

**Rediscovering Citizenship through Participatory
Action Research at Umong Municipality**

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Few Backgrounds about Thailand

- There are still large gaps of development between Bangkok and other major cities in regional provinces like Chiang Mai, Phuket, Konkean, Songkla, especially population and economic concentration.
- Currently, military junta has taken over government responsibilities since May 2014 coup, while they are trying to propose a new drafted constitution for public referendum for fresh election by 2017.

Facts about Local Governments

- There are 75 Provincial Administrative Organizations (Regional local governments), 1,983 Municipalities (urbanized area: city, and sub-district), and 5,770 Sub-district governments, officially called Tambon Administrative Organization (rural, less-populated area)
- Although there is elected mayors for local authorities, Thailand is considered a centralized state where provincial governors except Bangkok, are appointed by central government to oversee and unify state departments in the provincial regions.

Facts about Local Governments

- Locally collected taxes and revenue sharing is about 25% of the size of national spending, which is low comparing many developing countries.
- Small local governments in general depend on transfers and grants allocated by various department functions and autonomous agencies, including royal project support for better community development.

Development at Umong

- In 1997, villages of Umong community was upgraded to sub-district local government
- Municipal area of 20.09 square kilometer comprising of 11 villages with total population of 13,269 (male 6,275 and female 6,994)



Development at Umong

- In 2008, Learning Center for Self-sufficient Economy set up (King's inspired principle in the 1997 King Birthday's speech)
- Umong's 11 villages have constantly received supports from various state governments, such like provincial administration, ThaiHealth Foundation, Energy Fund, Agricultural Support Dept., etc.
- Umong received 2009 Royal Highness Princess Award Winner for Sufficient Economic Principle and Most Livable Municipality Award Winner

Citizen Engagement at Umong



Citizen Engagement at Umong

- State governments help setting up more than 20 community learning centers across 11 villages of Umong Municipality including health care, pesticide-free agriculture, household clay stove making, dried longan, fruit wine, health fund etc.
- In 2014, ThaiHealth Foundation supported Umong Municipality in setting up citizenship curriculum to promote its model of Healthy Municipality and civic engagement to the networks of local government.

Contextual Challenges

- Citizenship could not be effectively learnt from a model, but to constantly nurture the engagement of citizen of all groups
- Social capital of Umong is not making progress since new comers, migrant worker, new business groups, have largely been out of the network municipality
- Civic engagement rely too much on particular groups of same generation (farmers, village volunteers, school educators, municipal staff) while the economic growth from industry and business have been rapidly transformed the community

Lessons Learn

- Administration- whether to prepare a consensus building plan for identifying its civic characters;
- Objectives- whether to educate citizens, seek their preferences, or grant them influence;
- Targeting- which types of stakeholder groups to include in consensus building efforts;
- Techniques- what types of participation approaches to employ; and
- Information- what types of information and dissemination processes to incorporate in consensus building activities.

Thank you...



Mrs. Usa, 75 year old active citizen of a village