in four sites i.e. Non-Formal Education Center in Muang district, Chiangrai province, School for hill tribes at Ban Tad, Doi Tung, Mae Fah Luang district, Chiangrai province, Vajiravudh College in Bangkok, and a group of poor villagers in Nangrong district, Buriram province, thus enabling the learners residing in different habitats to improve their learning capability.

The Foundation selected a group of poor villagers dwelling in Nongbode sub-district, Nangrong district, Buriram province as one of its pilot projects. At the beginning, a trial was conducted at the Community Based Involvement in Rural Development (CBIRD) in Nangrong district, Buriram province operated by Population and Community Development Association (PDA). Later the program was moved to Non-Formal Education Center in Nangrong sub-district. Unfortunately, the results of trial in both locations were not quite satisfactory due to the fact that the villagers had no time to spare. The Foundation, therefore, solved such problem by assigning its representatives to work alongside the villagers at their own convenience right inside their homes.

The Lighthouse Project's representatives took turns on a weekly basis to advise villagers in the community. For Ban Limthong Community in Nangrong district, Buriram province, a group of six villagers working in vegetable growing joined the project. One of those villagers was Mrs. Sanit Thipnangrong or Na Noi, a poor farmer who had only a grade four education without any significant status in her community, joined the project in 1999.

At first, all members of the group showed considerable interest in the project. However, the Foundation's representatives found out that the villagers lacked the certain knowledge of household accounting. Therefore, they arranged

such lesson for the villagers. While learning, some complained that the subject was too difficult for them and they did not see the benefits of doing it. They eventually quit learning it one by one. At last, only Na Noi was still interested in the lesson. She patiently learned how to prepare household accounting by hand which was later replaced by computers. The computer enabled her to learn effectively faster.

Having recognized that Na Noi was seriously interested in the subject, the Foundation put great effort and endowed her with computers in order to learn together with her. It represented a case study on learning process of Na Noi starting from knowing nothing about the computer to utilizing the computer in learning towards wisdom. It was regarded as a prototype that could be progressively extended to others. In addition, the Foundation applied to the case the Constructionism theory and the ICT as a learning tool. The Foundation has also set up a Learning Center or the Computer/Internet Club at Na Noi's house fully equipped with the Internet system via satellite sponsored by Thaicom Foundation. The objective was to enable Na Noi, her daughter (Miss Paweena Thipnangrong known as Poom), other villagers, and young adults in the community as well as people from nearby villages to improve their learning capability.

Before joining the project, Na Noi and her family were heavily in debt and had no way to settle it. After having the opportunity to learn about household accounting, preparation of life plan and supplementary career from the Lighthouse Project's representatives, she was able to settle all her family debt by early 2003. Furthermore, she led small groups of villagers towards self-development following the King's Philosophy of Sufficiency Economy.

This booklet is documented with high hopes of disseminating the learning experiences of Suksapattana Foundation, Thaicom Foundation and Na Noi to those who are interested in this meaningful case study and the new approach in learner-centered learning, technology integration for life-long learning.

Paron Israsena

Chairman of Suksapattana Foundation Board

Vice-Chairman of Thaicom Foundation Board

Introduction

This booklet "The Learning of Na Noi and Her Family" is well documenting experiences of a lady named Mrs. Sanit Thipnangrong commonly known and hereinafter referred to as "Na Noi", who lives in Limthong Village, Nongbode Subdistrict, Buriram Province. Owing a great deal to her endurance and remarkable learning ability, Na Noi is able to overcome numerous difficulties in her family life, including her soaring debt problem. Truly, her life is a living monument. She is highly recognized by the whole community for her accomplishments in household accounting, career planning, debts reduction planning, and establishing a community computer club (i.e. learning aid center fully equipped with computer and Internet access). This serves as convincing evidence that learning can lead to a permanent change and finally bring about the rewarding achievement of Na Noi and her family success.

The learning of Na Noi comprises of interaction between her and her family, make up of her husband "Mr. Vorthong Thipnangrong", commonly known as "Na Vor", and her three children: Miss Paveena hereinafter referred to as "Poom", Somnuek nick-named Doke and Suradej nick-named Bank. They represent a role model emphasizing on learning development through a new learning approach well prescribed in Constructionism theory, developed by Professor Seymour Papert of Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Constructionism is a theory emphasizing on learner-centered learning methodology which the learner acquires his/her knowledge from past experiences, practices, and real life problems solving i.e. self-learning or self-educating.

This booklet combines the original hand written journal prepared by Na Noi and Poom together with additional face-to-face interviews conducted at later date for a more completed account of the events. This was done by the support of Suksapattana Foundation, United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute (HAIL). The main objective of this effort is to seek a learning prototype with the applied ICT suitable for living that enhances a notable change in community wisdom. It includes the dissemination of knowledge and past experiences to interested people and agencies. Lastly, this would be beneficial and a fundamental beginning for a study and future project of "Village that Learns: Knowledge Village".

The editorial committee is deeply grateful to Mr. Paron Israsena, all representatives from Suksapattana Foundation, and especially Na Noi and her family for their commended efforts and sincere cooperation in making this possible. Furthermore, this would be a perfect model for others to appreciate the significant value of transferring knowledge and past experiences derived from remarkable endurance throughout the greatest achievement.

Sumet Tantivejkul

Chairman of Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute Board

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Biography of Na Noi and Her Family Background

Mrs. Sanit Thipnarong commonly known as "Na Noi" was born on January 11, 1965, 8th daughter among 10 children of Mr. Dang and Mrs. Jud Boonkongchati. She began her schooling at Ban Nongthonglim School and continued studying until she completed grade 4. Since her academic performance was not quite satisfactory, she had to quit school and help her parents with rice farming. At the age of 20 she married Mr. Vorthong Thipnangrong", commonly known as "Na Vor", a man chosen by her parents. The couple had three children: Miss Paveena nicknamed Poom, Somnuek nicknamed Doke and Suradej nicknamed Bank, respectively.

After getting married, Na Noi's parents allocated a piece of land, approximately 0.5 rai to the couple for building a house, and given approximately 15 rais of land for rice farming. Unfortunately, only 7 rais were suitable for subsistence farming, the rest was considered woodland. Na Noi and her husband were regularly engaged as farmers, and hired for general laboring jobs after the harvest. The whole family lived on a poverty-stricken lifestyle. Their quality of life depended mainly on the yield of agricultural production that was influenced a great deal by a change of climate.



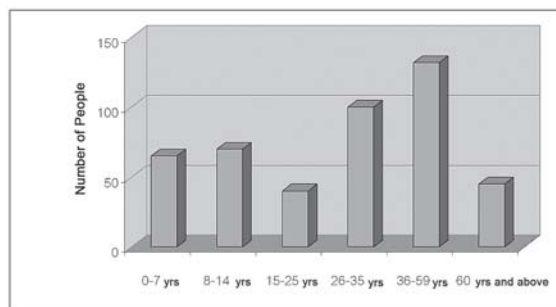
Background Information on Ban Limthong Community

Based on historical records, Ban Limthong Community was once a rich source of large trees and a wide variety of plant species. There was a huge clean swamp abundant in aquatic creatures and fishes. The swamp provided the villagers with adequate supplies of fresh water all year round, and attracted a wide range of animals that came for their water after the sunset. One day, there were merchants traveling on a wagon stopped for lunch under a huge shady tamarind tree standing next to the swamp. While they were resting, a golden wedge-shape object protruded from the water's surface. They greedily rushed into the water and tried to grasp the golden object. Surprisingly, just before reaching it, the golden wedge-shape object sunk in the blink of an eye. They, therefore, named the place "Ban Nongthonglim" (Ban=village; Nong=swamp; Thonglim=golden wedge-shape object).

The very first group of migrants who ever stepped foot on the land of Ban Nongthonglim comprised the villagers from Nakhon Ratchasima province named Mr. Herb Luersuebpan, Mr. Prai and Mrs. Tem Nenchoomsang, followed by groups of Cambodians and Laotians from Srisaket province and Surin province. Ban Limthong Community parted from Ban Nongthonglim village since June 1, 2004, and given it the new name "Ban Limthong" similar to the original homeland.

At present, Ban Limthong Community is under the administration of Nongbode sub-district, Nangrong district, Buriram province, 69 kilometers northwest of Buriram city limit. The village is bounded on the north by Ban Sarkam village, the South by Ban Kokeploung village, the East by Choomsang village, and the West by Ban Nongthonglim and Ban Thaithong village, respectively. A vast plain of sandy soil dominates the landscape of the village.

Ban Limthong village comprises 117 households, 230 males and 222 females. The population totals 452.



