

Building Partnerships between Government and Civil Society:

The Case of Paiboon Wattanasiritham and the Governmental Central Bank

The Role of ODII and AIC*

The Early Stages of Participation in Thailand

In 1991 an international NGO known as “Organizing for Development: an International Institute (ODII)” wanted to introduce a way of institutionalizing participatory processes throughout Thailand. In the belief that the country’s Fifth Plan mandated the participatory process, the Tambons were unable to do so because they had not been trained and no institutionalized mechanism for this purpose was available. ODII therefore offered to introduce and pilot-test a holistic, self-organizing process known as *Appreciation, Influence, Control* (AIC) during the implementation of one of its projects.

AIC involved “thinking and working together in a highly participatory and interactive manner throughout.” It was based on the “principle of the three sources of power: appreciation, influence, and control.” *Appreciation* involved understanding reality coupled with using the imagination in formulating a common vision. *Influence* involved the interactive search for the path toward realizing the vision. It also entailed the search for “strategies.” Meanwhile, *control* involved getting down to real action or “operating plans” that brought concrete results.

ODII had tested the AIC process in a collaborative project with the Population and Community Development Association (PDA), which was the largest NGO in Thailand, and with the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI), the country’s most prominent research institute. ODII believed that the AIC process was an effective tool in participatory development planning and that NGOs could assume the new role of facilitator as an essential feature of this planning intervention. It took about a year for the NGO Coordinating Committee on Development (NGO-CORD) to accept the idea of the facilitative role of NGOs in national planning.

Shortly thereafter, another new challenge emerged. How would this process run “on the ground,” considering that the concept of collaboration between the government and the people and the concept of public participation in decision-making and planning were new to both the government and the grassroots? To spread

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the use of AIC in the rural areas, ODII trained a small group of Thai facilitators. One of them was Khun Paiboon Wattanasiritham—President of the Foundation for Thailand Rural Reconstruction Movement (TRRM), the oldest development NGO in Thailand. Acknowledged by ODII as a key actor in spreading AIC throughout Thailand, Khun Paiboon Wattanasiritham recognized that promoting AIC was part of his job. He said,

I managed to take seven high-ranking persons with me to attend a four-day AIC workshop run by ODII in the USA. The New Development Paradigm. They in turn have advocated for or created the demand for the AIC workshops, many of which I helped organize. Other AIC-like workshops were asked for through contacts with myself and with TRRM from various quarters. Moreover, my development activities were such that they normally call for participatory processes for which AIC is well-fitted.

The first successes encouraged other NGOs and government agencies to use participatory processes. In 1993, Dr. Orapin Sopchokchai of the Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI)—in cooperation with the Population and Community Development Association (PDA) and the Community Development Department (CDD) of the Ministry of Interior—organized a project that sought ways to increase women's participation in village development planning and decision-making. The project built on previous findings of the importance of including women in the development process, from planning and decision-making through implementation.

At the end of the NESDB participatory planning process, a ground breaking Five-Year National Development Plan evolved along the lines of the new development paradigm. For the first time, the National Plan emphasized human-centered development rather than purely classical economic development. Its objectives included increasing community participation in national development, while its implementation strategy followed the integrated approach that called for cooperation between agencies and stakeholders in designing, implementing and monitoring plans and projects.

Most significantly, the citizens' rights to unite and form associations were enshrined in the 1997 Constitution under sections 45-47, which states that the people had a right to organize themselves to conserve or restore their customs, local knowledge, arts or good culture of their community and of the nation and participate in the management, maintenance, preservation, and exploitation of natural resources and the environment.

Further, the Constitution contained provisions for the institutionalization of NGO representation in all committees responsible for enacting laws related to education, health, and welfare.

Khun Paiboon added:

Now, government's relationship with civil society has been improving, albeit somewhat slowly. In fact, even the National Security Council now works closely with NGOs because they have started to realize the NGOs' potentials.

In addition, people's movements and actions at the local and regional levels have proliferated, including many networks as well as networks of networks. Also, government agencies have come to adopt people's participation as a matter of course, although the quality of such participation may not be quite satisfactory as yet.