

Thesis Title **Women's Group Collaboration and Development in Rural Communities**

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Abstract

This qualitative research aimed at studying the types and patterns of formation of women's groups in a rural community, and also the structure and conditions affecting such group formation. The researcher applied interviewing and observation techniques to collect data from various groups of people in the community such as women in general, women's group members, husbands of those women, women's group committee members, village leaders and senior people. The research was conducted in Long-Dua village, Pratoopa sub-district, Muang District, Lamphun Province.

The results of this research were as follows :

The patterns of women's group formation were generated for a long time on a basis of kinship system. That system helped the group members participating in their mutual work, reflecting the rural community's culture in general. A formation of the women's groups could be classified into two types. The first type was an informal group formation which was an indigenous type generally found every where. This type was naturally designed to help one and another person as its general purpose under a cordial relationship of the community's members. The group's structure did not specify the members' roles, norms and status clearly but rather emerged with full participation under their own decision. The duration of such group formation was uncertain, and mostly relied on the

types of activities and purposes. Group members might be dispersed or reunited depending on appropriate encouraging conditions. This type of group formation was generated in a natural way of learning in any community.

The second type of group formation was a formal pattern mostly encouraged by outsiders such as government agencies with some financial and technical supports. Such formation was based on the problems of needs of women with an aim to develop their occupational skills, experiences and community. Groups' structure was influenced by the government trends, but still needed the community participation within its way of living. Such trends consisted of a specification of the group roles, the members, share of responsibilities, status, acceptance of equal rights of others, and groups' norms.

The main conditions affected the success of group formation could be identified from other agencies, supports, community needs, and the members' participation in every step of group work. Such participatory steps were such as planning, decision-making, organizing and evaluation. Duties and responsibilities were shared among the members based on the individuals' talents and skills, but focusing on the groups' benefits.

A formation of women's groups could create changes of the members' ways of living. Those changes could be noticed in their abilities to solve the families' economic problems, acceptance of roles and status of the families and community. The formation also helped strengthening the community capabilities for development, leading to self-help and self-reliance. Simultaneously, such formation affected an imitation of earning a living of the groups' members, changing the values from comfortable consumption to being in debt and eventually family conflicts.