

Development of livestock and safe food production capabilities in Na Si Nuan Subdistrict, Kantharawichai District, Maha Sarakham Province

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Abstract - This project aimed to enhance sustainable livestock and food production practices in Na Si Nuan Subdistrict, Kantharawichai District, Maha Sarakham Province. Through a collaborative effort between Mahasarakham University and local communities, the project focused on addressing key agricultural challenges such as limited access to modern veterinary care, high costs of livestock management, and traditional farming practices. The “Happy Chicken” cage-free farming model was introduced as a sustainable alternative, improving animal welfare and increasing egg production. Comprehensive training workshops provided local farmers with essential knowledge in livestock management, disease prevention, and biosecurity. The project also included vaccination campaigns and veterinary services, which significantly reduced disease incidence among livestock, thereby improving overall productivity. Community engagement was a central aspect, with local leaders and farmers actively participating in the planning and implementation phases. The project also focused on educating younger generations through workshops and an E-book on poultry farming, laying the foundation for long-term sustainable practices. While the project achieved notable short-term successes, including improved livestock health and food security, ongoing challenges such as ensuring the sustainability of these practices remain. The project highlights the importance of integrating academic expertise

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with local knowledge and suggests that such collaborative approaches can significantly contribute to sustainable rural development. The outcomes of this project provide valuable insights for similar initiatives aimed at enhancing agricultural productivity and economic stability in rural communities.

Keywords: Sustainable Agriculture, Livestock Management, Community Engagement, Rural Development, Veterinary Services

1. Introduction

Na Si Nuan Subdistrict, located in Kantharawichai District, Maha Sarakham Province, comprises 27 villages, with a population primarily engaged in agriculture, including rice farming and livestock rearing. The proximity of this subdistrict to Mahasarakham University offers a unique opportunity for academic-community collaboration, particularly in enhancing agricultural practices and ensuring food security.

Despite the agricultural potential of the region, the local farming practices have been limited by several challenges, including low productivity, inadequate access to modern farming technologies, and a lack of sustainable livestock farming methods. These issues have been compounded by the reliance on traditional, small-scale farming methods that are often insufficient to meet the demands of both local consumption and market supply.

In response to these challenges, the project titled “Development of Livestock and Safe Food Production Capabilities in Na Si Nuan Subdistrict” was initiated. The project aimed to assess the agricultural potential of the subdistrict and introduce innovative livestock farming practices, focusing on the “Happy Chicken” model. This model, which promotes cage-free poultry farming, represents a significant departure from traditional livestock methods, emphasizing animal welfare and the production of safe, chemical-free eggs (Chadd et al., 2002).

The project’s primary objectives were to:

1. Conduct a comprehensive survey to assess the agricultural potential and needs of the Na Si Nuan community.
2. Develop and implement a sustainable model for livestock farming that could serve as a replicable example for other communities.
3. Enhance the capacity of local farmers and students by providing training in modern farming practices and establishing model farms as educational resources.

This initiative reflects Mahasarakham University’s commitment to integrating academic resources with local development efforts, thereby contributing to the sustainable development of the Na Si Nuan Subdistrict. By leveraging the university’s expertise in agricultural sciences, the project sought to address the immediate needs of the community while laying the groundwork for long-term improvements in food security and economic stability.

The introduction of the “Happy Chicken” model within this project highlights a growing recognition of the need for ethical and sustainable farming practices. This model

not only aims to increase egg production but also ensures that the methods employed align with principles of animal welfare and environmental sustainability (Pretty, 2008). Through this project, the university and the local community of Na Si Nuan have established a collaborative framework for achieving sustainable agricultural development. The outcomes of this collaboration are expected to serve as a model for similar initiatives in other rural areas, contributing to broader efforts to improve food security and rural livelihoods across Thailand.