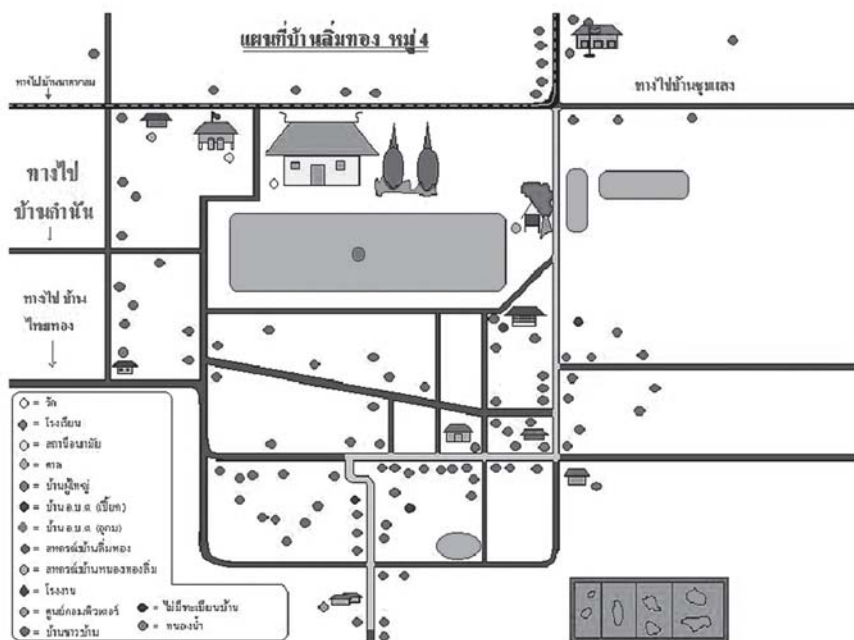
Age group	Number of people
0-7 yrs	65
8-14 yrs	70
15-25 yrs	40
26-35 yrs	100
36-59 yrs	132
60 yrs and above	45

Populations of Ban Limthong village can be divided into different age groups as follows:

The populations are poor Thai citizens who believe in the Buddhism religion, and live in the underdeveloped region of the country. The major occupations are rice and fruit farming, animal farming and manual labors. Their native dialect is called Thai Dueng, a typical language spoken in Nakhon Ratchasima province. They have a simple and casual lifestyle that the people sincerely help one another in rice farming.



Rapid and extensive socio-economic changes, the regional prosperity, modernity and the first introduction of luxurious facilities such as roads, electricity, water and a wide range of technologies introduced to the village had the adverse effects on the casual way of life and rich culture of the villagers. They stopped helping one another in the fields, but started hiring supplementary labors instead. Without knowing the impacts of such changes, the people of Ban Limthong Community began to face a soaring debt problem.



An outline map of Ban Limthong village, located at Moo 4, Nongbode sub-district, Nangrong district, Buriram province

The Nature of Problems

After their marriage, Na Noi and her husband were mainly engaged as farmers. Unfortunately, rice farming did not make their family rich. On the contrary, their subsistence farming only yielded enough rice for family consumption, and barely enough for repaying their debts. After the completion of rice planting, they had nothing else to do but waited for the harvest. Besides, there was hardly any job available for them in the village. The annual yield of rice varied with seasons i.e. good yield if there was plenty of rain, bad yield in the dry season. Since their family had no other source of supplementary income, they often borrowed money from a loan shark in the village for their farming. The rice harvest was sold in order to pay off their debts. If the annual rice harvest was poor, there would be insufficient yield for debt settlement. Thus, debts soon began to accumulate. As a result of the circumstances, the loan shark refused to lend them any more money. Na Noi, for the first time, headed for the Office of District Cooperative from where she requested a loan of 29,000 baht. She repeated the process over and over again on the following years until she became so familiar with requesting loans from various finance institutes. For instance, she borrowed 8,000 baht from the Office of Village Cooperative, 2,000 baht from the Women Group, 2,000 baht from the Savings Group, 500 baht from the Men Group, etc. She borrowed 1,000 baht from her close relatives to purchase her children's textbooks and another 2,000 baht for the family business investment.

Apart from the aforementioned problems, Na Noi admitted that she had confronted difficulties and inevitable problems in her marriage life. First, the utmost personal problem, she was sick of her husband's drinking habit. Whenever he was drunk, he could not control himself and eventually had often made mischief between husband and wife. The second was poverty, a common problem faced by the rural people. She recognized that the more children she had, the more money was spent. The yield of rice from 7 rais of land was barely enough for family consumption. The income from farming hardly covered the cost of living. She had no idea what to do with her life. She often asked her husband to quit drinking, but he could not permanently refrain from it. He went back to drinking habit because of insulting remarks made by his friends. She spent her life aimlessly, and fell deeply into her personal problems and more importantly the indefinite obligations to pay off her accumulating debt.

Na Noi has always attempted to raise her family standard of living, but she has not had a clue to start with. One day, she reached the highest peak of hopelessness and began to sink into a life of vice i.e. gambling. She started to play cards following a bad influence of her friends, and getting even with her husband's drinking habit and negligence. By mid 1997, the situation was so critical that they were about to end their marriage. Na Noi herself felt that she had reached the limits of her endurance and could not live with her heavy drinker husband any longer. She decided on separation and demanded that her husband made the choice of their children with whom he preferred to take. She also allowed him to take whatever assets he wanted with an exception of the estate inherited from her ancestors. Without knowing that this was the starting point of her life, her husband finally decided to quit drinking permanently and strongly committed to work hard. Although the aforementioned incidence could lessen the frequency of argument between the couple, the main family problem on soaring debts was still persistently unsolved.

Concentrate, Review the Situations and Find the Solutions

After refraining from heavy drinking, Mr. Vorthong became a new man. Na Noi and her husband began to lease a piece of land from a villager for more farming area i.e. it was increased from 7 rais to 60 rais and finally to 70 rais. The more farming area occupied, the more seeds and fertilizers were required, and the more losses confronted. They never had enough money for savings after the harvest. As a result, they sought for jobs in cassava roots gathering and sugarcane cutting, starting from 5:00 am to 6:00 pm. Na Noi earned 70 baht/day, while her husband received a daily wage of 170 baht. They took their small children along and placed them in the shade of a tree while working together in the field. After the sugarcane harvest, her husband went to Bangkok to work for a construction company. Unfortunately, he was accidentally injured and headed home to recuperate. Because of his injury, Na Noi very often borrowed some money for his medications and treatments from a loan shark in the village who charged a monthly interest at 5%.

Na Noi frequently hoped to meet someone who could provide her with the assistance she required. But, her hope seemed to fade away. She tried very hard to earn a supplementary income to improve her family standard, although she realized that she was not quite knowledgeable. She started learning to cook all kinds of food and desserts and sold them to the villagers nearby. She was able to gain a daily profit of 70-80 baht, which was barely enough to cover the family's daily expense, and absolutely nothing was left for repaying the debts. She stopped cooking when she was pregnant with her third child, and only her husband still worked at the nearby cassava plantation from which he received only little wages. As their income decreased, they again began quarreling unreasonably over nonsensical issues.

In April 1998, Na Noi and her friends discussed the issue of growing vegetables for sale as a new source of supplementary income after the harvest. Due to lack of funds and knowledge, they did not know how to begin. Until September 1998, she heard that the Office of Sub-district Administrative Council (at Nongbode sub-district) would grant its financial aid for the Women Group. She eagerly joined the group, proposed a plan

for vegetables growing and requested a financial aid of 2,850 baht from the Office. Na Noi, her husband and 5 friends of her, namely Mrs. Prateep Thip-Aksorn, Mrs. Nipornrat Boongongchat, Mrs. Prayat Boonprasat, Mrs. Gharn Chantate and Mrs. Kitchanok Boonprasat, formed a group and together grew cucumbers, string beans, pumpkins, watermelon, chilies and tomatoes. They attentively took so special care of their vegetables that the yields of their produces were rather high.



Coopearte with the Allied Partners to Create the Learning Processes

With a personal recommendation made by a government official working for the Community Learning Program under the Non-Formal Education Center in Nangrong district, Na Noi had a chance to meet with Suksapattana Foundation's representatives undertaking the Lighthouse Project¹. On that occasion, she described to the representatives about her group's vegetables growing. She admitted that she did not really care whether or not she would receive any assistance from the Foundation. She thought those visiting representatives just came causally to seek further information for any particular research, and, perhaps, would never and ever come back again, similarly to what had happened in the past.

Finally, at the beginning of 1999, Na Noi has joined the Lighthouse Project. The representatives from the Foundation, led by Mr. Bangkok Chaowkwanyeeun, Miss. Vilailak Pavorarum (known as Ouy) and Miss. Supaporn Komeloy (known as La), took turns to visit her on a weekly basis. At first, she was upset and annoyed by this group of people who somehow intruded her private life. As a matter of fact, she was irritated by their instructions given to her to do unfamiliar things. As times went by, Na Noi and the representatives were so close to each other that a casual friendly relationship was eventually formed. They frequently discussed about issues like credit-debit accounting, writing journals and daily reports on vegetables growing, etc. She was touched and overwhelmed by their sincere assistance, as shown in one of her journals described here below.

"I could not express my gratitude today in words. It's the feeling of a poor woman who received great generosity from well-educated persons who never even once showed their negligence or aversion to underprivileged people. Instead, they cared for and looked after my well-being. They proved to me through times that they meant well. They're all very kind and I would never in my life be able to repay them.

¹ The Lighthouse Project aims at developing a new approach to learning under the Constructionism theory, and attempts to conduct a feasibility study on the development of the Constructionist learning process with the integrated technology to enhance the learner's knowledge.

I could only showed them my devotion to achieve what they've always been concentrating on facilitating and guiding me to success. I made a commitment that I would work so hard to achieve the ultimate goals and showed others who were not ready to commit themselves that I could do it well. I would do whatever I could to convince the others and encourage them to work and earn money for their families, similarly to what I've done for my own family, though my income was not considerably adequate."

