

จากความขัดแย้งสู่ความสามัคคี: การเรียนรู้จากประสบการณ์  
การสร้างนวัตกรรมในชุมชน\*

From Conflict to Unity: Learning from the Experience of  
Innovation Building in Communities

นพวรรณ ธรรมสิทธิ์\*\* และ ทับทิม สุขพิน\*\*\*

คณะรัฐศาสตร์และรัฐประศาสนศาสตร์ มหาวิทยาลัยราชภัฏเชียงราย  
เลขที่ 80 หมู่ที่ 9 ตำบลบ้านดู่ อำเภอเมือง จังหวัดเชียงราย 57100

Nopphawan Thammasit and Tubtim Sukpin

Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration, Chiang Rai Rajabhat  
University, No. 80, Village No. 9, Ban Du Subdistrict, Mueang District,  
Chiang Rai Province, 57100

Email: woodning@hotmail.com, tubtimsukpin@gmail.com

Received: October 29, 2024

Revised: January 31, 2025

Accepted: February 7, 2025

บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้วิเคราะห์อิทธิพลของอาสาสมัครชุมชนในการส่งเสริมการปรองดองทางสังคมในพื้นที่ชนบท โดยเน้นที่ชุมชนท่าจำปี จังหวัดพะเยา การศึกษานี้สำรวจผลกระทบของปัญหาสังคมและเศรษฐกิจ รวมถึงข้อขัดแย้งด้านทรัพยากรและความขัดแย้งระหว่างรุ่นที่มีต่อความสัมพันธ์ในชุมชน โดยชี้ให้เห็นถึงบทบาทสำคัญของนวัตกรรมที่ขับเคลื่อนโดยชุมชนในการเสริมสร้างความสามัคคี นอกจากนี้ได้นำเสนอแนวทางแก้ไขปัญหาคือการจัดการจัดสรรทรัพยากร เช่น โครงการบริหารจัดการน้ำ 'ฝายมีชีวิต' ซึ่งแสดงให้เห็นว่านวัตกรรมดังกล่าวส่งเสริมความไว้วางใจ ความรับผิดชอบร่วมกัน และความร่วมมือระหว่างกลุ่มคนในชุมชน

\* This article is a component of a research study on Social Harmony Learning through an Undertaken Innovation Study of Community Volunteers: A Case Study on Tha Champee, Muang District, Phayao Province. Research funding supported by Chiang Rai Rajabhat University in 2020

\*\* Assistant Professor; currently in the Department of Political Science, Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration.

\*\*\* Ph.D. in Public Administration; currently a Lecturer in the Department of Public Administration, Faculty of Political Science and Public Administration.

การศึกษาใช้การวิเคราะห์กรณีศึกษาเพื่อทำความเข้าใจว่า ผู้มีบทบาทในท้องถิ่นสามารถขับเคลื่อนการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางสังคมผ่านนวัตกรรมได้อย่างไร โดยเน้นถึงความสำคัญของอาสาสมัครในการส่งเสริมการพัฒนาชุมชนและการแก้ไขความขัดแย้ง ซึ่งช่วยให้เกิดการพึ่งพาตนเอง การพัฒนาทักษะ และการเข้าถึงทรัพยากรอย่างทั่วถึง ผลการศึกษาชี้ให้เห็นว่าการผสมผสานคุณค่าทางวัฒนธรรมดั้งเดิมเข้ากับแนวทางการแก้ปัญหาที่ทันสมัย สามารถส่งเสริมการปรองดองที่ยั่งยืนเชื่อมโยงช่องว่างระหว่างรุ่นและแก้ไขความไม่เสมอภาคทางสังคมและการเมือง

บทวิเคราะห์นี้นำเสนอการศึกษาด้านการเปลี่ยนแปลงทางสังคมผ่านการจัดการความขัดแย้งโดยใช้กรณีศึกษาที่แสดงวิธีการที่เป็นทางเลือกสำหรับสร้างความสามัคคีในชุมชนผ่านการผสมผสานแนวคิดด้านนวัตกรรมสังคมและการมีส่วนร่วมของชุมชน เพื่อสร้างกรอบการทำงานที่เชื่อมโยงความสัมพันธ์ระหว่างกลุ่มผู้มีส่วนได้ส่วนเสียและส่งเสริมการพัฒนาาร่วมกันของชุมชนในการแก้ไขความขัดแย้งอย่างยั่งยืนและสร้างความสามัคคีในระยะยาว ทั้งนี้แนวทางจากกรณีศึกษาสามารถนำไปปรับใช้ในบริบทอื่นได้อย่างเหมาะสม

การศึกษาสรุปว่า การพัฒนาอย่างยั่งยืนและความสามัคคีทางสังคมในระยะยาว จำเป็นต้องใช้การขับเคลื่อนที่มาจากอาสาสมัครโดยมีนวัตกรรมเป็นแกนกลาง โดยสนับสนุนให้มีการดำเนินโครงการที่ขับเคลื่อนโดยชุมชนอย่างต่อเนื่อง และการสร้างภาวะผู้นำที่ครอบคลุม เพื่อพัฒนารอบการทำงานร่วมกันอย่างมีประสิทธิภาพให้การปรองดองในท้องถิ่นได้รับการยอมรับและการเติบโตอย่างเท่าเทียม

**คำสำคัญ:** การแก้ไขข้อขัดแย้ง, การพัฒนาชุมชน, นวัตกรรมชุมชน

## Abstract

This article examines the influence of community volunteers on promoting social reconciliation in rural regions, with a particular emphasis on the Tha Champee community in Phayao Province, Thailand. The study examines the impact of socioeconomic challenges, including resource disputes and generational conflicts, on community relations, underscoring the critical role of community-driven innovations in fostering unity. It offers practical solutions to resource allocation issues, such as the "Living Weir" water management project. It demonstrates how such innovations foster trust, shared responsibility, and collaboration among community groups.