2. Materials and methods

2.1 Preparation phase

2.1.1 Team meeting and planning After receiving budget approval, the project team convened to plan the execution of the project. The responsibilities were distributed among the team members as follows:

Venue and field preparation: Managed by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kanittha Pengmeesri, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Songsak Champawadee, and Asst. Prof. Dr. Sukanya Leetongdee.

Community data collection: Led by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Songsak Champawadee, Assoc. Prof. Dr. Kanittha Pengmeesri, and Asst. Prof. Dr. Duangnapa Promket.

Documentation, registration, and refreshments: Handled by Asst. Prof. Dr. Nattamon Tangchitwattanachai and Asst. Prof. Dr. Kanittha Rueang wittayanusorn.

Procurement of materials and financial disbursement: Managed by Asst. Prof. Dr. Duangnapa Promket.

Vaccine procurement and transportation: Supervised by Asst. Prof. Dr. Pongpol Phongthaisong, with support from the entire project committee.

Training coordination: Organized by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Songsak Champawadee, Asst. Prof. Dr. Sukanya Leetongdee, Asst. Prof. Dr. Pongpol Phongthaisong, and Asst. Prof. Dr. Wittaya Worapun.

2.1.2 Target group identification The project aimed to engage multiple stakeholders, including:

Faculty and research team: 7 members

Students from the animal science program: 15 students

Veterinary science students: 15 students

Local farmers: 50 participants from Na Si Nuan Subdistrict

Local school students and teachers: 30 students and 8 teachers from 8 schools

2.1.3 Project area The project was implemented in all 27 villages of Na Si Nuan Subdistrict, Kantharawichai District, Maha Sarakham Province, from February 2022 to October 2022.

2.2 Implementation phase

2.2.1 Community survey and needs assessment a comprehensive survey was conducted between January and March 2022 to assess the current agricultural practices, income levels, resources, and specific needs of the community in Na Si Nuan. This phase aimed to gather detailed information about the socio-economic status of the

community, including the availability of agricultural land, water resources, and existing local organizations.

2.2.2 Data presentation and SWOT analysis In April 2022, the survey results were presented to local community leaders in a participatory workshop. This workshop also involved conducting a SWOT analysis with six farmer groups from different villages to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats related to livestock farming and safe food production.

2.2.3 Development of participatory action plans Between May and July 2022, the project team worked closely with community members and local authorities to develop an action plan aimed at improving livestock practices and ensuring food safety. This plan was designed to align with the needs identified in the SWOT analysis and to leverage the strengths of the community while addressing its weaknesses.

2.2.4 Construction of happy chicken farms From May to August 2022, three model farms for “Happy Chicken” production were established:

Model farm in Ban Tamyae: A community-based farm.

School farm in Ban Na Si Nuan School: Integrating agricultural education with practical farming.

University farm: Serving as a demonstration and research facility.

2.2.5 Curriculum development for agricultural integration A curriculum focusing on integrated agricultural skills was developed and implemented in eight local schools. This curriculum was designed to foster problem-solving skills and professional attributes among students, preparing them for future agricultural endeavors.

2.2.6 Training and capacity building From February to July 2022, hands-on workshops were conducted to train farmers and students in setting up and managing the Happy Chicken farms. This included sessions on:

Setting up poultry housing and equipment: Ensuring proper installation and maintenance.

Happy chicken farming techniques: Best practices for feeding, watering, and disease prevention.

Biosecurity measures: Implementing safety protocols to prevent the spread of diseases.

2.2.7 Pilot chicken farming activities Starting in April 2022, the selected farmers and schools began raising Happy Chickens using the newly constructed facilities. The project team provided ongoing support and monitored the progress, with the goal of producing eggs for local consumption and sale by August 2022.

2.3 Monitoring and evaluation

2.3.1 Participatory reflection and feedback In August 2022, a workshop was held to gather feedback from the farmers and students who participated in the project. This session aimed to identify the successes and challenges of the project and to make adjustments as needed.

2.3.2 Project monitoring and final evaluation The project team conducted follow-up evaluations one month after the training sessions to assess the impact of the knowledge transfer on farming practices. The evaluation included surveys to measure participant satisfaction and the practical application of the skills learned.