By being encouraged, Na Noi was able to tackle her problems with great confidence, owing to the facts that she was not alone. Instead, she received great and valuable advice from Mr. Bangkok and Miss Supaporn who taught her how to write journals and prepare daily debit-credit accounts of cucumbers and beans. Miss Vilailak urged her to keep a consistent monitoring on progressive results of her vegetables growing, for instance, photographing or recording soil appearance and condition, growing techniques, farming plots condition, etc. Although her second vegetables growing was not as successful as the first one due to the disease caused by specific fungi, and she was about to give it up, Miss Vilailak and Supaporn suggested that she could ask for technical advice from the Office of District Agriculture or from some experienced neighbors. The two ladies even introduced her to Mr. Narongvej from the Siam Cement PLC for marketing, pricing and prioritizing techniques.

"Since I was given a chance to join the Lighthouse Project by the Suksapattana Foundation's representatives, instead of money or valuable assets, all I ever received from them was good thoughts and ideas. I had the thoughts of giving up so many times in the past. However, after a thorough consideration, it had come to my senses that I could not quit. Those helping people gained nothing in return, but still, they kept on coming and helping me regularly. I felt an obligation to pursue their good intention. Before I could neither write nor read much, but after they helped me, reasoned with me, and talked me into trying to do things that I thought I was quite incompetent of, I'm glad that now I'm able to read and write a lot better, though it's not so perfect."

Moreover, Mr. Bangkok advised Miss Vilailuk and Miss Supaporn to enter Na Noi's vegetables growing timetable, new data on vegetables growing list and information taken from her journal into the computer. The entry included

sales information on the second and the third plots of cucumbers, of which figures were also shown as graphic forms indicating comparative figures of the selling price and the average yield of each plot. Then, they discussed the alternative plans for a higher yield and gave their reflections on experiences and learning points. A year after, Na Noi could feel some improvements in her life for the first time. She was able to learn faster from the two ladies. She started making plans on her family, vegetables growing and household accounting. She was capable of expressing her feelings with more confidence and systematically presenting her ideas. She finally realized that a good planning could show her what to expect in return, including the future profits. She received enormous encouragement from the Foundation so that she made every effort to tackle all confronted problems by herself. She admitted that she's changed progressively. For example, she could write and read slowly and knew nothing about planning in the past. But, recently she could read and write faster, learn to record data, make plans, and more importantly, she could think systematically.

In 2000 Suksapattana Foundation led by Mr. Paron Israsena had a great idea to bring into the village the first lot of computers as effective learning tools for Na Noi, her fellow-villagers and the children. As a consequence, Na Noi, Miss Vilailuk and Supaporn conducted a public survey to receive opinions of the villagers and planned to set the computers for public use. The two ladies started to familiarize Na Noi and her daughter, Poom, with new technologies. Mr. Bangkok assigned her to the task of entering her household credit-debit data into the computer instead of hand recording in her journals as she had done in the past. According to her, it was the most difficult task since she could hardly read. Therefore, she knew that she must work harder on learning this new technology. Mr. Bangkok showed her the use of computer in calculations, while Miss Supaporn guided her through data search utilizing an Internet access. As a result, she was absolutely thrilled to her fortunate opportunity in continuous learning of new things.

She highly appreciated the generosity of the aforementioned people and realized that she was very lucky to have great opportunities and special privileges to learn new things all the time. She was given a chance to visit many interesting places and attend numbers of training courses and workshops, all of which were made possible and sponsored by Mr. Paron, Thaicom Foundation and Dr. Suchin Petcharak, the key person of the Northern Region Non-Formal Education Center in Lampang province. There were times when she felt so embarrassed to join the groups of highly



educated academic and experts, because she knew that she was only an ordinary poor villager with only 4th grade education. Anyhow, she tried her very best every time, and kept reminding herself of what Mr. Bangkok always said to her, "No one is good at everything. But surely, for growing vegetables, we "Ban Limthong village" are the best. Stop worrying." As she recalled exactly what he said, she rapidly gained her confidence, and was quite ready to exchange her experiences and knowledge with the others.

Nevertheless, she owed her success to her remarkable endurance throughout those difficult times of her life. For instance, her husband was not that happy seeing her doing things introduced by the aforementioned people. There were times that he begged her to quit dealing with the Foundation and its representatives. He gave reasons that those people were not as poor as he and his family, and how they would understand his family's long-suffering. He added that soon these people would abandon his family and eventually left everyone with life-long misery. Her three children were also not happy with great attention that their mother had given to those visiting people. They felt that sometimes she even gave more attention to those people than to her own children. Many neighbors talked badly behind her back and kept saying that she was nonsensically wasting her times. They would be happier to see her spending times in the field rather than talking and listening to those visiting people. Neighbors who were not so fond of her even insulted her intelligence i.e. following instructions such as writing, growing certain vegetables with certain applied techniques, etc. Instead of waiting for and listening to the Foundation's representatives, these neighbors felt that she should rather go out to get a job and earn a daily wage of 200 baht.

Na Noi explained to her husband and children patiently bit by bit. She often quarreled with them over the subjects. She only hoped that one day her

husband and everyone would understand and agree with her ideas and cooperate with the Foundation's representatives. Even though, it seemed rather difficult to prove to everyone of what she and those representatives were attempting to achieve, she never once gave it up. She proudly admitted that she was doing the right and valuable things. She knew for a fact that human development required not only individual competency, but also enormous times and great endurance, as summarized in her own words down below.

"For me, it takes times, long learning processes and good understanding of subject matters to develop a person. Miss Vilailuk came to me and worked alongside me regularly. She is truly a supporting factor in human development achievements. Above all, human development can not be accomplished without collaboration."

"I'm grateful to their efforts. I could see that everyone was so tired assisting me with my work just to encourage me to achieve the ultimate goals. Everyone has a decent job awaiting in the city, but all voluntarily helped an underprivileged woman like me with pleasure. I was given a chance to learn planning techniques for different kinds of task. I'm overwhelmed by their attempts to guide me to ultimately become self-sufficient representing a role model for other villagers. I could only hope that my fellow-villagers understand the value of working, instead of sitting still and waiting for giveaway. I myself had nothing, but I still strived to learn new things and needed good advices of the Foundation's representatives. I willingly opened my mind to hearing others, but my fellow-villagers considered it as nonsensical wasting times. If they did not listen to what the visiting representatives had to say, they would never understand the true value of learning for such underprivileged people like us. For me, now I had a chance to do my accounting on computers. Though I'm not really good at it at this moment, I'll keep working on it every day."

The Learning of Na Noi

Generally speaking, for most people a woman 40 years of age seems a bit too old to learn. According to Na Noi's learning experience, it is proven clearly to others that no one is too old to learn. At the age of 40, Na Noi was given opportunities to learn many things e.g. household accounting, life planning, communicating with others, exchanging knowledge and experiences, as well as utilizing hi-technology devices like computer and Internet, etc. All of which has brought about tremendous progressively changes in her life and her family's well-being.

Household Accounting

Household accounting seems to be a key factor to the success of debt relief. Because of an insufficient daily budget of the family, Na Noi felt the need of learning household accounting in order to make an itemized list of all daily purchase, and consequently cut down unnecessary goods consumption. At the beginning, she prepared her household accounting manually in a notebook, including a record of credit and debit entries. All entries were calculated manually either by heart or utilizing a calculator. At later stage, she recorded all credit-debit transactions in a computer, which enabling her to make very precise and prompt calculation. To sum up, computer is a truly useful device for her daily accounting. It allows her to work faster with precision i.e. quickly and correctly working on calculation, simply and efficiently itemize and record data, etc.

Suksapattana Foundation's representatives, Miss Vilailuk and Miss Supaporn attentively taught Na Noi to use the computer for data entry correctly. They also trained Na Noi's daughter, Poom, to transform data from her mother's personal book into the computer. She could even alleviate her mother's heavy burden by itemizing and labeling certain accounts.

Table showing samples of Na Noi's family account showing an itemized list of all purchase, including the total expense calculated by using the computer program

Date	Classification	Category	Detail	Unit	Price/Unit (baht)	Total (baht)
04/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Coffee	1	25	25
11/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Coffee	1	18	18
13/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Coffee	2	25	50
19/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Coffee	1	25	25
21/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Coffee	1	25	25
26/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Coffee	1	25	25
20/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Sugar	1	18	18
07/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Smoothies	1	10	10
16/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Soft drink	1	27	27
26/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Soft drink	1	27	27
20/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Seasonings	1	05	05
26/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Liquor	1	68	68
11/11/00	Kitchen	Beverage	Iced coffee	1	05	05
Total				14		328
05/11/00	Kitchen	Snack	Fried pastries	1	10	10
15/11/00	Kitchen	Snack	Fried pastries	1	15	15
27/11/00	Kitchen	Snack	Coconut pancake	1	05	05
02/11/00	Kitchen	Snack	Coconut pancake	1	05	05
05/11/00	Kitchen	Snack	Ice cream	1	05	05
12/11/00	Kitchen	Snack	Ice cream	5	02	10
18/11/00	Kitchen	Snack	Ice cream	5	02	10
Total						60

According to the aforementioned account, the result indicated clearly that Na Noi spent all of her budget on food and beverage e.g. coffee that is listed under the beverage category cost the most. This was due to the fact that her husband regularly consumed coffee. As a result of this, her husband decided to change his drinking habit by switching from canned ready-to-drink coffee to packaged instant coffee of which price per unit is cheaper.