The study employs case analysis to comprehend how local actors drive social change through innovation. It emphasises the importance of volunteerism in promoting community development and resolving conflicts, as it facilitates self-reliance, skill acquisition, and inclusive access to resources. The results indicate that integrating traditional values with contemporary solutions can promote sustainable reconciliation, bridge generational gaps, and address socio-political disparities.

This analysis presents a case study of social change through conflict management, which demonstrates an alternative approach to building community cohesion by combining social innovation and community participation concepts to create a conceptual framework that connects stakeholder relationships and promotes community co-development for long-term conflict resolution and cohesion. The case study methodologies are adaptable to diverse situations.

The investigation concludes that sustainable development and long-term social harmony necessitate innovation-driven volunteer endeavours. It advocates for the ongoing support of community-led projects and the cultivation of inclusive leadership to improve collaborative frameworks, ensuring that reconciliation initiatives are firmly established in local contexts and equitable growth is promoted.

**Keywords:** Conflict resolution, Rural development, Community innovation

## 1. Introduction and Background

The article "From Conflict to Unity: Learning from the Experience of Innovation Building in Communities" examines the role of community volunteers in fostering social reconciliation in the context of a rural community, with a critical analysis of the key research question of how community volunteers can use innovative approaches to promote reconciliation and social cohesion in rural areas, focusing on a case study of Tha Champee community, Mueang District, Phayao Province, which has historically faced social and economic problems that have affected community relations. This analysis points out the importance of community innovation in addressing these challenges, focusing on community volunteers as a mechanism for driving social cohesion by increasing participation in local problem-solving and improving villagers' cooperation in community public welfare activities.

Promoting sustainable development and harmony in rural areas like Tha Champee depends on social reconciliation. The village has faced numerous socioeconomic challenges, including resource allocation disputes, intergenerational conflicts, and community governance disagreements. These issues, deeply ingrained in Northern Thailand's historical and sociopolitical context, have created divisions that affect community cohesion. Innovation is crucial for fostering reconciliation and introducing new approaches to solving problems in local communities<sup>1</sup>. The Tha Champee, an upstream community involved in distributing water resources to other communities, is a prime example of this. Water management is driven by locals, and this trait was later employed to resolve disputes over water resource allocation<sup>2</sup>. This effort stemmed from creating the "Living Weir" project<sup>3</sup>, which allows all community members to participate in administration. The primary

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *“What We Learn from the Process of Creating Sustainable Human Development Through Social Innovation Platform in the Deep South - Thailand Social Innovation Platform,”* 2019, [www.thailandsocialinnovationplatform.org/socialinnovationplatforminthedeepsouth](http://www.thailandsocialinnovationplatform.org/socialinnovationplatforminthedeepsouth), accessed October 10, 2024.

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), *“Gorka Espiau and the learning from the Basque Country on conflict resolution - Thailand Social Innovation Platform,”* 2019, [www.thailandsocialinnovationplatform.org/gorka-espiau-basque](http://www.thailandsocialinnovationplatform.org/gorka-espiau-basque), accessed October 10, 2024.

<sup>3</sup> Pbs Thai, *“Thailand’s agenda - Learn to build a living dam | Thai PBS Thai PBS program,”* 2016, [www.thaipbs.or.th/program/Varathailand/episodes/37330](http://www.thaipbs.or.th/program/Varathailand/episodes/37330), accessed October 10, 2024.

condition is to bring together people from various backgrounds to collaborate on water resource management and administration projects to distribute and ensure that all residents in the area receive such water allocations wholly and equitably. At the same time, it fosters a sense of belonging, establishes responsibility, and encourages disparate groups in the community to collaborate for the common good through community volunteering<sup>4</sup>. This community exemplifies a rural location in Northern Thailand that constantly faces resource restrictions and social issues. This study aims to analyse the success of innovation in the community and identify volunteers' strategic role in fostering long-term change within the community's sociocultural and economic context. The goal is to propose a comprehensive analytical framework for analysing innovation's success and volunteers' role in the community.

At the same time, this essay seeks to clarify the academic context's understanding of the role of innovation as a tool for peacebuilding in conflict-affected areas by giving practical principles that can be used to foster long-term community cohesiveness and progress. The analysis will lead to an understanding that community-driven innovation can be an essential tool for creating social change, which is consistent with the concept of social change, which emphasises the role of individuals and community groups in driving change, and which is linked to conflict resolution theory, which emphasises creating understanding and cooperation among different stakeholder groups. In such a scenario, it is clear that long-term social reconciliation necessitates the involvement of volunteers and the promotion of practical innovation, both of which contribute to dispute resolution and the formation of genuine community togetherness.

