

**“A participatory approach to environmental management and clean-up project
-In case of Samutprakan Province –“**

(Case study provided by the Thailand Environment Institute (TEI))

Outline of Thailand Environment Institute (TEI) :

- Thailand Environment Institute (TEI) is a non-profit organization, established in 1993, focusing on environmental issues in Thailand.
- By working closely with international organizations, government, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), academia, the private sector and local communities, TEI helps to formulate environmental directives and link policy with action to encourage meaningful environmental progress in Thailand.
- TEI 's themes include “ Urbanization and Environmental Problems, ” “ Environmental Governance ” , “ Business and Environment, ” “ Grassroots Activities, ” “ Natural Resource Management, ” “ Energy, Industries, and Environment, ” “ Environmental Information Center, ” etc.
- TEI receives funds from private sector, various environmental programs, international organizations, and the governments of Denmark, USA, Japan, etc. Its operation is mainly based on commissions. It maintains favorable relationship with JICA.
- To get more information about TEI, please contact the TEI web site <www.tei.or.th>.

Introduction of a project to promote environmental clean-ups and management in Samutprakan Project:

The project was carried as a joint project between TEI and EC (European Commission) for two years from 1996 to 1998. It is to transfer European clean technology to Thailand in order to control and minimize factory wastes. TEI acted as the facilitator and advisor for this project and supported the project's success by building a system to secure the participation of every stakeholder including citizens for the preparation of provincial environmental plan and the planning of environmental management. Followings are the introduction of this project focusing on people's participation.

(1) Backgrounds:

- (i) Thai economy made significant growth under the top-down type industrialization policies, but its adversity of income inequality became apparent in the early stage of the Second Five-Year Plan. Furthermore, there was the depletion of natural

resources and the rise of environmental pollution.

- (ii) In late 1970's, it became clear that a top-down project would not provide expected results, and many project executors realized the need of people's participation.
- (iii) In 1992, Thai government introduced the Environmental Act and assigned the role of environmental management to local governments (provincial governments and cities).
- (iv) Samutprakan Province had 5,356 industrial factories by 1993, and was one of the earliest industrialized provinces in Thailand. It was, however, suffering severe pollution from industrial wastes, and designated as a pollution control zone in 1993.
- (v) By 1993, TEI was well aware, through its discussions with other Thai environmental NGOs, that the insufficient involvement of citizens in environmental management was the factor blocking the implementation of environmental policies. In 1995, TEI made a research on the diffusion of environmental management responsibility to local governments using the fund provided by USAID. Based on the research result, TEI proposed that environmental management responsibility should be distributed not only to local governments but also to general public in the form of citizens' participation.
- (vi) In 1994, the talk of a project to transfer clean technology to Thailand while incorporating greater participation of people came up between TEI and EC, and the actual project started in 1996.

(2) Purpose of the project:

- (i) To minimize future factory wastes in Samutprakan Province
- (ii) To transfer clean technology from Europe for this purpose
- (iii) To promote and encourage people's participation in environmental planning and the establishment of environmental management system, so to ensure the perpetual execution of activities.

(3) Project's outcome:

- (i) TEI organized the Participatory Environmental Management Committee (PEMC) consisted of every stakeholder from governments (including both central and local) to citizens, and succeeded in maintaining people's participation opportunities in environmental management. Stakeholders were classified in 8 sectors including governments, industries, commerce, NGOs, low income households, junior high schools, colleges, and media)

- (ii) Although the project was completed in 1998, the activity itself is still ongoing due to the established system of citizen participation.
- (iii) This approach would provide a good example for other provinces and foreign countries.
- (iv) A business leader who chaired the PEMC won a senator seat in the upper house.
- (vi) As practical cases for industrial waste minimization, Bangkok Spring Industrial Co., Ltd. And T.J.C. Chemical Co. Ltd. were designated as the demonstrative factories for cleaner technology transfer.

(4) Factors of success:

- (i) Environmental pollution in Samutprakan Province was extremely severe and participants commonly shared the views of mounting problems.
- (ii) PEMC adopted an approach to publicize the project and to call for all-round participation. This approach enabled the realization of civil participatory type project. For example, in case of a clean technology project, PEMC designated the applicable industries such as automobile parts and agro-chemicals and invited relevant corporations for participation.
- (iii) Stakeholder representatives were mostly the leaders of their respective stakeholders and had a strong motivation and leadership to improve Samutprakan.
- (iv) Involving provincial governor in PEMC's activities encouraged the participation from other sectors.
- (v) By letting people make their own decisions, TEI limited its role as a facilitator and advisor.
- (vi) TEI made every effort to obtain consensus on issues, while relying less on majority opinions, and avoiding the disregard to any constructive views no matter how minor the views were.
- (vii) The Stakeholder Conference encouraged creative thinking, and was held during a weekend (including evenings of that weekend) [PEMC's monthly meetings are held during work days.]

(5) What we learned:

- (i) Before asking people to trust us, we need to trust people. (It is more important to ask people's advice than to develop forecasts with expert knowledge.)
- (ii) Everyone should adopt the attitude of learning.

(6) Tasks for the future

- (i) To power up civil organizations is to network with other organization in other provinces and countries with the same view. In this way, it becomes possible to share successful and learning experiences. This will benefit in strengthening the morality and sustainability.

(7) Impression and supplementation:

The unique characteristic of this project was to combine people's participation, by way of using multi-stakeholder approach, with the introduction of environmental conservation technology (or clean technology ?) from Europe. This is the project that contributes to the promotion and establishment of environmental conservation, as well as the changing of industrial policies, which used to focus on industrial growth only. Around the time of this project, Thailand enacted their new constitution in 1997, established the Information Disclosure Act, and promoted democratization. Currently, about 80% of national congress representatives are said to have interests in environment, and their understanding of environmental policies is on the rise. We can expect further progress in environmental issues in Thailand.

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