

Banpu's "Baan Khao Samorkhon Sustainable Development Project"

Developing Baan Khao Samorkhon to be Model Sustainable Development Community Moving Forward to Sustainable Organic Agriculture

In the hope of seeing the 2011 flood-affected communities developing to become strong and sustainable, Banpu implemented a pilot project known as the "Baan Khao Samorkhon Sustainable Development Project" at Moo 1, 2 and 3, Baan Khao Samorkhon, Thawung district, Lopburi province. Although it appears there is now no residual flood damage, Banpu is not stopping its efforts to reach out and help these communities. With its belief in the benefits of sustainable development, Banpu Plc is now moving to the next stage to strengthen "Baan Khao Samorkhon Sustainable Development Project".

"The primary objectives of **"Baan Khao Samorkhon Sustainable Development Project"** are not only to support communities' rehabilitation from flood damage but to develop these communities to be sustainable. Banpu is continuing to pursue its business credo: *"an industry will be strong only when it is developed in tandem with social and environmental responsibility"*. Therefore, we are moving forward to develop this pilot project for three communities. We aim to encourage the Baan Khao Samorkhon community to be a model example of a sustainable, self-developing micro-society", said **Mrs. Udomlux Olarn, Banpu Public Company Limited Head of Corporate Affairs.**

The main community development project that Banpu initiated and provided guidelines for included short-, medium- and long-term activities. The initial short-term phase included the cleaning of public areas, repairing flood-damaged houses and the installation of water purifiers to ensure clean and adequate drinking water for community members. In the medium-term, the project has focused on rehabilitating and developing community economy such as establishing a fund for fertilizer worth THB 1,825,850 for the **"Baan Khao Samorkhon's Farmers-For-Truth Group"**. Aiming at reducing the debt burden of farmers, the fund provides fertilizers for members to borrow for rice farming. It also supports the establishment of a volunteer youth

group to encourage the new generation to create activities that will drive community involvement such as sport events, Mother's Day activities. Moreover, the Company developed a 'Community Disaster Contingency Plan' and arranged the workshop.

Banpu is currently implementing the program's long-term activities, which emphasize on career and self development. One example is to cultivate Cha-Om vegetable leaf and off season limes to diversify local farmers' incomes. Currently, there are 39 farmers growing 114 lime trees and 20 farmers growing 1,430 Cha-Om trees.

Banpu is also working in collaboration with Rice Science Center, Kasetsart University KamphaengSaen Campus to provide Sinlek seeds to plant in Baan Khao Samorkhon area which is now covering more than 65 rai, owned by 5 households. Sinlek seeds are known for their high levels of dietary fiber which helps hinder the absorption of sugar into the blood, making it suitable for patients with diabetes and high blood pressure. Moreover, the villagers were also trained in the production of organic fertilizer and mushrooms.

Banpu's dedication in working with the villagers has begun to show success. The villagers were previously only able to cultivate once or twice per year because they had to wait until the rains. Nowadays, they have learned how to cultivate Cha-Om and off season limes that would help them bring in additional income. Off-season limes are expected to harvest and sell in April 2015 while Cha-Om is already being sold. Sinlek Rice is a value-added product that gives significant income for the farmers. It can be sold for THB 25,000 per ton. Sinlek Rice is in strong demand thanks to consumers who are increasingly concerned about health and looking to consume more organic products. Thus, the farmers are able to see lower investment costs and better health personally since they now stop using poisonous chemical fertilizers and insecticides.

"The reason the Baan Khao Samorkhon Project has seen high success and established clear guidelines for sustainable development has not only come from Banpu's support but also from collaboration and commitment from community leaders and villagers who are eager to learn and create sustainable methods for their communities. Banpu has provided financial support, knowledge and experts to transfer much-needed knowledge to the community to help them

develop and grow their potential and skills in various areas including occupational and management skills. Activities have included a study visit to 'Baan Jumrung', a model self-sufficient community located in Klaeng district, Rayong province and a knowledge sharing session inviting community leaders from Bang Sapan to share knowledge on microfinance", **Mrs. Udomlux said.**

"If Banpu's efforts gain no support from the people or the leaders from the communities as well as local organizations, success is unlikely. We hope that Baan Khao Samorkhon will become a model sustainable development community for other communities. Now the development is in an early stage but it can be a model in some areas", **Mrs. Udomlux concluded.**