## **2. Investigation Context and Significance**

### **2.1 Social Reconciliation and Innovation in the Tha Champee Community Phayao Province**

This article extends a qualitative study conducted in the Tha Champee community of Phayao province to assess creativity in promoting communal harmony. In-depth interviews, observations, and document analysis were utilized

---

<sup>4</sup> Thaireform, “‘Living dam’ when the community rises up to manage itself, solve flooding, and store water for use during the dry season,” 2016, [www.isranews.org/content-page/item/46159-ecod13.html](http://www.isranews.org/content-page/item/46159-ecod13.html), accessed October 10, 2024.

to gather data, and thematic content evaluation was used to find key linkages. The framework is based on social reconciliation and innovation that reflects value creation and cooperation in rural communities and emphasizes the importance of joint initiatives, traditional values, and social transformation. It promotes long-term methods and policy approaches to meet the needs of local, academic, and national communities. This examines the aspect of advancing cohesion in rural communities in Thailand by presenting the social situation in the North, especially the relationship between communities and villagers, the struggle between traditional values and new values, the interaction between the old and new generations, and the relationship between villagers and local administrative organisations.

In addition, the economic and social issues that arise in rural communities, in general, are also factors that produce disagreements over resource rivalry and conflicts in local resource allocation, leading to tensions in the interaction between individuals living in the same community and region. This study demonstrates the relevance of community innovation, which may foster unity and lessen the distance between local authorities and villagers who are members of the community. Community volunteers ensure resource access in this setting. This inquiry will extensively analyse the backdrop of initiatives and activities in rural communities in the North of Thailand. For instance, the Tha Champee community includes a project based on Buddhist activities<sup>56</sup> to illustrate how religious leaders may promote social responsibility and solidarity, which is why the community is more crucial.

### **2.1.1 The Importance of Building Social Reconciliation in the Community**

Key to the long-term unity of rural communities and the attainment of sustainable development objectives In the Tha Champee community of Phayao Province, it was determined that the establishment of social harmony is not only necessary but also essential in order to prevent conflicts from escalating into

---

<sup>5</sup> Wongphet Kongjan, “The Model of Strengthening the Stability of the Family by Buddhist Integration,” *Journal of MCU Peace Studies* 4, Special 1 (May 2016): 257-269.

<sup>6</sup> Arunee Sujetnan, “Strengthening the Kalyanamitra Community with Buddhist Principles,” *Dhammathara* 8, No.2 (July - December 2022): 93-131, <https://so01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/dhammadhara/article/view/254180>, accessed September 1, 2024.

broader social divisions.<sup>7</sup> This was the case. Building mutual understanding and resolving underlying tensions are critical components of more effective cooperation, particularly in promoting economic development projects, public health initiatives, and environmental conservation in the community. Nevertheless, the capacity of innovation has facilitated the unification of various community stakeholders, thereby cultivating a sense of shared success and responsibility. The successful expansion of community-initiated projects to all relevant parties has been achieved by adapting modern tools to traditional methods. The Tha Champee community has developed innovations that can bridge the gap between various groups by fostering cooperation in the pursuit of sustainable agricultural practices. This includes establishing vocational support projects that simultaneously strengthen the social structure of the rural community and address economic needs.

### 2.1.2 The Role of Innovation in the Reconciliation Process

In the Tha Champee community, innovation is essential for addressing community issues. These innovations promote collaboration and collaborative decision-making, alleviating resource allocation tensions such as community-driven water management systems, agricultural cooperatives, and digital platforms for communication to reconcile the divides between various groups, including older generations and newer members.<sup>8</sup> “The living weir” is a water management innovation that is community-driven and important for resolving water allocation issues.<sup>9</sup> It is also a tool for promoting trust among groups of villagers who have conflicts over water resources. The living weir principle fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility among all members who collaborated in its construction. The Tha Champee community previously experienced disputes regarding unequal water allocation. However, the community comprehended and constructed the living weir

---

<sup>7</sup> United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): Nigeria, “*Fostering Community Reconciliation and Reintegration Through Livelihood Opportunities*,” 2023, [www.undp.org/nigeria/stories/fostering-community-reconciliation-and-reintegration-through-livelihood-opportunities](http://www.undp.org/nigeria/stories/fostering-community-reconciliation-and-reintegration-through-livelihood-opportunities), accessed August 18, 2024.

<sup>8</sup> Giovany Cajaiba-Santana, “Social innovation: Moving the field forward. A conceptual framework,” *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, No.82 (July 2013): 42–51, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2013.05.008>, accessed October 18, 2024.

<sup>9</sup> Eichler, G., & Schwarz, E., “What Sustainable Development Goals Do Social Innovations Address? A Systematic Review and Content Analysis of Social Innovation Literature,” *Sustainability* 11, No.2 (January 2019): 522, <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11020522>, accessed August 18, 2024.

through volunteer activities to fortify relationships among villagers in various activities, including environmental cleanup and ecosystem enhancement.

Unique concepts and experiences are crucial practical solutions to community issues to which varied origins contribute. This sense of belonging fosters solidarity and guarantees that each volunteer feels indispensable and appreciated within the community. In the Tha Champee, community participation is designed to resolve immediate demands and establish the foundation for long-term social cohesion and collective resilience.

### **2.1.3 The Context of the Tha Champee Community, Phayao Province**

The Tha Champee, a community in Phayao Province, features cultural variety and demographic variances based on employment and generational viewpoint. The hamlet's population mainly comprises people who work in agriculture for subsistence, local handicrafts, and small-scale trade. Furthermore, the community experiences internal obstacles and concerns such as land use disputes, water shortages, and economic insecurity, all contributing to stress in the group's social life. Furthermore, external factors have exacerbated the situation, particularly in agriculture, where production has decreased due to climate change and volatile market conditions, while government policies to support the agricultural sector have changed in response to the political situation, putting continuous strain on the community's livelihood and likely to worsen.

