

NON-STATE ACTORS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES IN DEVELOPMENT -
ACTIONS IN PARTNER COUNTRIES (MULTI COUNTRY) FOR NON-STATE ACTORS

Best Practice Khon Kaen: Decentralized and Community-led Policy-Making

- short version -

Thematic Area: Peoples' Participation in Planning and Decision Making

Country of Origin: Thailand

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A Project implemented by the consortium: Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung e.V., Thailand Environment Institute (TEI), Local Government Development Foundation Inc. (LOGODEF), United Cities and Local Governments for Asia and Pacific (UCLG-ASPAC), Association of Indonesian Regency Governments (APKASI), Association of Cities of Vietnam (ACVN), and National League of Communes/Sangkats of the Kingdom of Cambodia (NLC/S).



ABOUT DELGOSEA

The Partnership for Democratic Local Governance in Southeast-Asia (DELGOSEA) was launched in March 2010 and is co-funded by the European Commission and the Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) of Germany through the German Ministry of Development Cooperation.

DELGOSEA aims to create a network of cities and municipalities to implement transnational local governance best practices replication across partner countries: Cambodia, Indonesia, Philippines, Thailand and Vietnam. It supports the role of Local Government Associations (LGAs) in providing and assisting the transfer and sustainability of local governance best practices replication by local governments. Most importantly, through the exchange of best practices in the region, DELGOSEA intends to contribute to the improvement of living conditions of disadvantaged groups in Southeast-Asia by helping increase their participation in local planning and decision making.

In the first phase of project implementation, an intensive research was done to determine Best Practices (BP) in local governance in each of the five participating countries. A consortium of international local governance experts and representatives from the LGAs reviewed and selected 16 BPs out of the submitted 27 BPs.

The project concentrated on the following four thematic areas while selecting best practice examples from the five countries:

1. Peoples' participation in planning and decision-making;
2. Institutional governance;
3. Inclusive urban public services;
4. Fiscal management and investment planning.

The following short descriptions BP is one of the selected 16 BPs in the area of people's participation in planning and decision making, provided by Khon Kaen in Thailand.

Starting in January 2011 through August 2012, DELGOSEA will continue to collaborate with LGAs and local governments to transfer best practices replication. The pilot cities/municipalities could modify or improve the original best practice to their local context. The LGAs in the five participating countries will closely consult and guide the selected pilot local governments on the transfer and implementation of BP replication.



Country	Thailand
Local Government:	Khon Kaen City
Type:	Municipality
Best Practice:	Decentralized and community-led policy-making
Aspect of Governance:	People's participation in planning and decision-making
Reported By:	Somphant Techaatik and Songpon Tulata

Summary

Khon Kaen City has been selected as a best practice, because unlike many other cases, it managed to develop a sustainable and comprehensive strategy to strengthen people's participation with the aim to (1) to improve the people's quality of life and social capital and (2) to enhance the competitiveness and capacity of the municipality. The establishment of the City Council and the "Department of Supporting Citizens Participation and Decentralisation" as well as the consequent decentralisation of municipal power to community organisations ("Small Municipality within Big Municipality") were herewith the key prerequisites for the implementation of more than 200 projects.

The strategy started from the point that at first, a platform is needed to get to know people's opinion and needs to be able to formulate the appropriate policies. For this purpose the City Council was created. The Department of Citizen Participation and Decentralization Support was established and has become a key mechanism for the municipality in the collaboration with community organizations and in project screening before submitting them to the municipal executive's for consideration.

The Department is equipped with permanent staff and is handling the implementation plans to strengthen and facilitate citizen participation in municipal activities. Lastly, the strategy has been designed on the belief that people know best their needs and constraints. Following this, community organisations were given the power to decide on their own development plans and projects.



