

## Report on Participation in Field Research in Thailand

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### **Between Sufficiency and Achieving SDG's: Lesson from Thailand**

Visiting Bangkok, Thailand, was like visiting my home country, Indonesia. With all complexities and adversities, Thailand stands at the front row for striving Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) amongst South East Asia (SEA) countries. It was compelling to learn about the idea of sufficiency economy, which was initially proposed by their preceding King Bhumibol. Personally, I was astonished to learn about many things during our trip in Thailand; their contribution to achieving SDGs, their strategies on promoting rural citizens and empowering social enterprises, and the precious historical value that was built over hundreds of years.

Our group might be one of the luckiest ones since we had a chance to visit UNESCAP (United Nations of Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific). Before we enjoyed a lecture session there, we started a roundtable discussion on SDGs with students from Thammasat University. It was enlightening for all participants to share our knowledge and insights on what has happened in our home countries and the current situation on SDGs. Having introduced in 2017, the discussion inferred that current achievement remained moderate in terms of implementing best practices of SDGs by the citizen, as well as institutions. The fact that some countries are still challenged by severe issues such as illegal labor, awareness of the importance of a healthy environment, poverty-reduction, and an equal right to access education. Later on, we enjoyed a discussion with Ms. Mia Mikic, the Director of UNESCAP, who shed light on what methods they have applied to accelerate the results. Nowadays, the government, as the rule maker, should not overemphasize economic goals and neglect environmental sustainability.

To achieve sustainability means to understand what people consumed and how many they spend. The exponential growth in using technology through many activities has affected the way of spending. The very next day, I had an opportunity to meet a representative from the Bank of Thailand to converse about the digitalization of the banking industry. I argue that it is now a general case in any country in the world to embrace e-money and other forms of digital currency. Nonetheless, the financial literacy rate of society remains an obstacle to overcome. As an institution that is responsible for money and economic stability, the Bank of Thailand strives to succeed in both digitalization and educating the citizen to that effect.

Another captivating lecture session was delivered by Assoc. Prof. Isriya N. Bunyasiri. She presented to us about the concept of sufficiency economy. As I mentioned earlier, the idea was one of the visions of King Bhumibol. The philosophy behind the design is straightforward: to attain our goals without hurting other parties. It stands on three pillars: a way of thinking, a way of doing, and a way of living. To reach sufficiency, an individual should righteously consider if something is a need or merely a desire and to know when to stop. It is also salient to understand what we are doing, being sensitive to our surroundings. And lastly, one should build protection against shocks, we are advised to be prudent and perform self-immunity.

This field research also provided beneficial chances to meet one of the successful alumnae of the EA Program. We met Nat, who is currently an active politician in his hometown and inspiring social-entrepreneur. Upon completing his study at Kyoto University, he was encouraged to develop and contribute to wider society through what he obtained. He fights against inequality, which he thinks should be eradicated by merely providing anyone access to information and voice. His passion for social business led him to collaborate with other groups to broaden the scope. For me, it is a fascinating idea as I research entrepreneurship in an emerging market. I gained practical knowledge from Nat as an expert and practitioner. Our visit to Samut Prakan province with him and lecturers from Kasetsart University, was also an eye-opening experience. As the “lungs of Bangkok”, we learned how local governments supported local entrepreneurs to introduce their products and services.

Finally, the overall field research in Thailand has encouraged me in two ways. First, as a student, it reshaped my thinking on how my research design would apply on the ground. Second, as a human, it made me think comprehensively about preserving needs and distinguishing wants. I myself will strive to contribute more towards achieving SDGs in the upcoming future.