Under such stressful conditions, Tha Champee villagers discovered social innovations through collaborative learning with external organisations and local leaders. They used their knowledge to experiment with and solve various community problems. The Tha Champee community recognises water management's importance and affects many groups and villages. Introducing methods and models emphasising resource sharing, environmental sustainability, and social integration has resulted in intergenerational communication, particularly the transfer of traditional farming methods and handicraft skills from the elderly to the younger generation. Meanwhile, the younger generation has introduced modern technologies and shared information with community leaders and elders, making it easier for them to access and comprehend new developments such as water-saving irrigation systems and online market platforms.

A notable innovation is establishing a community-based resource management committee to supervise utilising communal properties and water

sources. By ensuring a sense of equity and transparency and the equitable distribution of resources, this group, comprised of representatives from various social and economic backgrounds, enhances the community's economic stability and attenuates conflict.

#### **2.1.4 The Interaction Between Community Participants and Villagers**

The interactions in the community of Tha Champee have shown that the connections between local agencies, religious leaders, villagers, and external stakeholders are the backbone of community-driven innovation projects. These connections, which have led to cooperation in carrying out activities that lead to reconciliation, are instrumental in the success of projects such as the Living Weir with community volunteers under the supervision of community leaders, such as the village headman, who mediate among community members under the understanding of the principles of consensus.

The Tha Champee community's interactions with stakeholders such as local government agencies, religious leaders, villagers, and external organisations are thought to have deep and complex foundations of relationships that reflect the formation of cooperation for reconciliation. Still, there may also be divisions if different opinions exist. Local leaders spearhead encouraging collaboration via meaningful community forums to examine forms and methods of practice that encourage long-term reconciliation. At the same time, religious leaders in the community contribute spirituality and moral practices that raise villagers' awareness via various programs and innovations, such as community learning centres and environmental conservation initiatives. These accomplishments demonstrate the village's ability to solve local problems and effectively use cooperation in the creation of innovation-driven activities in the Tha Champee community, which has received assistance from external organisations such as NGOs and universities both in and out of the area, who have come to promote and support such social innovation initiatives.

#### **2.2 The Role of Community Volunteers in Positive Social Change**

'Community volunteers' are considered to play an essential role in promoting positive social development, especially in this community, where it was discovered that the ability to promote the community in terms of cooperation and resource mobilisation for public benefit includes the participation of volunteers who not only participate in activities but also become catalysts for creating activities for

various groups in the community to come together to solve problems. This analysis section will explain how volunteer participation and creativity contribute to long-term development and social conflict resolution.

### **2.2.1 The Importance of Innovation in Social Reconciliation**

In the Tha Champee, community volunteers have implemented innovative actions for practical and social needs, including water management and relationship cultivation. The Living Weir Project is an important example that inspires the community to drive various environmental conservation and preservation activities. This innovation meets practical needs and creates a relationship system that allows villagers to participate in the comprehensive management of the community's natural resources. The volunteer system is an important platform for sharing labour, which results in relationships between people at the same level because they may have been separated by economic or social status before. This creation promotes a sense of ownership and responsibility for community members to participate in long-term activities continuously under the same understanding. Even if there are problems, they can use the principles of compromise and consensus, eventually reducing conflicts. According to the theoretical framework linking innovation to social reconciliation, which is based on the concepts of social capital and community resilience, innovations in the Tha Champee community, such as the Living Weir Project, have the potential to develop new compatible both practical and social needs while promoting cooperation in comprehensive natural resource management.

### **2.2.2 Collaboration Between Villagers and Volunteer Groups**

One of the most apparent aspects of the relationship between villagers and volunteer groups intending to upgrade the community is the promotion of mutual respect and trust. Here, volunteers act as mediators between villagers and external organisations, playing an essential role in managing various development projects. The primary duty of volunteers is to coordinate the community, mobilise resources, and effectively communicate community benefits to partners based on a proper understanding of local traditions, social dynamics, and needs. This collaborative relationship is seen in projects related to environmental problem management, such as sustainable water management, where volunteers play a crucial role in promoting community participation in decision-making.

The education and healthcare projects of the Tha Champee community were collaborated by government agencies and NGOs to provide education and healthcare to local villagers. Volunteer groups organize workshops with health experts to communicate with villagers, giving them new health knowledge to supplement traditional treatment methods. The cooperation between villagers and volunteer groups solves complex problems through mutual respect. Long-term relationships can enhance the community's sustainable development and empower it to a solid local foundation.

### **2.2.3 Innovation-Driven Social Reconciliation**

Volunteers play an important role in moderating and resolving conflicts within communities because of their adaptability to problem-solving approaches, cultural and social relevance, and the inclusion and welcoming of villagers. Meanwhile, villagers and volunteers have worked together to reduce resource competition while increasing access equality. This approach integrates conventional community values with modern sustainability principles and fair distribution. Volunteers work with villagers to reduce the intensity of conflicts in the community by combining modern management techniques with traditional conflict resolution mechanisms. Community innovations motivate the approach by transforming problems into mutual benefit and cooperation opportunities.

### **2.2.4 Challenges and Adaptations in Volunteer Work**

The volunteer process in Tha Champee encounters significant difficulties, including previous challenges such as resistance from the old power structure, doubts about volunteers' activities, and limited and insufficient resources, which have caused the process to stall. Volunteers implemented a participatory decision-making approach and transparency and encouraged shared community ownership. They implemented a participatory decision-making process focusing on transparency and community ownership and urged local administrators to recognize compromise for increased cooperation.

