

MULTIPLE STREAMS ANALYSIS OF AGENDA SETTING AND PUBLIC POLICY FORMULATION: A CASE STUDY OF THAILAND'S VILLAGE AND URBAN COMMUNITY FUND¹

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Abstract

This paper critically analyses the policymaking process used in the development of Thailand's village and urban community fund policy by applying Kingdon's Multiple Streams Framework to examine the formulation of the policy. The multiple streams theoretical framework provides a good explanation of how a policy problem is constructed in various policy contexts by analyzing how the political stream, problem stream and policy streams contribute to the formulation of the public policy. This paper provides a better understanding of the policymaking process in Thailand. The research shows interesting results regarding the process of agenda setting, whereby the political stream along with the other two streams have generated the push necessary for the formulation of the village and urban community fund policy in Thailand. In spite of the accentuation of the political stream, in order to formulate a policy, the problem stream, and policy stream are also necessary drivers, key to widening the policy perspectives and in decision making.

Keywords: Multiple Streams, Public Policy, Political Stream, Problem Stream, Policy Stream, Village and Urban Community Fund

INTRODUCTION

For a long time, the majority of Thailand's population have continuously faced the problem of poverty. One of the causes is that development plans mainly emphasize economic improvement, which leads to an increasing gap between the rich and the poor, expanding social inequity, and resulting in considerable subsequent problems (Thanapol saranjit, 2015). Furthermore, the weakened communities in rural areas have shown an inability to be self-reliant. Solving the persistent poverty issue is critical to the country's development. Every government has given importance to this goal.

Hence, the policy of village and community funds was announced to parliament on February 26th, 2001, as an urgent policy under the government at that time. This policy was meant to be an instrument to solve the poverty problem through a community process which focused on the community's learning capability, and development towards self-dependency and a sustainable community.

The village and urban community fund policy is one of the policies that aims to tackle poverty directly among under-privileged grassroots communities. The policy was transformed into practice in the form of projects within the same year, and has

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continued until the present time, covering city areas as well as rural areas across the country. This policy is considered as a redistributive policy which has accentuated income distribution. However, the village and urban community fund policy was criticized as a populist policy put forth for political gain, thus creating a sense of dubiousness among society, from its launch until the present day.

With more than 19 years of implementation, the village and urban community fund policy, which has widely affected the population, has inspired an interest to study the development of its past policy formulation process, based on Kingdon's Multiple Stream framework. Consisting of the problem stream, political stream, and policy stream, the framework suggests that the key drivers to the aforesaid policy formulation vary in different contexts. The researcher aims to utilize the findings of this study into Thailand's public policy formulation, for educational purposes, to make propositions to stakeholders for improvement, and to act as a base for creating similar public policy in the future.

LITERATURE REVIEW

During the policy formulation process, problems occur and eagerness alone is not sufficient to solve these problems and automatically lead to the setting of a policy agenda. The agenda may be set by someone such as a policy maker, politician, member of a benefit group or a member of the mass media. Policy agenda setting is derived from streams in the society, which John W. Kingdon has identified in his development of an analysis framework for the public policy decision making process. First invented in 1984, the analysis is known as "Multiple Stream" (Larkin, 2012), in which, the "Multiple Stream" comprises of 3 streams; these are the problem stream, political stream and policy stream.

The first stream, the problem stream puts emphasis on people's interests, whereby a policymaker will specify a particular problem, and identify the definition of the

problem in order to set up a policy to solve that problem. In order to become a problem stream, indicators related to the government and people are necessary (Kingdon, 1995). The problem stream includes the period of time in which the problem has been significant, the problem definition, and feedback from the problem study. It should be noted that problems already exist, but only when the policy maker becomes interested in them can the problems be solved and the solution developed into a policy (Gates, 2010).

The second stream, the political stream puts emphasis on the government or political sectors in determining the problem based on interactions among influential powers in society, including the public mood, benefit groups, political movement, or the shift between governments. Nevertheless, political stream formulators are always from the visible cluster, including, administrative officers in high ranking positions, government consultants, or the Prime Minister, media, benefit groups or political parties. In general, the problem arises and is agreed via negotiation among those involved as previously mentioned. Therefore, the political stream is comprised of the national mood, pressure group campaigns, election results, partisan or ideological distributions, and changes of administration.