3. Results and discussion

Activity 1: Area potential survey (April 24-30, 2022)

The first activity of the project involved a comprehensive survey conducted between April 24 and April 30, 2022, in Na Si Nuan Subdistrict, which consists of 27 villages. The survey aimed to evaluate the area's potential, including agricultural practices, income levels, and community resources, focusing on the needs related to livestock.

Survey methodology:

The survey included 270 households (10 households per village) and 27 community leaders. The survey was divided into two parts: a household questionnaire and a community leader questionnaire.

Key findings:

Occupations and income: Most villagers engage in rice farming, with secondary income from livestock such as poultry, cattle, and swine. However, the income from these activities is limited due to traditional farming methods and reliance on external markets.

Agricultural resources: The area has adequate agricultural land, but there is a lack of water resources and modern farming equipment. The soil quality varies, with some areas being prone to drought.

Community needs: The community expressed a need for improved livestock management practices, access to veterinary services, and alternative income sources.

Photographic documentation: The survey team documented various aspects of the community, including agricultural practices, livestock conditions, and local resources such as water sources and animal feed stores. Below are examples of the collected data:

Aspect	Observation
Livestock	Traditional free-range poultry and cattle farming
Water Resources	Insufficient irrigation and water storage systems
Animal Feed Availability	Limited access to affordable animal feed

Summary of findings: The survey results indicated significant potential for developing sustainable livestock practices in Na Si Nuan. However, challenges such as inadequate water supply, lack of modern agricultural knowledge, and limited veterinary support need to be addressed to enhance productivity.

Activity 2: Community data presentation and SWOT analysis (May 24, 2022)

Following the survey, the collected data were presented to community leaders on May 24, 2022, at the Na Si Nuan Subdistrict Administrative Organization. The meeting included 27 community leaders, 7 university faculty members, and 4 undergraduate students.

SWOT analysis findings:

Strengths: Strong community cooperation and a willingness to adopt new practices were observed. The presence of Maharakham University nearby provides an excellent resource for academic support.

Weaknesses: Limited sustainability in community collaboration and a lack of modern livestock management practices. Additionally, high costs of feed and veterinary services are barriers.

Opportunities: The community's interest in improving livestock practices, coupled with university support, offers a pathway for sustainable development. There is also potential for introducing new livestock breeds with better productivity.

Threats: Economic challenges, such as the high cost of inputs and the impact of environmental factors like drought, could hinder progress.

Strategic development plan:

Based on the SWOT analysis, a strategic development plan was created, focusing on sustainable livestock management, improving food security, and enhancing economic stability.

Activity 3: Training workshops on poultry and cattle management (June 15, 2022)

On June 15, 2022, a series of training workshops were conducted at Maharakham University, focusing on poultry and cattle management. Seventy farmers participated, along with 4 undergraduate students and 7 faculty members.

Key training areas:

Poultry management (Happy Chicken Model): Participants were trained on the benefits of cage-free poultry farming, focusing on animal welfare and biosecurity.

Cattle health management: The workshop covered essential practices such as disease prevention, vaccination, and nutritional management.

Outcome: Participants reported an increased understanding of modern livestock management practices. The training also highlighted the importance of biosecurity measures in preventing disease outbreaks.

Summary table:

Training Module	Participants	Key Outcomes
Poultry Management (Happy Chicken)	70 Farmers	Improved knowledge of cage-free farming practices
Cattle Health Management	70 Farmers	Enhanced skills in disease prevention and animal care

Activity 4: Vaccination and veterinary service implementation (July 23-24, 2022)

In response to the needs identified in the previous activities, the project team provided vaccination and veterinary services on July 23-24, 2022.

Implementation details: Services included vaccination for Lumpy Skin Disease, nutritional supplements, and deworming for cattle. A total of 80 cattle received vaccinations, 75 were dewormed, and 100 received nutritional supplements.