### **2.2.5 The Long-Term Impact of Volunteerism on Social Reconciliation**

Volunteer work impacts communities in the long term, particularly in unity and conflict resolution. Volunteers play a role in developing new standards of cooperation to overcome and resolve conflicts, particularly immediate problems affecting villagers' livelihoods in the community. The relationship skills developed through volunteer work over time have long-term effects on villagers, encouraging

them to play an active role in managing their own community development. This is exemplified by the project's development of a sustainable water management system and the increased agricultural productivity, a direct result of improved cooperation with villagers through the community volunteer system.

### **2.2.6 Volunteerism as a Model for Broader Social Change**

Volunteering in the Tha Champee community fosters social reconciliation and demonstrates a commitment to local creativity and development. Volunteers transform conflict into opportunities for unity and cooperative growth. Simultaneously, they serve as change agents, encouraging personal empowerment and public service. After assessing the potential of the innovation, the Tha Champee Community Living Weir project found that the ecosystem is being restored, increasing the biodiversity of animals and plants, storing and maintaining water in the canal, and ensuring year-round availability. Economic and social effects include increased revenue from better-quality agricultural goods and community involvement in constructing and maintaining the weir, fostering cooperation among people from various areas. The involvement of volunteers in this type of process creates a framework for conflict resolution and long-term unity in rural communities. This has become a powerful motivator for empowering local stakeholders and combining traditional practices with modern problem-solving techniques to achieve more effective long-term social change.

## **3. Social and Economic Context of the Local Community**

### **3.1 Potential in Natural Resource Management**

A significant aspect of natural resource management in rural communities is preserving physical conservation for the most extended duration. In this instance, the Tha Champee community's identity and livelihood are founded on water resources, forests, and agricultural land. The abundance of resources will also indicate unity and conflict within the community. Conflict among villagers who compete to use scarce resources in the community will likely arise. The potential for natural resource management in rural communities will be considered in the following context.

#### **3.1.1 Community's Resources: Water, Forests, and Agricultural Land**

The community considers water to be its most important resource. The area is home to agricultural livelihoods and consumption and significant

water storage areas for the province. It has since become an important local tourist attraction, attracting visitors, generating income, and helping to improve the economic status of locals and villagers. However, being an important water source for the community has created challenges in a variety of situations, such as competition for access to water sources during the dry season, fisheries exploitation, and water storage for agricultural use, all of which are sensitive issues that can easily lead to conflicts in communities with main rivers flowing through and used as a source of consumption. Nevertheless, the Tha Champee community has demonstrated its ability to manage or face challenges in maintaining a delicate balance in resource use by solving problems at the source through community innovation in water resource management, with the assistance of village volunteers who came to help build living dams to see the benefits and importance of water management in the community. The community places a high value on agricultural land management because the area's yield depends on available water. As a result, modern farming practices have dramatically altered the traditional agricultural landscape. The community's current challenge is balancing modern chemical use and the annual increase in agricultural use.

### **3.1.2 Community Role in Managing Natural Resources: Formation of Activity Groups and Volunteer Involvement**

One important mechanism for developing effective strategies for community resource management to achieve proactive action is the establishment of local resource management groups. These groups consist of village elders, farmers and young community members who play important roles in the local area, as well as cooperation between villagers and external organisations that support organising various activities in the community. The integration of these groups has led to the more accessible establishment of a community volunteer system, especially in integrating groups to create activities for local development and solve challenging problems related to natural resource management in the community. In addition, the integration of cooperation with government organisations and external educational institutions that provide technical assistance, funding, and personnel has led to the enhancement of the potential of the volunteer system in terms of creating a sense of shared responsibility. The volunteer system has gone beyond labour with the condition of unpaid work; instead, it sacrifices physical and mental

strength to perform public welfare activities, which is considered to promote long-term relationships. Important examples of related volunteer activities include (1) providing knowledge to villagers in the community about sustainable agriculture, (2) campaigning to protect watershed forests, (3) establishing village volunteer groups to patrol and prevent illegal activities in watershed forests, and (4) organize various community activities that combine traditional customs and cultures with new ways of life, which should be consistent and carried out together.

### **3.2 Social Innovation Creation: A Case Study of the "Living Weir"**

In the "Living Weir" task in the Tha Champee community, volunteers collaborated with community elders and younger generations to establish a sustainable water management system that maintained traditional practices. The Living Weir, also referred to as "*Faai Mee Chee Vit*" in Thai, was developed to enhance water conservation and supply, particularly during dry seasons, by combining traditional and modern techniques. In the past, weirs (or small dams) were built in rural Thailand to regulate water flow for agricultural purposes and daily use. Nevertheless, these methods necessitated modernisation for population growth, agricultural changes, and environmental shifts.

#### **3.2.1 The Role of the Living Weir as an Innovation**

Tha Champee's 'Living Weir' is an innovative initiative combining traditional and modern water management approaches for consumption and agriculture. The construction of this living weir is consistent with the preservation of local traditions related to the construction of water storage using traditional wisdom while supporting contemporary environmental needs through joint discussions between local villagers of all groups with different occupations and ages to manage water in the community.<sup>10</sup> Using volunteers to bring villagers from different villages together is one way to bridge the gap, allowing people in each community to communicate more efficiently. At the same time, it is a method of passing down knowledge between generations, combining the traditional wisdom of the older generation of villagers with the modern ideas or techniques of the younger generation, who have been educated and brought together to manage and use in this activity. Simultaneously, environmentally friendly materials and improved

---

<sup>10</sup> Tawin Samayayen et al., "The Study and Planning to Build the Living Weir with the Process of Participation in Civil Society," *Journal of Educational Innovation and Research* 2, No.8 (June 2024): 703–717, <https://doi.org/10.14456/jeir.2024.44>, accessed September 28, 2024.

water storage techniques are combined to create a modern weir based on traditional wisdom.

