The Thammasat Model :
Sustainable Community Enterprises

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Executive summary

Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) promises organisations the opportunity to develop local talent, strengthen grassroots links and give something positive back to the communities which host them. However, few organisations realise its potential. The Community Partnership Association (CPA) was formed in Rayong Province to coordinate and enhance CSR activities for communities in the area. It faces three main challenges: lack of sustainability, ineffective stakeholder engagement and lack of innovation. Thammasat Business School (TBS) has a strong reputation for its expertise in social innovation and sustainability, but it is always looking for ways to make its programmes more practical and real-world based. Meanwhile, numerous community enterprises across Thailand struggle to run their businesses successfully and realise their full potential.

In this case study, we present an opportunity to simultaneously reimagine CSR, enhance community enterprises and provide practical, innovative education in business competencies. Our approach has application across the country and may help to address, in a sustainable way, some of Thailand's most serious structural challenges: rural poverty and inequality.

The Thammasat Model (TU Model) creates a mechanism for these three stakeholder to collaborate in the delivery of effective CSR projects. The initiative creates high- impact, sustainable community-centred enterprise based on grassroots participation. As a L&D initiative, it combines executive, professional, talent and organisation development domains. All TBS students, domestic and international, participate in a community project as part of their core credits. The CPA screen projects for entry, provide funding to support the students and mentor participants. Projects typically last 5-7 months. The goal of students and mentors is to work alongside the community to help it realise its full potential, while developing their own business acumen.

Quantitative and qualitative impact is made at three different levels: individual stakeholders in each project; local, university and business communities; and regional, and national levels. Starting with a pilot of three projects in 2016, by the end of the 2019 academic year, over 500 community projects will have been completed all over Thailand.