Lastly, the policy stream puts emphasis on the composition of the public policy decision making and identification of alternatives towards decision-making. Here, those who have influence in configuring the alternatives towards decision-making, are normally from the hidden cluster. This includes scholars, advisors, and benefit groups. The policy stream results in the development of alternative solutions to the problem, including access to the law or emerging technologies to support problem solving.

Therefore, the policy formulation originates when all three streams, consisting of the problem stream, political stream, and policy stream, occur simultaneously, with participation from the policy stakeholders in

both the government and public sector who encourage the agenda setting.

A window of opportunity or policy window is part of a dynamic process with several solutions floating around, ready to couple with problems appearing at any moment. Most policy windows open only occasionally, and might not stay open very long (Karin and Björn, 2009). Thus, actors who promote a specific solution, the policy entrepreneurs, must act rapidly before the opportunity passes by, or they will be required to wait until the next chance comes along.

Policy entrepreneurs are individuals who introduce and promote their ideas in many different forms and invest time and energy to increase the chances of an idea being placed on the decision agenda (Kingdon, 1995). Policy entrepreneurs may thus appear either inside or outside the organization where an idea is introduced. While decision makers often shift their attention from one problem to another, policy entrepreneurs keep to their issue. Even good proposals may, however, fail to be taken seriously if they are presented before the policy community is ready. The phrase ‘softening up processes’, refers to actions taken to prepare and educate both the public and specialists, and are often driven by policy entrepreneurs (Karin and Björn, 2009). Thus, both the problem recognition

and the suggested solutions could be the result of the efforts of policy entrepreneurs.

METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this section is to outline the overall research methodology used in this paper with the identification of a conceptual framework, research approach, and the analysis of results.

The conceptual framework and research methodology for this study were designed following a review of the literature, theory, and related research. The methodology consisted mainly of documentary research, with additional detail built up from in-depth interviews.

The analysis of agenda setting and public policy formulation was inspired by existing theories based on the Multiple Stream conceptual framework of John W. Kingdon (1995). The Multiple Stream conceptual framework is comprised of the Problem Stream, Policy Stream and Political Stream.

Qualitative research was conducted through documentary research and in-depth interviews in order to analyze the results through descriptive analysis, and to integrate the findings with the contents of the related conceptual framework.

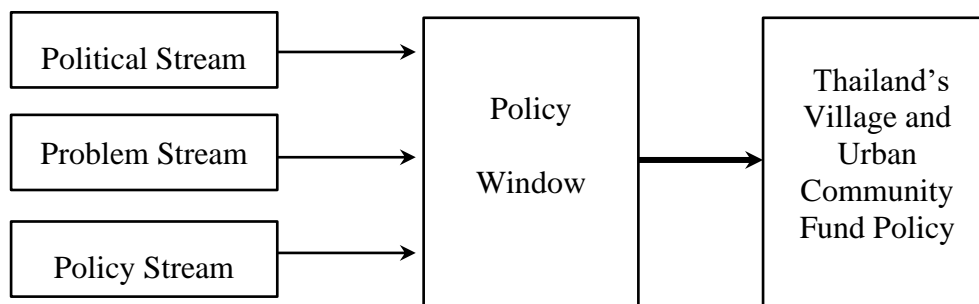


Figure 1 The Multiple Stream conceptual framework of agenda setting and policy formulation

RESULT

1. Political Stream

There are several dimensions affecting the agenda setting and public policy formulation process. As the village and urban community fund policy is reinforced by the political stream, this aspect was thoroughly explored as follows.

1.1 The 1997 Constitution and the Change of Thai Politics

The 1997 Constitution allowed people to participate in drafting the constitution, making its structure and key points different from previous constitutions in Thailand's history. This reflected the pure intention or main objective in drafting the constitution, and led to a pure political reformation (Wongwittayaphanij, 2007). It is obvious that the 1997 Constitution was drafted with the statute focusing on having a strong executive and a strong Prime Minister. Hence, the election system was different from previous elections in order to promote political stability. The 1997 Constitution marked a turning point in politics and affected the creation of political parties as well as party policies, including 'T. Party' and the power head of the government's administration who won the election in 2001.

The 1997 Constitution might not have had a direct effect on the political stream in the formulation of public policy regarding Thailand's village and urban community fund, but it clearly had a structural effect on the formation of political parties, especially 'T. Party'. This party was formed under the 1997 Constitution, with one of its prominent populist policies being Thailand's village and urban community fund policy. The campaign was very popular among the people, and led to the party winning the election in 2001.