### **3.2.2 The Impact of the Living Weir on Community Relationships**

The Living Weir task is a prime example of how social innovation can catalyse reconciliation and unity in rural communities. The project addresses environmental and social challenges and significantly improves the local ecosystem.

1) Solidarity and cooperation through the Living Weir Project: It is clear that the villagers' relationships within the community have changed due to the development of social innovation in water resource management. The Living Weir allows residents with diverse backgrounds to collaborate in managing the limited natural resources. In this sense, eliciting cooperation from traditional and modern people is difficult. Similarly, environmental changes and rising agricultural and household demand for limited water use are being addressed. As a result, the Living Weir has emerged as an essential mechanism for resolving the problem of water scarcity through the cooperative exchange of knowledge and skills among villagers, both young and old, resulting in a new type of relationship that compromises, listens to opinions, and shares responsibility for the management of local resources. Integrating traditional wisdom and modern approaches has resulted in more efficient cooperation and additional community activities.

2) Conflict Resolution through Social Innovation: The Tha Champee community's "Living Weir" is part of a voluntary process in which members communicate with one another to address problems via official and informal agreements and discussions. People from both upstream and downstream get together to discuss and solve issues. The Living Weir project implements this participatory strategy by agreeing on equal opportunity for resources, transparency, and mutual understanding. This physical instrument is a potent symbol of communal solidarity since it solves environmental and social concerns. When comparing case studies from different communities to the Tha Champi community, it was discovered that essential elements vary depending on the group's setting in many areas. For example, the Mühlviertel community in Austria adopted a water management system similar to the Tha Champi community. Still, it emphasized involvement by forming a community council of members from all regional groups. The other sample is the Phthiotis community in Greece, which stressed discussion and forums to foster stakeholder collaboration and

understanding in resolving numerous issues.<sup>11</sup> However, the contrasts in these groups' techniques indicate the Tha Champi community's unique strategy of systematically integrating participation and negotiation to settle problems and establish community sustainability in another aspect.

#### **4. From Conflict to Unity: Learning Processes and Building New Relationships**

This section examines how community members can gain equal access to resources and influence decision-making processes through active participation and how village participation fosters equality through volunteerism, which empowers and pressures stakeholders to participate in community-led activities.

##### **4.1 Building Relationships Under Equality**

One of the most important aspects of promoting social cohesion is ensuring that community members have equitable access to resources. Volunteers are essential as facilitators and coordinators, ensuring that resources are allocated fairly and transparently and making everyone feel valued and respected. Volunteering has become necessary. Individuals volunteer, which breaks down the social hierarchy that permanently restricts access to resources for certain groups of people. In other words, vertical relationships have been transformed into horizontal relationships where everyone is equal. Furthermore, open dialogue and promoting diverse perspectives in decision-making have significantly improved the community's problem-solving abilities. As a result, villagers have learnt to adapt to differing viewpoints to reach a joint decision based on the principle of social consensus.

##### **4.2 Learning Self-Reliance**

Community-driven equality relationships are vital to self-sufficiency through social innovation collaboration. The Living Weir Project is an exemplar of this. It has evolved into a model for learning about water resource management and a platform for developing mutual understanding and exchanging skills in water care, water sources, and weir maintenance. The ability to exchange information is helpful and necessary for the project's long-term success.

---

<sup>11</sup> Georgios, C., & Barrai, H., "Social innovation in rural governance: A comparative case study across the marginalised rural EU," *Journal of Rural Studies*, No.99 (April 2023): 193-203, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.06.004>, accessed December 29, 2024.

### 4.3 Strengthening Networks for Community Development

The Tha Champee community discovered that integrating volunteers from each village community within the same region, whether sub-district, district or even province, was a significant benefit in developing volunteer networks to foster community cooperation. These networks facilitate combining more comprehensive activities under community coordination, providing a foundation for long-term sustainable cooperation. They will also encourage communication with stakeholders, residents in the same region, or external agencies involved in developing and resolving local issues. Establishing a volunteer-based community development network will lead to a more robust social structure within the community.

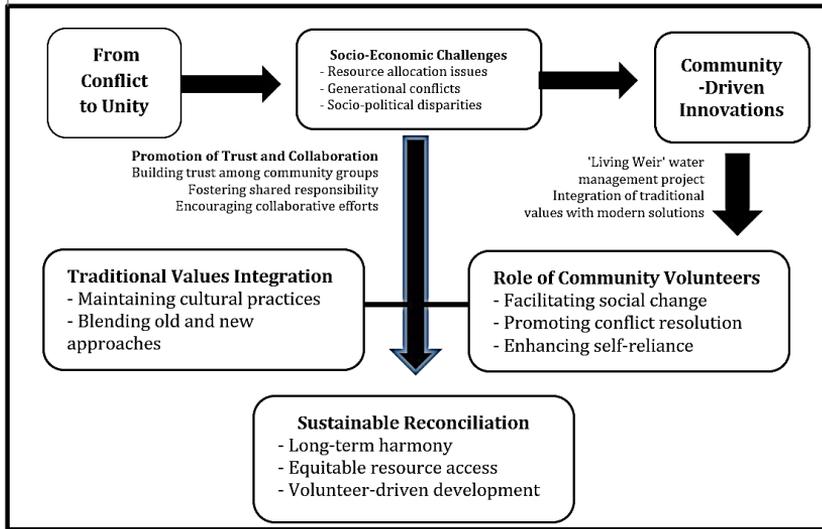
## 5. The Successes and Challenges of Community Innovation