The following results were achieved:

- Better policies through better defined data on the needs and constraints of the people; involvement of more than 130 community organisations in the city council; close cooperation with the academia for community research.
- More community based projects better reflecting the needs of the people; people define their own development plans, manage their budgets, human resources and procurements. Community management became cost-effective and efficient.
- Strengthened capacities and empowered people to better deal with local concerns and issues.
- Better policies led to the improvement of living conditions of the people by e.g. better environment and sanitation management (flood prevention, garbage management, safety food).

The strategy has been supported by the City Council Program from Denmark – DANCED as well as by own funds from the municipality.

A. Innovative Elements

The City Council case study showed many positive results from encouraging people's participation. The executives of Khon Kaen City were able to collect data and comments from various organizations, networks, and the public sector, which have enabled them to make better decisions on public policies. A number of programs—such as the city shrine, city gate, and public park improvements to solve the traffic problem—were also shaped from the people's comments and suggestions. The same was done with the policies on cultural life, the people minds and awareness, public road safety, and improvement of public parks to increase space and green area for people. Through this mechanism, the municipality gained a better understanding of the people's needs. It also improved its efficiency in serving the people.

The Small Municipality in Large Municipality case study, on the other hand, showed that the people were aware of the problems and needs of their own community. At the same time, they were also the best people to solve their own problems and needs. Khon Kaen City provided knowledge and information and supported the community to come up with ideas to solve their own problems.



Today, the local community in Khon Kaen is no longer dependent on the central government to improve their quality of life. They can plan their own community programs and implement them. The decision-making on development work, infrastructure buildings, and cultural activities are now managed by the community.

The two case studies show that people have potentials. The city and community people can manage their own development works if the municipality takes an active role in teaching them and providing them with opportunities.

B. Involvement and Activities

The case studies were initiated by the Office of the Khon Kaen City Mayor. It was a result of the participatory planning process ran by the training team¹ under the support of the mayor. Followed by various types of research and training programs in strengthening the management and administration of the municipality, this research model was initiated by municipal advisors² and municipal executives--including academics, senior development workers, and local politicians. The key people behind the studies are Mr. Peerapol Pattanapeeradech, Mr. Deja Premrudeelert, and Dr. Somphant Techaatik. The communities had representatives coordinating the research work with the Khon Kaen municipality.

Representatives of civil society and the population joined meetings and seminar workshops, where the research team could observe and learn from them. In the meetings, people who were interested in participating to change the city in a good way were encouraged to join follow-up meetings with the City Council. In some occasions, the people shared their ideas through radio stations, such as FM 103 and the Khon Kaen University and community radio stations.

In the case of the Small Municipality in Large Municipality model, the community participated in community planning, budget planning, lesson distilling, and assessments. Budget allocation is a function of the Office of the Division concerned. The research team also organized the field research to visit the community and to observe and participate in

¹ Dr. Somphant Techaatik and staff from Khon Kaen University.

² The adviser team comprises Mr. Peerapol, the Mayor, Mr. Deja, the senior developer, and Dr. Somphant, the researcher from Khon Kaen university, and others.



community activities. The task included organizing group discussions and interviews with the community people.

The City Council is the venue for public hearings on people's reviews and opinions on public policies. It is also where people can interact with municipal executives before they finalize the policies. The Small Municipality in Large Municipality model is the form of participatory community development planning. Both public hearing and participatory development planning activities were implemented under the department Power Decentralization to Community Policy of Khon Kaen City Municipality.

C. Sustainability and Replication

The City Council and the Small Municipality in Large Municipality models are easily managed under the Department of Participation and Power Decentralization Promotion. In some cases, the mayor can also manage the models and order a special team to eventually manage specific issues. Both case studies are sustainable and can be replicated by other municipalities and local government units. The basic elements of the models can teach those who are interested in promoting the decentralization and participation model.

Decentralization and local government are very interesting issues. They have become very popular in Thailand. This is also supported by various groups of people, such as NGOs, people's organizations, mass media, and academic circles.

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