Another example of the effective use of household accounting was in 2002 when her husband accidentally injured and was unable to work in the field. She reduced her rice farming area from 15 to 8 rais, and leased 7 rais to other farmers. The result shown here below indicated that the total yield of rice and income from rice farming in 2002 was significantly higher than those earned in 2000 and 2001, when the whole 15 rais of land was totally engaged by Na Noi and her husband alone.

Table showing farming expense account in 2000

Item	Unit	Price/Unit (bath)	Credit (bath)	Debit (bath)	Remarks
Rice yield	43	500	21,500		
Labor	1	2,895		2,895	
Gasoline for rice plow	1	930		930	Spare parts included
Chemical fertilizers	1	2,900		2,900	
Rice milling	41	13		533	
Beverage	1	270		270	
Total			13,972	7,528	

Table showing farming expense account in 2001

Item	Unit	Price/Unit (bath)	Credit (bath)	Debit (bath)	Remarks
Rice yield	42	550	23,100		
Labor	1	1,990		1,990	
Gasoline for rice plow	1	925		925	
Chemical fertilizers	1	2,184		2,184	
Rice milling	1	280		280	
Beverage	1	280		280	
Total			17,441	5,659	

Table showing farming expense account in 2002

Item	Unit	Price/Unit (bath)	Credit (bath)	Debit (bath)	Remarks
Rice yield	62	550	34,100		
Labor	1	3,490		3,490	
Gasoline for rice plow	1	1,459		1,459	Spare parts included
Chemical fertilizers	1	4,100		4,100	
Rice milling	62	12		744	
Beverage	1	308		308	
Vehicles	1	180		180	
Total			23,819	10,281	

In conclusion, Na Noi found out that self-farming was considered time-consuming, low income and high labor required. She was convinced that she should engage only adequate area of land for rice farming, and the rest might be useful for other agricultural production.

Advantages which Na Noi received from household accounting

1. A chance to practice calculation, raising family awareness of credit and debit transactions, eliminating unnecessary purchase, efficient use of resources and money.
2. Planning for debt relief program, able to appraise the annual credit and debit accounts, leading to budget planning for sufficient money to spend and the rest of money to repay debts.
3. Applying the learned experiences in household accounting to individual and family career planning.
4. Utilization of computer in data entry, calculation and accounting leads to the learning of modern technology for the benefits of future livelihood.

Preparation of Life Plan

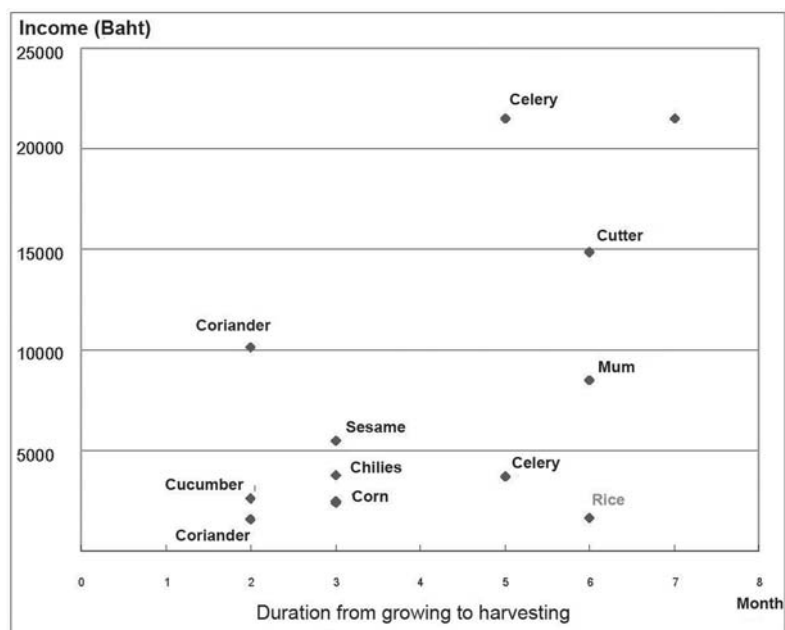
Having a thorough understanding of household accounting, Na Noi began to proceed with agricultural accounting for individual and family career planning. To start with, the Foundation's representatives assisted her in making a plan on vegetables growing to increase supplementary income for the family outside the harvest. They together planned to grow different kinds of vegetables in different periods. They also estimated an approximate caring expense as well as the future profits and loss. Computer, again, was used in calculating debit-credit transactions and profit-loss expectations.

Having certain calculation experiences, she was able to calculate the expecting profit gained from each kind of vegetables taking into account of duration from growing to harvesting, detail of which is shown in the following table.

Table showing comparison between duration and expecting income from initial investment of 1,000 baht

Vegetables	Duration (months)	Income (baht)	Vegetables	Duration (months)	Income (baht)
String bean	2	1,574	Celery	5	3,667
Pumpkin	2	1,581	Chilies	3	3,750
Coriander	2	1,596	Sesame	3	5,455
Rice	6	1,620	Mum	6	8,486
Peanuts	3	2,430	Coriander	2	10,141
Corn	3	2,454	Cutter	6	14,876
Cucumber	2	2,612		7	21,483
			Celery	5	21,483

Graph showing the summary of duration and expecting income, thus promoted a clearer view and better understanding



In reference to above graph, Na Noi could draw a conclusion that rice farming was not profitable, therefore, she shifted in vegetables growing for supplementary income.

She reviewed the result of her 1999 vegetables growing in order to draw a plan for 2000. She started with making a list of vegetables, growing procedures, growing periods and duration. During the planning phase, the Foundation's representatives taught her to figure out the initial cost. She recorded all data by hands and learned to prepare vegetables growing accounts. Such practice improved her writing and reading skills. She started making notes of growing stages and problems confronted, then, drew an alternative plan with technical assistance of the Foundation's representatives. Instead of a week plan prepared in the past, she could now draw a year plan.

At the beginning, she drew a map on a paper. Later, it seemed impossible to do so by hand on paper due to the fact that her enormous data started to accumulate. Therefore, she felt the need of computer as a tool for data recording, fast and precise calculation. The Foundation's representatives taught her how to make a plan using available data on expense and income gained from vegetables growing and rice farming already stored earlier in the computer. Together with data on her monthly household expense account, she was able to figure out monthly/weekly profits and loss as well as yearly-accumulated profits. She was able to show a financial result in a form of graph, thus promoted a clearer view and better understanding.

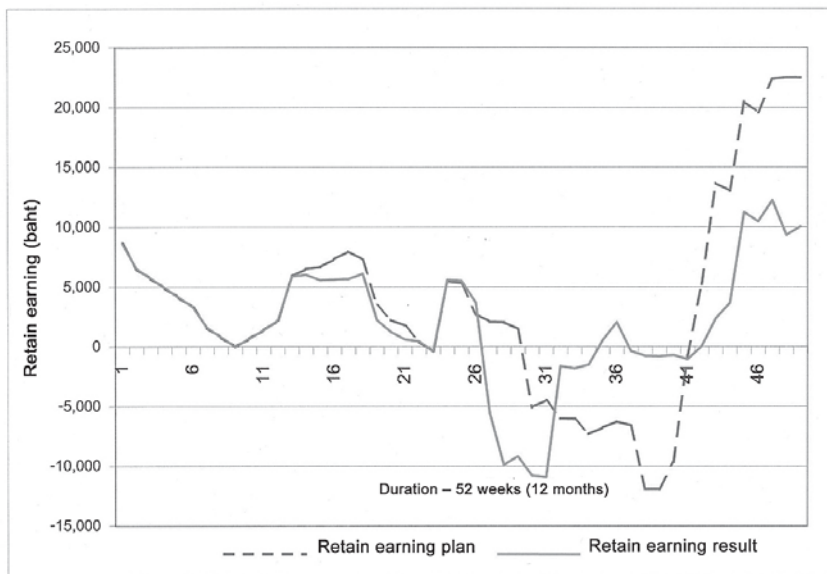


Mr. Bangkok Chowkwanyuen from Suksapattana Foundation is showing Na Noi how to prepare career plans and draw graphs

The graphic result indicated the approximate time when she should engage in other extra work. She also learned that making plans could tell her whether or not that work was profitable or just barely covering the cost. She was able to determine the expecting income and expense accounts in

the future, and prevent the future problems.

Graph showing retain earning plan and retain earning result in 2000



In addition, Mr. Bangkok taught her to make a debt relief plan starting by calculating the loan interest per annum and comparing it to the regular bank interest rate. The result indicated that if she could get a loan from the Government Savings Bank at a lower interest rate and pay off her debt at a higher interest rate, she could settle all her debt faster.

After completion of her vegetables growing plan, Mr. Bangkok suggested that she should submit it to the Government Savings Bank for a loan. He also proposed to act as guarantor of her loan request on only one condition that she must promise that she would never ever borrow more money from the loan sharks.

Upon receiving a grant from the Government Savings Bank, as promised, she settled all her debts and never again borrowed any more money. At the same time, Suksapattana Foundation granted a financial aid of 3,000 baht/month to her. The amount of which was fully paid to the Government Savings Bank every month.

Na Noi planned to pay off her debt within two years, starting from 2001 to 2003. Unfortunately, only the financial aid of 3,000 baht/month was absolutely insufficient for debt settlement. However, the acquired household accounting knowledge enabled her to control her family expense effectively. She learned to economize and cut down on spending considerably. And from past experience in careful planning of her vegetables growing, she was able to grow various kinds of vegetables and sell them, thus increased her family income. As a result, she could completely pay off all her debts within 2003 as planned.

