

Wilavan Noipa 2006: Social Capital Concerning Forest Resource Conservation:

A Case Study of Community Forest in Moo Ban Tawang sai, Tambon Wang Mee, Amphoe Wang Nam Khiao, Changwat Nakhon Ratchasima. Master of Science (Sustainable Land Use and Natural Resource Management), Major Field: Sustainable Land Use and Natural Resource Management, Interdisciplinary Graduate Program.

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This research paper aimed to study the conservation of community forest in Tawang sai village in Nakhon Ratchasima, a northeastern province of Thailand. The study focused on the development of the community and its social capital concerning forest conservation. One aspect of the study was to find appropriate means to strengthen the community's social capital in managing its natural resources. The qualitative approach was employed to conduct the study. Data were collected from both primary and secondary sources. Key informants in the community were interviewed. The study was presented in a descriptive report.

Form the study, Tawang sai village was a newly-established community in Tambon Wang Mee, Amphoe Wang Nam Khiao of Nakhon Ratchasima Province. The development of the community can be observed in three stages: 1) settlement period (2498-2510 B.E.) A group of 2-3 families from Sikhieu district migrated to the area as herdsmen and occupied the land. 2) Cash crop period (2511-2530 B.E.) This was a period of the most dramatic changes, the physical expansion of the community, more land possession, intensive land use and the deterioration of forest resources and soil quality. 3) Conservation period (2531 B.E.- present) The deterioration of the natural resources reached a crisis point. Villagers rallied to oppose logging concession and allocated certain forested land for development and rehabilitation. The result was the return of fertile land and forest for communal utilization as it has been until present. The success of the community in forest conservation has become a model widely recognized by a number of organizations in the country. The study found that there were some internal elements serving as social capital for forest conservation of the community. There were trust in the community leaders, well established forest committee, well articulated community forest regulations, their cultural belief in Buddhism and superstitious power. External elements also played a part in the success of forest conservation. Logging concession by The Forest Industry Organization of Thailand (FIO), the role of Wildlife Fund Thailand (WFT) under the Royal Patronage of H.M. the Queen of Thailand, Plant Center No.4 (Ratchasima), and their pride of being a model for study tours by numerous organizations. The approach to strengthen the social capital of the community should involve the development of communal human resources of all strata to further forest conservation. The fostering of good relationship between all social organs in the community should be promoted, such as family, temples, and schools, to establish cross generation continuity in natural resources management. Also, the integration of local wisdom and belief with communal rules and regulation should be supported to enhance the practicality of the natural resources conservation.

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