Photographic documentation:

The implementation was documented, showcasing the collaboration between farmers, students, and faculty.

Service provided	Number of animals treated
Vaccination (Lumpy Skin)	80
Deworming	75
Nutritional Supplements	100

Activity 5: Poultry vaccination services (August 19, 2022)

On August 19, 2022, the project provided vaccination services for poultry across three villages (Ban Saen Suk, Ban Na Si Nuan, and Ban Pho Mee).

Implementation details:

A total of 550 poultry were vaccinated, with the participation of 25 farmers, 7 faculty members, and 38 students. The activity focused on promoting disease-free poultry production in the community.

Photographic documentation:

The activity was documented to illustrate the scale of the service and the community's engagement.

Village	Number of Poultry Vaccinated
Ban Saen Suk	150
Ban Na Si Nuan	200
Ban Pho Mee	200

Activity 6: Integrated career development workshop for students (September 2, 2022)

The final activity involved a career development workshop for students on September 2, 2022, at the Agricultural Technology Operations Building in Kantharawichai.

Workshop structure:

The workshop aimed to educate students on sustainable livestock practices, including poultry management. The content was delivered through an E-book titled "Happy Chicken Farming," covering topics like poultry breeds, feed management, disease prevention, and farm operations.

Student engagement:

The workshop included 8 schools from the Na Si Nuan area, with students demonstrating high engagement and interest in livestock farming.

Photographic documentation:

Photos from the workshop sessions depicted active student participation and the hands-on learning environment.

Summary table:

School	Number of students	Key learning outcomes
Na Si Nuan Primary School	30	Understanding of poultry management basics
Pho Mee High School	25	Skills in disease prevention and farm setup
Saen Suk Elementary	35	Enhanced knowledge of sustainable farming

4. Discussion

The findings from this research project highlight several key insights into the potential and challenges of developing sustainable livestock and food production practices in Na Si Nuan Subdistrict. The activities carried out under this project offer valuable lessons that can inform future efforts to enhance agricultural productivity and food security in rural communities.

Integration of local knowledge and academic expertise

One of the major successes of the project was the effective integration of local knowledge with academic expertise. By engaging community members in the survey and planning phases, the project was able to identify the specific needs and challenges faced by the local population. The involvement of Mahasarakham University provided access to advanced agricultural techniques and veterinary knowledge, which were crucial in addressing the issues identified during the surveys.

For instance, the introduction of the “Happy Chicken” model of cage-free poultry farming not only improved animal welfare but also enhanced egg production, thereby contributing to local food security and household income. This demonstrates the importance of bridging the gap between academic research and practical, community-based applications.

Addressing the challenges of traditional livestock farming

The survey results revealed several challenges in traditional livestock farming practices, including limited access to modern veterinary services, inadequate knowledge of disease prevention, and reliance on costly commercial feeds. These challenges have historically limited the productivity and sustainability of livestock farming in the region. The training workshops and subsequent veterinary service interventions provided practical solutions to these challenges. For example, the vaccination programs significantly reduced the incidence of common livestock diseases, while training on biosecurity measures helped farmers implement practices that prevent future outbreaks. The provision of nutritional supplements also improved the overall health and productivity of livestock.

However, the project also highlighted ongoing challenges, such as the need for consistent access to affordable veterinary care and the high cost of feed, which continues to be a barrier for many farmers. These findings suggest that while short-term interventions are beneficial, there is a need for long-term strategies that focus on building local capacity and ensuring sustainable access to resources.

Importance of community engagement and capacity building

The project's success was largely due to the strong engagement of the local community, particularly during the SWOT analysis and strategic planning sessions. Community leaders and farmers were actively involved in identifying priorities and developing strategies for improving livestock management and food production.

This participatory approach not only ensured that the project was aligned with local needs but also empowered the community to take ownership of the outcomes. The training workshops and hands-on activities provided practical skills that farmers could immediately apply, leading to tangible improvements in livestock management practices.