1.2 The Political Stream and The Village and Urban Community Fund

1.2.1 Development of Strategic Policy

Before the formation of 'T. Party', previous governmental policies arose normally via technocrats, government officers, and scholars, but not from politicians. In later years, after the formation of 'T. Party', agenda setting was transformed. As 'T. Party' had its own policies, the government office played a supporting role in transforming the general scope of the policy into concrete objectives and implementation (Chaipong Samnieng, 2013).

Ockey (2004) analyzed the influence of 'T. Party' in changing the political system, and the phenomenon in which Thailand's politics were previously patronaged under allegiance to a factions system without developing an overall perspective of the Party. 'T. Party' created populist policies which provided capital directly to grassroots communities. These policies included urban community funds, a farmers' debt moratorium, the 30-baht health care scheme, and asset capitalization. These were competitive policies which supported the party's principles, and reflected the party's efforts in winning the election.

As a newly founded party, 'T. Party' was seeking to create a solid political stronghold during its first election by introducing a policy, which was of direct contingency to the people, especially regarding suburbanites who comprised an important stronghold. One founding member of 'T. Party' explained that in order to win the election in 2001, the party framed its pre-election strategy with objectives and targets that people across the country could realize. With these objectives as a starting point, the former leader of the party formed working groups for various policy aspects including social economics and education.

The former commissioner, from the department of community development had responsibility for the Village Fund (in-depth interview, July 9, 2015) and analyzed that during that time, 'T. Party' was seeking for new opportunities to be dispersed into all areas in Thailand. The idea of 'Community funds' was selected as it served the objective of gaining a strategic political stronghold among villages and communities.

'T. Party' turned politics into 'national policy' which directly related to the people. Another speculation reveals that there were similar policies formulated among political parties in previous years, as well as a dependency among suburbanites on connection networks known as a 'patronage system' which was rooted in the traditional agricultural society. Suburbanites usually and obviously vote according to the guidance of their supporters and have been subject to the effects of bribery since 1980 (Laothamatas, 1988). In order to lessen the 'patronage system' and importance of bribery, it was important for suburbanites to be given the opportunity to react to governmental policies, directly and with equality. Nevertheless, before the 2001 election, many scholars disagreed with 'T. Party' policy, including one elite scholar. Despite the disagreement, this scholar praised 'T. Party' as the first party to offer alternative policies to society, accentuating the progress of Thai politics.

1.2.2 Synchronization of A Political Group Base

In addition to the point that 'T. Party' strategically formulated its policy, the party also gathered a political group base and attracted several influential individuals during the foundation operations of the party, including recruiting from other political parties, middle-class individuals who could connect with lower-class people or grassroots communities scattered around rural areas, potential politicians, social activists, and non-government organization officers (Noppharat Wongwithayaphanit, 2007).

The key personnel to the party's policy formulation, especially Thailand's village and

urban community fund, included but were not limited to many political party leaders. One of the key players in the formulation of the party's Thailand's village and urban community fund policy was the deputy secretary-general of 'T. Party' who received cooperation from non-government organizations as he is well-known in NGO society and had connections with the Prime Minister of that time (Anek Nakabutr, 2005). This observation aligns with the view of the former commissioner, at the department of community development who had responsibility for the Village Fund (in-depth interview, July 9, 2015), who perceived that 'T. Party' was well equipped with human resources from various backgrounds and expertise. One example is that the leading economy scholar responsible for the 'One Tambon (sub-district), One Product (OTOP)' policy had expertise in monetary and financial matters. Members of the coalition government leaders had robust experience in village and community funding, and included former NGO members who were renowned in matters of rural society. However, the exact person who was responsible for formulating this policy is not yet clear. Nonetheless, this policy has always been the core policy of the party, even before the election.

Not only did 'T. Party' gather influential individuals from various groups, including businessmen, scholars, and NGO members, as mentioned above, and which led to winning the election, but the party also attracted several former members of the House of Representatives from other parties. Members from other parties and political groups were drawn to 'T. Party' in order to expand its political stronghold, including former members of the House of Representatives who owned voting bastions in their respective areas, and also former members of the House of Representatives who were social populists (Wongwithayaphanit, 2007). The person who played an important role in formulating Thailand's village and urban community fund policy and who acted as the first Chairman of the Board in Thailand's village and urban community fund, had resigned as leader of 'K.