The learning of debt relief plan enabled her to pay off her long and indefinite debt within the year 2003. She proceeded first with studying her own situations, understanding problems confronted, admitting actual expense, finding ways to earn supplementary income and cut down on family spending. All of which allowed her to lay down her individual and family plans, based on her basic requirements and acquired knowledge.

After a successful debt relief resulted from cooperative efforts between Na Noi and the Lighthouse Project, Office of the Secretary-general of Education Council deemed appropriate to disseminate the learning points and experiences of the Lighthouse Project. It had therefore granted its financial support of 50,000 baht to Dr. Suchin in order to document the subject matters and the learning experiences of Na Noi alongside the Project for the publication and broadcasting purposes. Dr. Suchin and Na Noi together documented valuable past experiences, including her learning approach to improving her self-development and her family's standard of living. After the completion of written documents, Dr. Suchin endowed Na Noi and the village youngsters with the aforementioned money for their careers investment. Besides, a portion of such endowment might be useful for the expansion and transfer of their learning to the communities.

Na Noi spent the money so carefully that every single baht would be wisely disbursed for her self-development and for the utmost benefits of the community as a whole. She disbursed a sum for her debt settlement, and spent 10,000 baht on cattle. In addition, she purchased cooking equipment and food ingredients for her extra career in order to earn a supplementary income for the whole family. She planed to spend parts of this income on supporting the children and youth activities held at the Community Learning Center or the Computer/Internet Club. Lastly, she determined to spend the last portion of funds on the purchase of land in front of her house in order to expand the Community Learning Center or the Computer/Internet Club in

the future for the expansion of youths' and villagers' education opportunities.

Advantages of life planning:

1. Transform an abstract plan into reality.
2. Show the realistic indications of profits and loss, which in turn lead to the analysis of problems and solutions finding.
3. Enhance the effective decision-making and career planning most suitable for her and applicable to the natural resources available.
4. Modify and apply the gathered useful information, the acquired knowledge, great feelings and experiences derived from the learning to making a living.

Communication

Good communication is the key factor to widen the learning world of Na Noi. In the past, communication to her was just limited to words and casual conversation with people in her own community. As a result, she hardly heard any news from other communities in order to allow her to apply it to her and her family ways of life. At present, she has become acquainted with a wide range of modern, economized and convenient communications accessible anywhere anytime. As a matter of fact, she learned how to use a telephone in communicating with others nearby and far way. Telephone communications do not only shorten the distance and times, but also enable her to learn more about the other communities i.e. whether or not they have similar ways of life.

She even learned how to access the Internet to communicate with others, find correct information and search for news and knowledge of her interest. She also learned how to send e-mails to others living in the remote areas. She sometimes sent e-mails to the officials for their professional and technical advice and guidance. As a result, she became acquainted with many knowledgeable people who provided her with valuable advice for her livelihood.



Na Noi is communicating with others via the Internet.

Apart from the aforementioned technology, she had a chance to learn the application of useful gadgets in communication. For example, she was once wanted to increase her vegetables productivity but doubted whether or not it was possible to grow two kinds of vegetables in the same plot of land. She searched through the Internet for telephone and facsimile numbers of the specialized officials. With assistance of Suksapattana Foundation's representatives, she could write correct questions and send them to the officials via facsimile. She received the answers to her questions within the same day just in time for her actual growing.

Advantages of communication

1. Widen areas of knowledge to greater extent, obtain more useful information and apply it to real family life.
2. Utilize the Internet in communication and data search.
3. Communicate with the specialized officials or others for useful and professional advices.

Exchanging Knowledge and Sharing Past Experiences (Lessons Learned from Ban Samkha Community)

As a result of a long collaborative effort of Suksapattana Foundation, Thaicom Foundation and allied partners on the Village that Learns Project took place in Ban Limthong, Nongbode sub-district, Nangrong district, Buriram province, there has been quite a change continuously in the community, for instance, an expansion of networking to communities in order to exchange and share their past experiences and achievements. Generally speaking, the people of any communities could learn and understand more about themselves and others' way of life by visiting the people in different communities, exchanging knowledge and sharing past experiences with them.

Between October 15 and 20, 2002 Na Noi and Ban Limthong Community's representatives had a chance for the first time to visit Ban Samkha Community in Lampang province where they learned, exchanged and shared their experiences with other villagers. The names of visiting representatives are as follows:

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1. Mrs. Sanit Thipnangrong (Na Noi) | Village Committee |
| 2. Mr. Sangwan Boonkongchat | Deputy Village Leader |
| 3. Mr. Udom Boonprasart | Sub-district Administrative Official |
| 4. Mrs. Chaleer Joomsuwan | Village Retail Store Committee |
| 5. Mr. Supoj Nivejkul | Village Retail Store Committee |
| 6. Mrs. Buapan Vujkriengkrai | Woman Group's Representative |
| 7. Miss Paveena Thipnangrong | Young Adult |

This generated Na Noi' and her fellow-villagers' enthusiasms for applying the acquired knowledge to promote the development of individual and community. Exchanging ideas and sharing past experiences of each individual are beneficial for personal usage. And, sharing the problems confronted by each individual may lead to possible solutions.

Consultation with knowledgeable people from Ban Samkha Community about the accounting problems faced by the Community Store allowed the villagers to figure out the real cause i.e. carelessness of the store committee. The committee somehow neglected to perform their assigned duties and did not strictly follow the rules and regulations of the store. Moreover, there was an improper performance of the annual audit. Once they realized the real cause of their problem, they could then find the solutions for the effective performance in the future.



A team of Ban Limthong villagers led by Na Noi visited the Ban Samkha Community Retail Store where they exchanged knowledge and shared their experiences

Na Noi had an opportunity to visit and learn from the Ban Samkha Community Bank, which inspired her to establish a community bank in Ban Limthong Village. Unlike the Ban Samkha Community Bank that received financial supports from Krung Thai Bank PLC, Ban Limthong Community receiving no financial assistance from any offices, in her opinion, must first become self-sufficient. The operation was first initiated with 100,000 baht, the amount of which was taken from the accumulated profits of the Ban Limthong Community Store. This was considered the initial capital of Ban Limthong Community Store-Bank program. It was established for the villagers who were in a desperate need of getting a loan at low interest rate in order to pay off their debt from a high interest loan. It offered an emergency loan for those villagers in the community who needed money for business investment or their careers. Moreover, villagers could deposit their money with the place at an annual interest of 12%.

For continuous development, after the official visit to Ban Samkha Community, the people of Ban Limthong Community invited the leaders and representatives of Ban Samkha Community to visit them and share with them the past experiences and achievements that could be applied to their community development programs. As a Therefore, between December 28, 2002 and January 1, 2003, a group of people from Ban Samkha Community came to Ban Limthong Village to exchange knowledge and share their past experiences with the villagers. The names of visitors are as follows:

1. Dr. Suchin Petcharak	Director of Northern Region Non-Formal Education Center
2. Mrs. Srinuan Wongtrakul	Ban Samkha Community Teacher
3. Mrs. Aree Inmapan	Community Retail Store Caretaker
4. Mr. Boontham Charoemsook	Savings Group Committee/ Deputy Village Leader
5. Mr. Chatchaval Utiya	Chairman of the Village Fund
6. Mr. Tan Wannasuwong	Chairman of the Stock Raising Group
7. Miss Pornnubpan Wongtrakul	Coordinator/Young Adult
8. Miss Nittaya Utiya	Young adult
9. Mrs. Sangchan Jailoon	Woman Group's Representative

The delegation from Ban Samkha Community pointed out that the community public relations are the most important means of communication of the people in the community, and urged the leaders of Ban Limthong Community to purchase new amplifiers. Based on this advice, the villagers came to their senses that they must first become self-sufficient before asking for assistance from others. During their visit, the visitors gave some money to the host families in return of their kind hospitality. The community purchased their new amplifiers with the aforementioned sum plus the donations from Mr. Sapon Petchasawang, a member of the House of Representatives from Buriram province, and the endowments to temple on special religious activity.

Ban Limthong Community presently owned a new set of amplifiers and the radio-signaling tower. Many group of people already used the said equipment for the community public relations. For instance, every Fridays a group of young adults used it to broadcast the news of their group activities and disseminate the useful information obtained from the Internet. The Community Store Group communicated their store activities to the villagers. Others like waste collecting campaign and vices quitting campaign were also communicated by this particular means. As a consequence, the villagers gained more knowledge and knew what was happening in their community. In conclusion, exchanging knowledge and sharing experiences with the people of Ban Samkha Community is a good idea from which Ban Limthong Community as a whole has benefited. Na Noi in particular can apply it to the sustainable development of herself as well as her community.

Advantages of exchanging knowledge and sharing experiences

1. Establish a community networking
2. Apply the acquired knowledge and experiences from the leaders and representatives of Ban Samkha Community to the community development programs.
3. Create the community's enthusiasms and cooperation in developing their community.

The Learning Center: The Computer/Internet Club

The Learning Center or Computer/Internet Club is located at No. 82, Moo 4, Nongbode sub-district, Nangrong district, Buriram province, where Na Noi and her family are residing. Suksapattana Foundation and Thaicom Foundation have financially supported the center since 2001. The latter endowed the center with the Internet access aiming to widen the learning world of the community through Internet.