This investigation addresses complicated difficulties, particularly in sustainable development and peacebuilding, by incorporating community innovation. The Tha Champee community's story highlights the strengthened connections among varied stakeholders via consultation and creating natural and nominated community leadership, ultimately empowering the community in conflict resolution. These processes are consistent with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of reducing inequality (Goal 10)<sup>12</sup>, peacebuilding, justice, and strong institutions (Goal 16)<sup>13</sup> and utilising the framework from conflict to solidarity, which demonstrates an integrated approach that can be applied in other communities with similar contexts and problems, linking community innovation to address resource imbalances and power management with the participation of people at all levels. Furthermore, this context can be used to better understand the role of social innovation in promoting intergenerational cohesion as well as the integration of traditional methods and modern technologies, all while empowering communities to be agents of social change. The study's implications will be applied to various challenges at the local and worldwide levels concerning sustainable development and peacebuilding.

---

<sup>12</sup> United Nations, “Reduce inequality within and among countries - United Nations Sustainable Development,” 2023, [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/?utm](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/?utm), accessed December 29, 2024.

<sup>13</sup> United Nations, “Peace, justice and strong institutions - United Nations Sustainable Development,” 2023, [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/?utm](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/?utm), accessed December 29, 2024.



Picture 1 The diagram highlights how innovation-driven volunteerism is central to resolving conflicts and achieving sustainable community development.

Source: Noppawan Thammasit, 2024.

The diagram presents the analysis framework, “From Conflict to Unity,” beginning with exploring how innovation can facilitate social reconciliation in rural communities such as Tha Champee. The results reveal that innovation promotes reconciliation, strengthens intergenerational ties, and promotes sustainable development. The conclusion emphasizes the vital role of community-driven initiatives in achieving sustainable social cohesion, empowering volunteers, and integrating traditional and modern methods. The flow of ideas is represented by arrows connecting each element, showing how each step contributes to a deeper understanding of how communities can transform conflict into unity through creative approaches.

### 5.1 Successes in Community Development

Developing leadership abilities among community members is one of the most remarkable results of community-driven innovation in the Tha Champee community. The "Living Weir" initiative has brought together community members of all ages and backgrounds to manage community resources more effectively

and sustainably through a social innovation that promotes a sense of shared ownership and responsibility. Development in such a framework has substantially contributed to creating a culture of self-reliance, allowing communities to manage their own needs better and depend less on external aid. It has also established community networks to coordinate and collaborate with other groups to encourage information exchange, improve skills, and integrate existing resources to the greatest extent possible.

## **5.2 Challenges Facing the Community**

Although these accomplishments have been achieved, the process of fostering community innovation is characterised by numerous obstacles. Ideological conflict is one of the most critical challenges when different groups within the community hold divergent views on development. Older generations may resist change in countless rural regions and interpret modern innovations as endangering their traditional lifestyle. Misunderstandings and a lack of cooperation may result from this resistance within the community. Additionally, certain community members do not possess the necessary skills or resources to participate fully in innovative projects, which can result in unequal participation and reinforce long-standing power dynamics. Frequently, these challenges are exacerbated by social and economic factors, such as the dominance of local elites or external economic pressures, which complicate gaining widespread acceptance and support for community inventions.

## **5.3 Overcoming Challenges Through Interaction and Collaboration**

Community volunteers create a platform for developing skills that enable people to learn how to interact with other sectors engaged in local development, such as seeking financing and resources. These approaches have improved communities' ability to manage resources efficiently and actively engage in sustainable development activities or projects. At the same time, volunteers play an essential role in increasing relationships between diverse groups of individuals in the community, which aids in dispute resolution and promotes better understanding among community members. Regular open meetings and debates are a key technique for addressing community issues and their varied aspects and dimensions in their local locations.

## **6. Conclusion and Recommendations**

This section's conclusions are derived from examining social reconciliation through community innovation and providing suggestions for future practices. By concentrating on the case analysis of social innovation in the community, the study reinforces the critical role of community volunteers in establishing lasting social harmony and bridging divides. The volunteers act as catalysts for change, spearheading innovative initiatives that stimulate diverse community groups and resolve conflicts.

### **6.1 Conclusions from the Study**

One of the most significant discoveries of this analysis is the transformative transition from conflict to unity that can be accomplished through community-driven social innovation. The "Living Weir" is a prime example of how the community in the community effectively managed natural resources and strengthened social ties under the guidance of local volunteers. Community volunteers have been stressed as a component in achieving reconciliation and acting as mediators in discussions and facilitation between villages and authorities at different levels in complicated social dynamics. The community has evolved from a situation in which people were divided into groups based on competition for resources and different perspectives on development to one in which community volunteers reflect members' collective decision-making under equality, which is an essential foundation for developing a more cohesive and cooperative social structure based on the needs of the community itself.

### **6.2 Recommendations for Collaboration**

This study offers suggestions for encouraging additional innovation and collaboration within the community. The implication is that community leaders and volunteers should persist in cultivating an accessible where all members have equal access to resources and decision-making processes. Another factor is that shared leadership naturally emerges from participation in joint activities and the collaboration framework between local leaders and volunteers in accomplishing initiatives that are by community needs and objectives. This participative approach guarantees that social innovation is rooted in local realities and promotes long-term sustainability. In addition, it is imperative to foster ongoing communication among various social groups and generations within the community, as this will facilitate comprehension and avert disputes in the future.