Party' in order to join 'T. Party' as the deputy party leader. He was elected into seventh place in the party-list through proportional representation in the 2001 election. On the other hand, the former deputy secretary-general of the office of the political development council (in-depth interview, March 9, 2015) gave the opinion that Thailand's village and urban community fund was developed from an existing policy of 'K. Party'. The policy was derived from the 'Money Diversion' policy. However, regardless of who was the original formulator, we must take into account that this policy was derived from 'K. Party' or another benefit group and its objective once belonged to K. Party.

The first chairman of the board in Thailand's village and urban community fund explained that Thailand's village and urban community fund once belonged to 'K. Party'. During his term as leader of the party, the 'Revolving Fund policy', as well as other fundamental structural policies were implemented and successfully benefited villagers around Thailand. This triggered the notion of the public community fund policy. The origin of this policy derived from the connection between the revolving fund policy and the trial execution of a women's group at Nam Phong, in Khon Kaen province. From his experiences, it was realized that even when villagers work very hard, they still face a shortage of funds. Therefore, the concept raised is similar to that of the diversion of money to rural areas. More or less, this policy is perceived as 'Revolving Funds' rather than providing money for investment. Therefore, these 2 aspects were merged and evolved into the 'K. Party' policy.

However, since 'K. Party' was a small party, executing the community fund policy faced difficulties. Although 'K. Party' had always been one of the coalition governments in past years, the government did not see the necessity of this policy, and, the main reason why the Prime Minister at that time supported this policy is that he understood and realized the value of the policy as a good political

policy. In an in-depth interview (July 20, 2015) the former director of the village and urban community fund's office observed that Thailand's village and urban community fund was formulated after the former leader of 'K. Party' executed the trial phase of the 'Womens' Fund'. Once he joined 'T. Party', he brought this notion with him and incorporated it into the party's core policy. During that time, the policy was brought up in a generic form, but neither concrete practices nor road maps were introduced.

2. Problem Stream

2.1 Poverty

Poverty is a social problem reflecting a failure of governmental policy and its development plan. Not only does this problem affect the entire nation, but inequality arisen from the country's development plan has increased the numbers of impoverished citizens. The result of developing the country according to capitalism caused a greater inequality gap (Seksan Prasertkul, 2002). Poverty and social inequality reflect the weakness of villages and local communities that lack accessibility to funds for solving their problems.

Poverty is a major problem of villagers. The founder of the Trad honesty savings group (in-depth interview, February 27, 2015) observed that this policy was formulated based on the poverty problem. Similarly, the honesty savings group (Sajja Sasomsap) was founded on the concept of an impoverished community. Educated human resources do not return to their hometowns. This is one cause of a distorted population structure and leads to an aging society, roughneck society, and uneducated society. Elderly, unskilled, and uneducated people are left behind in the community and become a burden to the society, leading to difficulties in developing the community. On the other hand, one senator (in-depth interview, June 18, 2015) suggested that villagers do not demand

solutions to the poverty problem as it reflects their normal way of life.

In endeavoring to solve poverty, the government has issued several policies to tackle poverty. Before the formulation of Thailand's village and urban community fund policy, people would repeatedly demand for the government, the governor or other related organizations to solve this problem. The overall Thai society developed according to the national development plans, from the first plan until the current plan, entitled the 12th National Economic and Social Development plan (2017-2021), in which the proportion of underprivileged has reduced, based on relevant data: less than 7.9% of the population are now considered poor according to the poverty line, and there has been an increase in the average GDP per capita in 2017. In addition, attempting to stimulate economic and social development has generated employment, resulting in improvements to the country's economy.