Na Noi made use of the computer in recording her credit and debit entries and performing her household accounting. She searched information of her interest and communicated with others via the Internet. Villagers living in the vicinity of her house could have access to this computer center under the supervision of officers in charge. Furthermore, young adults and Buddhist monks could use the computer in typing assignments and searching information of their interest via the Internet.

This learning center serves as a knowledge fountain for everyone in the village, including the children and young adults who can learn useful things and knowledge appropriate for every day life. This allows them to learn all sorts of subject matters right in the village without the need to travel into the city. It gives a great opportunity for the rural children to catch up with the modern and advanced technologies, and provides them with the same privileges as given to the urban children. In summary, the Internet is an essential means of communication for the current developing children.

The Learning Center or Computer/Internet Club is another important part of the community that must be fully cared for by everyone. To begin with, a

group of young adults forms a team to regularly check on computer's conditions. They organize a 1-month computer program during their summer vacation for those interested children. The program covers all basic lessons, including the correct way to turn on and off the computer. During sessions, the children learn how to tackle the problems arisen while using the computer e.g. not responding programs. For basic computer programs, the kindergarteners learn a program known as "Paint" for the common movement practice and the control of mouse, while the older children learn Microsoft Word and basic Microsoft Excel programs.

Activities of the Learning Center

Besides the aforementioned activities concerning the use of computer and the Internet access, the Center also arrange the programs that enhance many skills of the children. For example, during the summer of 2001 the Center organized a series of programs promoting the students' learning skills at the Community School. The programs varied depending on each learner's requirements e.g. Mathematic camp, English language camp, Agriculture camp, Home Economic camp, Arts and Crafts, etc. The children were very happy with the programs. At the end of programs, each group presented to their friends and parents some outstanding achievements. Their parents were overwhelmed and wanted more activities like these every year.

In late 2001, the Learning Center organized a training program on water management of the community. The Center permitted the participants to use its computer for data collecting and exercises. Young participants were taught so much about the use of water. They, particularly, learned about their community water source, types of animals commonly found in the community water reservoir, valuable and useless vegetations, etc. Apart from learning of water source, the children were trained in drawing a topographic map of their village. They were taught to measure the areas of their village and divided among themselves into groups in order to draw up a community map, including locations of their neighboring villages. They enjoyed this program very much because they were allowed to apply the Paint program to draw a map. At the same time, the adults could also make use of this village map.

Next, the Learning Center set up a training program on community forests. Since their village is surrounded by a considerable large forestland under a joint responsibility of six nearby villages, the Center felt that the children

should take parts in caring for and preserving their forestland. For the program arrangement, the Center invited officials from the Department of Forestry to educate the children about the general information on forestland. The children were taken into the wood to study types of trees growing naturally in the area, including various species of herbal plants, food source and animals living in the forest, etc. After obtaining the information, the children then recorded all data in the computer and included them in the Learning Center's website.

In the following summer vacation, the Learning Center set up a computer-training course to enhance the children's learning skills. Many children from nearby villages attended the program, comprising all basic lessons such as the correct ways to turn on and off the computer, proper ways to solve the problems confronted while using the computer, utilizing the Paint program for mouse controlling exercise and editing motion pictures.

A computer program known as Dreamweaver IV was introduced to two different groups of learners, the Village Group and the Community Forest Group. The former engaged in searching information on Ban Limthong village, while the latter searched for local forestland information. Both groups were taught to use the computer program in making website containing all information found, and then linked it to the Learning Center's website. Other activities included Basic English lessons, spelling, reading and writing exercises. At the end of programs, all participants must express their feelings towards their learning experiences or give their reflection of events, similarly to evaluation. They must describe what they have learned from the programs and presented it on a computer utilizing the Microsoft PowerPoint program, which preferred by every participant because of its properties i.e. colorful pictures and amazing sounds.





*Photographs of activities held at the Community-Learning Center
or the Computer/Internet Club*

The Learning Center website: <http://limthong.haii.or.th>

The Learning Center or the Computer/Internet Club designed its own website to disseminate information on the Center, Ban Limthong Community, activities and programs offered for the villagers. It is an intellectual source where the village children and young adults who attended certain programs can store their useful information and findings obtained from the activities. This website is made possible by Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute (HAI).

The contents of website include information on Ban Limthong Community, interesting articles on education and agriculture, information on savings, activities calendar, pictures gallery of the Learning Center's activities, a community map, a topographic map via satellite, chatting board, etc.



Website of the Community-Learning Center or the Computer/Internet Club

Advantages of having the Learning Center or the Computer/Internet Club

1. Being an intellectual source for the villagers who can apply the acquired knowledge to their every day life.
2. The community could catch up with the modern technology.
3. Arrange the useful programs and activities for children and young adults.

The Pride of Na Noi

After a long remarkable effort through great difficulties, discouragement and failure, Mrs. Sanit Thipnangrong, commonly known as Na Noi, an ordinary 4th grade female villager who always shows great diligence, endurance and passionate in life-long learning, has finally acquired knowledge that gives her the feelings of great pride, thus owing everything to her own two hands and strong heart.

Changes in Her Family

One of Na Noi's great prides grown from her valuable learning is her ability to apply the acquired knowledge to change her life and raise her family standard of living.

She started with the learning of her and her family problems. She tried very hard to figure out how to solve her family poverty. After experiencing and learning new technology, though she faced difficulties of her 4th grade education, disagreement among family members and misunderstanding of learning objectives, her diligence and great endurance encourage her to achieve her ultimate goals. She is now able to explain to her family and convince them that she is doing something good and beneficial to both her own family and the community as a whole. In the end, everyone very well understood the situations and delightedly learned new things together, thus leading to a unique collaboration.

Finally, she could improve her family standard of living. Everyone knows how to live under the sufficiency economy without the needs of a loan. Her husband and children work hard together to earn a living, and eagerly seek other works after the harvest, thus bring home small amount of supplementary income for the family. The aforementioned changes are the utmost pride and happiness of Na Noi and her family.



Mr. Vorthong Thipnangrong
(commonly known as Na Vor)

"At the beginning I did not really care much because I did not quite understand what the Foundation's representatives were trying to teach us, and what they wanted us to do. My wife explained to me what they were trying to do, but I was afraid to express my feelings. I hardly spoke to them. When they visited us, I often went out to do something else. As times went by, they tried harder and harder to encourage me. They kept talking to me and explained a lot of things. They suggested that I should refrain from drinking canned ready-to-drink coffee and switched to generic instant coffee. They told me that it could cut down our family expense. Days passed, I started to reorient myself and accepted new technology and learning that they introduced to our family. They all were very nice, but still I was afraid to talk to them. I made a commitment that I would work hard to raise our family standard of living."



Miss Paweena Thipnangrong
(commonly known as Poom)

"In the past, I was shy and hardly talked to people. When the Foundation's representatives came and taught us new technology, I listened and watched quietly. They taught me to solve problems by myself independently of others. When I saw my parents worked in vegetables growing, though I felt like helping them, I was too tired to give them a hand. My mother used to say that if we did not work how we were going to get money for family expense. She taught me to be self-sufficient and not to wait for others' assistance. I helped my mother by

carrying vegetables into town for sales. Sometimes I went with my brothers, but sometimes I went alone. I felt bitterly ashamed, but I had to try my very best for our family. I must work hard at school in order to graduate with a degree. I knew that I must economize and be careful for what I was spending. I needed to make a plan for my own future. Since the Lighthouse Project gave us the chance, I felt more confident and no longer afraid to speak up."



Mr. Somnuek Thipnangrong
(commonly known as Doke)

"I did not like to get involved with the visiting people. I was afraid to express my feelings and talk to strangers. I'd like to be alone. I helped my mother with vegetables growing and some housework whenever she asked me to. I did not like it though because I felt tired and I would rather spent times playing with my friends. However, my mother still insisted that everyone should lend a hand with housework. There were times that we decided to split the work, but it failed. This was because sometimes either my brother or my sister forgot, and sometimes I myself forgot. My little brother hardly worked at all. Unlike my sister I did not like to listen to those visiting representatives, but I honestly did know what they were doing. Sometimes I felt hurt that my mother did not love us or even care for us anymore. I really wanted to get more attention and affection from her. I helped my parents in vegetables growing and rice farming. Sometimes after school I took care of my father's cattle. I'm glad that the Lighthouse Project brings good things to our family and improves our family standard of living."



Mr. Suradej Thipnangrong
(commonly known as Bank)

"I was shy. When the Foundation's representatives talked to me, I just simply smiled back without saying a word. I did what my parents asked me to do, but sometimes sneaked out of the house to play with my friends. My mother asked me to work hard at school and taught me to economize and help my sister with housework."

Meet with the Prime Minister

The greatest pride and pleasure of Na Noi, an ordinary poor farmer with 4th grade education, is the four special occasions given to her by the Prime Minister, Dr. Taksin Shinnawatra.

The first was on June 16, 2001 when she had a chance to present before the Prime Minister her working plans at King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi. It was the very first time in her life that she was given such great opportunity to talk with a high-ranking person of the nation. She was enormously impressed and delighted with the Prime Minister's acknowledgement i.e. he did not overlook someone so unimportant like herself and her fellow-villagers, though they were nobody from the rural area.