### **6.3 Building on the Success of Innovation for Reconciliation**

The success of projects such as the "Living Weir" should be leveraged to expand collaborative frameworks that involve external partners, such as NGOs and government agencies, while maintaining the community at the centre of decision-making in future social innovation campaigns. Communities could be encouraged to develop innovations that combine traditional traditions with new technologies to solve local concerns better and effectively. It is critical in this process to evaluate the context of volunteers in relation to the community's cultural and social contexts, as well as to facilitate and communicate with diverse stakeholders. To maintain this effort, communities should establish long-term partnerships offering monetary support and technical expertise for future innovation projects.

### **6.4 Long-Term Support for Community-Driven Initiatives**

The study underscores the significance of ongoing support for community-driven initiatives as potent instruments for resolving social conflicts and fostering sustainable development. Government agencies and non-governmental organisation (NGOs) are vital in distributing resources and educating community people to strengthen and improve the potential of local volunteers and leaders. By supporting these local initiatives, stakeholders can guarantee that rural communities such as the Tha Champee community continue to thrive and remain resilient in the face of social and environmental challenges.

### **6.5 New Pathways for Community-Driven Sustainability and Conflict Resolution**

To contribute to the current debate on community-driven innovation, future research should explore new perspectives, such as using digital technology to promote community participation in rural areas, community-based renewable energy development for sustainability, and incorporating cultural diversity to resolve conflicts. Furthermore, implementing contemporary ideas such as the Circular Economy and Social Innovation Labs can help increase the value of local resources. At the same time, forming cross-area collaboration networks within and outside the community will aid in exchanging best practices between communities. However, enhancing the role of youth as leaders of long-term change via creative engagement would promote change by allowing the next generation's creative potential to integrate and interact more effectively with the community's original members.

## Bibliography

- Arunee Sujetnan. "Strengthening the Kalyanamitra Community with Buddhist Principles." *Dhammathara* 8, No.2 (July - December 2022): 93-131. <https://so01.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/dhammadhara/article/view/254180>. accessed September 1, 2024.
- Eichler, G., & Schwarz, E. "What Sustainable Development Goals Do Social Innovations Address? A Systematic Review and Content Analysis of Social Innovation Literature." *Sustainability* 11, No.2 (January 2019): 522. <https://doi.org/10.3390/su11020522>. accessed August 18, 2024.
- Georgios, C., & Barraí, H. "Social innovation in rural governance: A comparative case study across the marginalised rural EU." *Journal of Rural Studies*, No.99 (April 2023): 193-203. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrurstud.2021.06.004>. accessed December 29, 2024.
- Giovanly Cajaiba-Santana. "Social innovation: Moving the field forward. A conceptual framework." *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, No.82 (July 2013): 42–51. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.techfore.2013.05.008>. accessed October 18, 2024.
- Kongjan, Wongphet. "The Model of Strengthening the Stability of the Family by Buddhist Integration." *Journal of MCU Peace Studies* 4, Special 1, (May 2016): 257-269.
- Pbs Thai. "Thailand's agenda - Learn to build a living dam | Thai PBS Thai PBS program." 2016. [www.thaipbs.or.th/program/Varathailand/episodes/37330](http://www.thaipbs.or.th/program/Varathailand/episodes/37330). accessed October 10, 2024.
- Somyayen, Tawin, Bunlert Wongpho, Vinai Veeravatnanond, and Thasanapat Panprom. "The study and planning to build the living weir with the process of participation civil society." *Journal of Educational Innovation and Research* 8, no. 2 (June 30, 2024): 703–717. <https://so03.tci-thaijo.org/index.php/jeir/article/view/264618>. accessed September 28, 2024.

- Thaireform. “‘Living dam’ when the community rises up to manage itself, solve flooding, and store water for use during the dry season.” 2016. [www.isranews.org/content-page/item/46159-ecod13.html](http://www.isranews.org/content-page/item/46159-ecod13.html). accessed October 10, 2024.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). “*Gorka Espiau and the learning from the Basque Country on conflict resolution - Thailand Social Innovation Platform.*” 2019. [www.thailandsocialinnovationplatform.org/gorka-espiau-basque](http://www.thailandsocialinnovationplatform.org/gorka-espiau-basque). accessed October 10, 2024.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). “*What We Learn from the Process of Creating Sustainable Human Development Through Social Innovation Platform in the Deep South - Thailand Social Innovation Platform.*” 2019. [www.thailandsocialinnovationplatform.org/socialinnovationplatforminthedeep-south](http://www.thailandsocialinnovationplatform.org/socialinnovationplatforminthedeep-south). accessed October 10, 2024.
- United Nations Development Programme (UNDP): Nigeria. “*Fostering Community Reconciliation and Reintegration Through Livelihood Opportunities.*” 2023. [www.undp.org/nigeria/stories/fostering-community-reconciliation-and-reintegration-through-livelihood-opportunities](http://www.undp.org/nigeria/stories/fostering-community-reconciliation-and-reintegration-through-livelihood-opportunities). accessed August 18, 2024.
- United Nations. “*Peace, justice and strong institutions - United Nations Sustainable Development.*” 2023. [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/?utm](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/peace-justice/?utm). accessed December 29, 2024.
- United Nations. “*Reduce inequality within and among countries - United Nations Sustainable Development.*” 2023. [www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/?utm](http://www.un.org/sustainabledevelopment/inequality/?utm). accessed December 29, 2024.