The development and distribution of the “Happy Chicken Farming” E-book to students and farmers also contributed to building local capacity for sustainable farming. By focusing on education and training, the project laid the groundwork for continued improvement in agricultural practices beyond the project's duration.

Sustainability and long-term impact

While the project achieved significant short-term gains, ensuring the sustainability of these improvements is a critical consideration. The continued success of the initiatives introduced by the project depends on the community's ability to maintain and build upon the knowledge and resources provided.

The formation of farmer groups, as recommended in the strategic development plan, is a promising step towards sustainability. These groups can facilitate the sharing of resources, collective problem-solving, and stronger market linkages. Additionally, ongoing support from academic institutions and local government agencies will be essential to address any future challenges that may arise.

The long-term impact of the project will also depend on the continued engagement of younger generations, as seen in the student workshops. By fostering an interest in sustainable agriculture among students, the project has the potential to influence future agricultural practices in the community.

Broader implications for rural development

The results of this project have broader implications for rural development, particularly in regions with similar socio-economic and environmental conditions. The approach taken in Na Si Nuan Subdistrict—combining local knowledge with academic expertise, engaging the community in participatory planning, and focusing on capacity building—can serve as a model for other rural development initiatives.

The success of the “Happy Chicken” model, in particular, demonstrates the potential of sustainable, small-scale livestock farming to improve food security and economic stability in rural communities. By promoting animal welfare, reducing reliance on costly inputs, and enhancing the quality of agricultural products, such models can contribute to both local and national goals for sustainable development.

Lessons learned and recommendations

The project's implementation provides several lessons for future initiatives:

Community engagement: Active participation from the community is crucial for the success and sustainability of rural development projects. Future projects should prioritize building trust and fostering collaboration with local stakeholders from the outset.

Capacity building: Training and education are key to empowering communities to adopt and maintain new practices. Ongoing support and follow-up training sessions should be considered to reinforce and expand on initial knowledge gains.

Sustainability planning: Long-term sustainability requires careful planning and the establishment of structures, such as farmer groups, that can continue to support and build upon project outcomes. Linking communities with local government and academic institutions can also help ensure continued access to resources and expertise.

Overall, the project demonstrates that with the right support and resources, rural communities can make significant strides in improving agricultural productivity and sustainability. The insights gained from this project can be applied to other regions, contributing to broader efforts to enhance food security and economic resilience in rural areas.

5. Conclusions

The project aimed at developing sustainable livestock and food production practices in Na Si Nuan Subdistrict has successfully demonstrated the positive impact of integrating academic expertise with local knowledge. Through a series of carefully planned activities, including area potential surveys, community engagement, and practical training workshops, the project addressed key challenges faced by local farmers, such as limited access to modern veterinary care and the high cost of livestock management.

The introduction of the “Happy Chicken” cage-free farming model and the provision of veterinary services led to immediate improvements in livestock health, productivity, and overall food security in the community. The active participation of local farmers and community leaders, along with the capacity-building efforts targeted at both adults and students, ensured that the project’s benefits were widely shared and understood.

However, the project also highlighted ongoing challenges, such as the need for long-term sustainability strategies, particularly in maintaining access to affordable resources and veterinary care. The formation of farmer groups and the continued involvement of academic institutions are critical to sustaining the project’s positive outcomes.

Overall, this project serves as a model for similar rural development initiatives, demonstrating that with the right support and community involvement, significant strides can be made in improving agricultural productivity, economic stability, and food security. The lessons learned from this initiative will not only benefit Na Si Nuan but also provide valuable insights for rural communities facing similar challenges across the region.

Acknowledgments

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active participation and collaboration, ensuring that the project was closely aligned with local needs. Their commitment and engagement were key to achieving the positive outcomes we have seen in sustainable livestock practices. Put applicable sponsor acknowledgments here; DO NOT place them on the first page of your paper or as a footnote. Acknowledgments should be as brief as possible, in a separate section before the references.

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