The second was on November 10, 2001 during the Cabinet Meeting held in the remote areas when the Prime Minister and the Cabinet visited her at her house in Ban Limthong Village, Buriram province. The Prime Minister talked with her casually in person and encouraged her to pursue her ultimate goals for the sake of her community development.



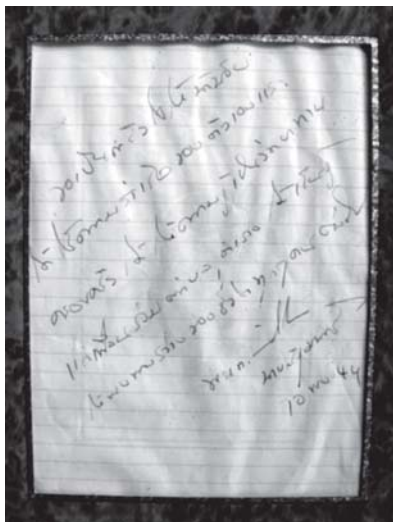
The Prime Minister and the Cabinet visited Na Noi at her house on November 10, 2001

The third was on June 20, 2003 when she had another chance to meet with the Prime Minister at Ban Samkha Community, Lampang province. While he was officially visiting Ban Samkha School, she had a moment to talk with him and requested for his assistance in expanding the Bandwidth² for hi-speed Internet services and providing more opportunities to the people of community. She spoke to him that *"A road to wisdom is narrow. But, only through the application of ICT will increase the opportunities for the villagers to acquire knowledge."*

The latest was on April 24, 2004 when the Prime Minister paid Buriram province an official visit. Once again, she was given a chance to meet with him in person. He personally insisted that she let him know whether or not she would require further assistance. He advised her to share her

² A range within a band of wavelengths, frequencies, a range of radio frequencies over which a digital device can operate. For bandwidth system, its capacity for data transfer rate equals to bits per second (bps) or kilobits per second (Kbps). For analogue system, its unit of frequency equals to one cycle per second (Hz).

experiences with Mr. Pie Sroi-Sra-Krang, village philosopher living in Lam Plai Mat district, Buriram province, from whom she could gain more useful knowledge and ideas to improve herself and her community as a whole.



Translation of the Prime Minister's message:

"Best wishes to Na Noi and your family. Hope to see that you and your family can apply your achievements to the development of your fellow-villagers in this district and sub-district so that they can pursue their ultimate goals."

*Dr. Taksin Shinnawatra
Prime Minister
November 10, 2001*

Hand-written message from the Prime Minister

Seeing Her Own Value

In the past, Na Noi felt that she was rather useless because she was simply an old uneducated person with limited learning privilege. After having opportunities to learn new technology, she admitted that her old thought seemed to obstruct her of learning. But now she thinks differently and has a new set of ideas. It has come to her senses that it is never too late to learn and everyone can be a life-long learner.

Today, she feels that she is even more valuable now that her learning does not only benefit herself and her family, but also her fellow-villagers. Her worthwhile learning brings about the improvement of quality of life of everyone in the community, thus leading to the greatest pride of all. She is so proud that now no matter who she is either a small-unrecognized person from the remote area or a well-established person from the most advanced community, she is still valued equally. Each person is valuable and means something to others and the society as a whole.

Expansion of the Project to the Community

Based on past experience, Na Noi is convinced that learning is the most valuable asset that promotes the community development. She, therefore, wants to transfer her acquired knowledge to her fellow-villagers in Ban Limthong Community for the improvements of their community. As a consequence, the people can wisely solve their problems themselves by applying the acquired knowledge for a better quality of life in a debt-free and well-united community. They shall be strong and self-sufficient and able to earn consistent supplementary income after the harvest. More importantly, there shall be many sources of supplementary income in the community so that the people need not to leave their homeland for work. As a result, the villagers will love their birthplace even more and devote themselves to its improvements. .

Strengthening the Community

A key factor to the success of project expansion is to strengthen the community. The people are encouraged to exchange their ideas with others, accept new knowledge and technology and give their opinions for a common understanding and collaborative effort to strengthen their community.

Na Noi transferred what she had learned from Suksapattana Foundation and Thaicom Foundation. She started with a gathering of villagers to empower them to share problems commonly confronted by either the individual families or the community as a whole. It's the meetings where everyone must join in finding the possible solutions.

Nevertheless, strengthening the community towards sustainable development is difficult. It requires enormous times, great efforts and, absolutely, active leaders. Collaboration takes considerable times to form, since many groups of the people still do not understand what is happening. It would take a long time before everyone could understand and agree to cooperate. The community needs someone active with a firm leadership to lead them to a total cooperation. Therefore, initially there is the need of experts or experienced people who could contribute enormously to a common understanding of the people. The experts could guide them to

tackle and solve their problems, and eventually empower the villagers and strengthen the whole community to become self-sufficient in the future.

Na Noi Plays a Role of "Facilitator".

For the success of project expansion, Na Noi began by facilitating the interested fellow-villagers in their household accounting. To start with, she facilitated small groups of interested people, and then spread through close relatives and friends. As a result of learning together, the learners changed their ways of spending money i.e. spending less. They knew what they should or should not buy, thus significantly lowered the family expense.

Since Na Noi has learned many more new things, she is now ready to become a good facilitator to facilitate her fellow-villagers. She is able to apply to group activities the acquired knowledge in management, things learned from various visits, and suggestions from Suksapattana Foundation's representatives. The people in different groups can exchange their information and data obtained from activities. She also transfers new knowledge acquired from her visits to other fellow-villagers and encourages those interested groups to apply it to their career.

Transferring Knowledge to the Community

Na Noi has applied her experiences and new knowledge acquired from the Foundation's representatives and other government officials to improve her community and also transfer them those interested in learning together with her. She has involved in the following activities.

1. She joined a Woman Group in making shampoo and dishwashing detergent. She got a formula from Mr. Manop of Herbs Preservation Club in Lampang province. She wanted to form a group of interested people to engage in this kind of activity in order to earn supplementary income for their families and at the same cut down their expense.
2. She taught the interested fellow-villagers to prepare their household accounting and pointed out its benefits to their families. For instance, it showed a daily expense. Many people who had done this before appreciated it very much. It enabled them to see the details of what they had spent, and which items must be cut down. Once they were satisfied

with their household accounting, they started to spread the new knowledge through friends, resulting in a great expansion of household accounting to many more interested people.



Na Noi and a group of women are making shampoo.



Na Noi is guiding a group of interested people in household accounting.

3. For the Community Retail Store, Na Noi and the committee are responsible for managing the store. She was appointed a treasurer in charge of credit and debit accounts.
4. She was appointed a member of Managing Committee for the Village Funds.
5. For the Woman Group, she works together with the women in the group activities and seeks other works for supplementary income.



A group of women are working for supplementary income.



Things Follow:

Her great effort to extend her learning to the community is considered quite a success in certain level. There is a joint learning among the villagers. The people are working in teams, exchanging knowledge and sharing past experiences, forming a united community and increasing their supplementary income.

As a result of her assistance, the villagers now understand a household accounting system. Some of them were not so fond of their unbalanced accounts between credit and debit that they decided to quit doing it. It was simply because they could not bear seeing such high expense. As they discontinued preparing their household accounting, they could not solve their overspending problem. She did not push them to continue doing it if they did not really want to do it voluntarily. At present, only 10 families are continuously performing their household accounting. They are able to effectively manage their expense and cut down unnecessary spending.

Supporting Factors:

Na Noi alone could not bring about the success of project expansion into the community. Therefore, personnel and government officials are most needed to provide their professional assistance for the achievement of the ultimate goal.

Suksapattana Foundation, Thaicom Foundation, NECTEC and HAIL together endowed the community with the programs promoting learning skills and particular knowledge in modern technology for development of the people.

The Constructionism Lab at the Northern Region Non-Formal Education Center in Lampang province gave her great opportunities to attend numbers of training courses and workshops from which she could transfer her acquired knowledge and valuable experiences to the people of Ban Limthong Community.

The Office of Sub-district Administrative Council granted its financial aid to the Supplementary Career Group for their vegetables farming and baking desserts for sales.

The Village Committee supported the community works and recruited the village members to attend community activities.

Miss Vanida Panchoomsang, M.D., Public Health's representative from Ban Nongthonglim Office, gave her professional advice in grouping people for works.

Difficulties in Working:

Difficulties found in community activities obstructed the progress of work and caused some ineffective correspondences i.e. slow and discontinuous communication. Such obstacles could lead to protests from the villagers, parts of whom still disagreed with the ideas because of their selfishness, thus promoted the aggregation of people who were ready to blame or look down at others' mistake.

Members of the Village Developing Group arranged the meetings to discuss the possibility of bringing the villagers together as one unity. They proposed an organization of community activities in which many villagers could join. For example, they set up the Elderly People Club and organized an annual activity in which all villagers could pay their highest respect to the elderly people. Many villagers were interested and eagerly attended the ceremony. The Group also arranged a constructive dialogue on common problems faced by the villagers and discussed about possible solutions step-by-step.



Traditional ceremony where the children are paying their respect to the elderly.



People are attending a general community meeting.

Young Adults Development:

Realizing that the extension of project by organizing the activities may not be effective in adult groups, Na Noi, therefore, switched her focus to young adults and children groups in order to lay down the fundamentals of future community development. The committee appointed her daughter commonly known as "Poom", the deputy working for the Office of Sub-district Administrative Council (young adults' representative), to act as the leader in young adults' activities.

In the early years, there were a few group activities for young adults. It seemed appropriate to call for the meetings for those interested youths. Twenty young people showed strong interest in participating the programs. After attending, they were not any more afraid of expressing their feelings, ideas and thoughts. From then on, they scheduled for weekly meetings on Fridays to update the progress of group activities and project as a whole. They had a chance to exercise their work in public relations by making announcements of group activities as well as calling for group meetings.

In recognition of youths' capabilities, adults allowed them to help with data entry taken from the Community Store's bookkeeping, and examining the total purchase and sales of the store. At time of dividend allocation, the adults granted a financial aid of 500 baht to youth programs in response to their excellent achievements, thus encouraged them to continue to perform more beneficial activities for their community.

Youth Projects

The Youth Group has learned how to write a proposal and submit it to the concerned government agencies for grant aid to support its projects. For example, they submitted their proposal on catfish-rearing project to Community Based Involvement in Rural Development (CBIRD) and the Office of District Agriculture in Nangrong district for assistance in fish rearing technique. Both organizations have provided tremendous support and advice to the young people. For instance, CBIRD requested that they should write a proposal and submit it for grant aid to support their catfish-rearing project. Meanwhile, CBIRD's representatives regularly monitored their progress. After monitoring their performance, the representatives invited them to join in CBIRD's projects to enhance their capability in animals rearing.



Youngsters are digging a pond for catfish rearing.



They are feeding their catfishes.

After the completion of catfish-rearing project, the Group made a great effort to link their works to the Learning Center or Computer/Internet Club. They recorded all data, changes and problems confronted while rearing their catfishes in the computers as database, stored for others who might be interested in catfish rearing to study.

For the Learning Center or Computer/Internet Club, the Group has initiated a program in computer maintaining and fixing, of which the young adults are now undertaken it seriously. This program was first taken into consideration of the Center due to many computer problems faced by the users. For example, when the computer was not correctly functional, they must be transported into town for maintenance, thus cost times and money.

Youth Meetings

It is essential that young people attend their group meetings to make plans for their projects and activities. Therefore, the Youth Group attempts to arrange its group meetings regularly to discuss new ideas, raise subject matters, make plans and find possible solutions to group problems.

As a result of their meetings, they are able to pinpoint a serious problem of their time management. This is because members of the group are not available at the same time due to their major responsibilities e.g. some are studying at school, while some are working in the factory, thus disables them from managing their times wisely. Since time management is truly their problem, they are summoned to a group meeting to schedule a common time suitable for everyone, besides the times spared for catfish breeding

project and other projects planning. Mr. Somsak Poomchuay, Thaicom's representative, attends the meetings regularly to supervise and give his professional advice to the group.

As a result of their participation in the group activities, the young people of Ban Limthong Community harmoniously united in making themselves useful to their community.



The Youth Group is planning its activities.

Youth Activities

Ten young adults are actively participating in group activities e.g. a demonstration of organic or toxic-free string bean farming, agricultural cooperatives, the Office of Sub-district Management, Office of Village Management (the youth program). All participants are members of the "We love our birthplace" Club. The latest group activity is the establishment of Garbage Bank whose members purchase recyclable items from villagers and sell them to others for a supplementary income of the community and the Youth Group.

Participation in many group activities brings young adults together more often. They hold more responsibilities and attend numbers of discussion under the supervision of Na Noi. Having solved the problem of time management, they set up a timetable for working in shifts at the Learning Center or Computer/Internet Club and the vegetable growing plots, abided by the rules and regulations set forth by the Group. They sometimes felt deeply insulted by the adults' criticism. There were numbers of adults doubted whether or not they could manage their money, and if they could make profits from their investment. As a matter of fact, the young adults did not feel very discouraged after being criticized, on the contrary, they

found their inspiration from such insulting. They worked hard to win the adults' recognition of their achievements in agriculture and community cooperatives, owing a great deal to Na Noi, CBIRD's representatives and the youth collaborative efforts.

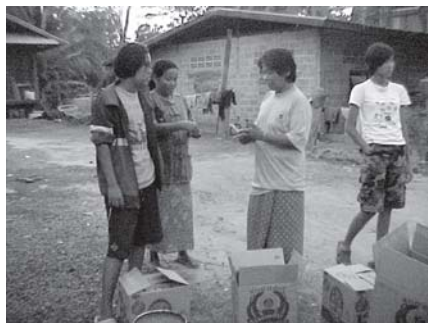
All useful information, interesting pictures and knowledge obtained from the youth activities are shown on the community website: <http://limthong.haii.or.th> prepared and uploaded by the youth.

Apart from the aforementioned activities and projects, the Youth Group under the leadership of Na Noi's daughter (nicknamed Poom) who acts as the news announcer between 6:00 am and 6:30 am daily, produces a radio program on the community broadcasting. Poom broadcasts the general information and popular songs during the day from Monday through Friday, and her brothers take a control on weekends. Other fellow-youths take turns in broadcasting between 5:30 pm and 6:30 pm. The villagers highly appreciate this community radio broadcasting which focuses on spreading the community news, and highlighting the news obtained from the Internet, general useful information and favorable news on democracy movement.



Youngsters are broadcasting their programs.

The establishment of Garbage Bank was inspired by a dream of young adults after a series of meetings on the pros and the cons. The Bank is located at the Learning Center or Computer/Internet Club. The Youth Group goes out and buys recyclable items from the villagers, the Community Store and the children. It is considered a successful activity that eliminates community waste and at the same brings about a supplementary income for the whole community and a small portion for the children to spend on their munchies.



Youngsters and their Garbage Bank

Summary of the Learning

Prior to her engagement with the Lighthouse Project under the sponsorship of Suksapattana Foundation, Na Noi was deeply in soaring debts and making great attempts to find the solutions. She had never in her life had a good financial plan and her main income from rice farming was insufficient to pay off her debts. She had never thought of planning her future investment and had no ideas of making profits whatsoever. Her effort in debt relief plan never succeeded until she had a chance to work alongside the Foundation in 1998. Such cooperative effort aimed at developing a new approach to learning i.e. learner-centered learning, in which the learner formulates her/his own curriculum with professional assistance from the supervisors. Both the learner and supervisors together analyze and figure out possible solutions to the problems, then execute their plans together. As a result of particular cooperative efforts, Na Noi, Suksapattana Foundations and the allied partners of Ban Limthong Community have gained the most valuable lessons.

A drastic change of her life began in 1998 when Suksapattana Foundation's representatives came to hand the most valuable lessons to her with the aim of improving her learning capabilities by applying a new approach of self-learning or self-educated methodology from which the learner seek her own knowledge with no constraints on her choice of subjects and learning procedures. The representatives took the role of facilitator who only provided professional assistance concerning the learning subjects. They taught her how to think, make plans and check them thoroughly before taking actions. First, she was taught to prepare her household accounting that seemed to be a valuable lesson to her to stop and think before putting a great deal of effort into any activities.

After familiarizing herself with household accounting, she could precisely figure out her family expense, thus enabled her family members to understand their overspending situation. As a result, they brought up the problem and determined to find the solutions by reducing their spending money. Na Noi encouraged her family in living under the sufficiency economy without putting her family into soaring debts. She learned to prepare her household accounting by making use of a computer. All data entries were precise and complete, thus enabled her to make a decision with ease. By 2003 she was completely free from debts.

She learned to make plans for the future of her family and highly hoped for a better quality of life through effective career and life planning development. All of which would not be possible without the full support of her husband and her children, especially her daughter, Poom, who worked alongside her mother in making the family plans for 2-3 years ahead. With great pride, both mother and daughter transferred to their fellow-villagers what they had learned from doing their household accounting proved to be helpful to them for paying off their debts. They extended the success of this project to their community and raised their standard of living progressively through times.

Above all, Na Noi learned to be a facilitator who could facilitate and transfer to her fellow-villagers useful information and valuable knowledge. Her remarkable performance was considered to be the most important gesture that helped others in the community. For instance, she taught others to prepare household accounting. She was appointed a treasurer of the Community Store, a member of the Village Funds Committee, a member of the Woman self-help group, a leader in charge of the Learning Center or Computer/Internet Club, etc. She attempted to promote equal opportunities for young adults and villagers to learn, exchange and share knowledge most beneficial to the whole community.

The remarkable success of her learning from 1998 to 2005 owed much to her family support, financial, intellectual and technical assistance given by Suksapattana Foundation, Thaicom Foundation, the Office of Secretary-general of Education Council, the allied partners, as well as collaborative efforts of young adults and the concerned Limthong villagers, all of whom potentially promoted the future learning community.

Knowledge is the key to everything only if we could acquire.

We should not just see things, but should keep on processing and reasoning instead.

We should not ever stop learning, but should keep on seeking for new knowledge.

Applying the acquired knowledge to the benefits of others is surely better than using it to harm others.

Allied Partners

1. Suksapattana Foundation
2. Thaicom Foundation
3. Hydro and Agro Informatics Institute
4. National Electronics and Computer Technology Center
5. The Office of Secretary-General Education Council
6. CBIRD in Nangrong sub-district
7. Non-Formal Education Center in Nangrong sub-district
8. Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural and Cooperatives, Nangrong sub-district branch
9. The Siam Cement Group
10. The Northern Region Non-Formal Education Center, Lampang province
11. Ban Samkha Community