2.2 Difficulty of Fund Accessibility

In rural areas or even metropolitan areas, one of the causes of poverty is a difficulty in accessing funds. The former deputy secretary-general of the office of the political development council (in-depth interview, March 9, 2015) explained that for the villagers and working class individuals, a major source of funds is Loan Shark Debt. Therefore, Thailand's village and urban community fund was formulated in an attempt to create a proper loan system with a low interest rate which villagers could access. Moreover, one mechanism to rescue villagers from poverty is 'funding'. Employment is always derived from 'funding'. Similarly, the founder of the savings group in Klong Piao, Songkla (in-depth interview, June 30, 2015), was a community leader and philosopher, who observed that the cost of life is limited, not incremental, yet, the cost of living rises constantly, resulting in the need for additional funding. In addition, a former member of 'T. Party' (in-depth interview, March 24, 2015) stated that 'T. Party' visited the people to

inquire about the people's needs, discovering that while they want to work, there is a lack of accessibility to funds. The question to the party was "what could be the source of funding?". Similarly, the former chairman of the village and urban community fund Committee (in-depth interview, March 17, 2015) claimed that people's sources of funds were loan sharks and relatives, for which the interest rate is significantly high. The problem was how to give people access to proper funding. The "Community Fund" idea was created to act as an independent mechanism within the community at all times.

In conclusion, the lack of accessibility to funds acts as the Problem Stream and has a significant role in policy formulation, especially regarding funding at the village or community level. Furthermore, the government had no direct policy that could create economic opportunities for villagers to access funds with ease.

2.3 Economic Crisis

The economic crisis which occurred in 1997 had a severe and wide impact on Thailand's economy. The Thai economy was growing rapidly during 1990-1995 following which the crisis occurred, accumulating continuous problems to financial institutions and the private sector. Ultimately, the economic bubble burst and the economic crisis expanded across Asia. Renowned as the 'Tom Yam Kung Crisis', the Thai government was required to call out for support from the International Monetary Fund (IMF). This was a significant economic crisis for Thailand. From the analysis and in-depth interviews, regarding the crisis in 1997, and the Policy Stream of the village and urban community fund, several interviewees expressed the opinion that the economic crisis in 1997 was a secondary factor propelling the formation of the village and urban community fund.

The former deputy secretary-general of the office of the political development council (in-depth interview, March 9, 2015) had interchangeable opinions that the crisis in

1997 directly affected only the upper-class people, not the lower-class people.

On the contrary, although the economic crisis did not have a direct effect, it was still an important factor urging for the necessity to stimulate the grassroots economy. The director of the village and urban community fund office (in-depth interview, March 16, 2015) explained that even though the crisis was not a direct factor, it was one of a combination of factors. If the economic foundations were strong, the nation would be self-dependent and would be able to sustain a holistic economy. This occurrence played an important role in urging for the necessity of stimulating the grassroots economy.

The knowledge base regarding poverty, economic disparity, and the attempts of the government in searching for a solution to poverty, along with the perception of the crisis in 1997, which affected people in all classes, led the political leaders, political parties, and benefit groups to realize the Problem Stream. There was a realization that poverty exists in both rural and urban areas where there is inadequate funding and a lack of opportunities to source funds for employment, and also for the concept of stimulating the grassroots economy on macroeconomics.

3. Policy Stream

In Thailand, the government has supported a microcredit policy for more than 30 years. Most of the policies and programs, developed from community-based schemes, and were initiated through government encouragement. In 2001, the Thai Government created the village and urban community fund as part of its poverty alleviation policy. It is the largest government microcredit program in Thailand, with 1 million Thai Baht allocated per village. However, although there were previous policies from the government sector in the form of rural funds, those policies usually disappeared in the long term. Part of the reason for this might be due to the fact that the cash injected was only occasional.

3.1 Economic policy stipulating cash flow

Regarded as a “Revolving Funds” policy, policy entrepreneurs have a positive view of the village and urban community funds policy, indicating that money injection into the village generates a greater velocity of money and improves market liquidity. In the view of economics, it is seen to create a circular flow of money, where a ‘Revolving Funds’ policy results in money being spent in Value-added Tax (VAT) transactions, thus returning it to the country. Similarly, the director of the village and urban community fund office agrees with the notion that stimulation of the grassroots economy creates circulation of money at the base of the economy. When the base of the economy is embedded with money circulation, the overall economic system is stimulated. Therefore, this kind of policy scheme focuses on money injection into grassroots economies, in which this stimulation can create spending in major sectors of the country.

In the past the government has usually focused on solving surface level problems, e.g. international trading, without realizing the root cause of the problem. The former director of the village and urban community fund office (in-depth interview, July 20, 2015) compared the basic concept of the village and urban community fund to growing a tree. In the past, the government had only watered the tip of the tree while leaving the trunk and roots, the economic system, neglected. Strengthening the roots and giving opportunities for self-development in the grassroots communities is crucial. The former chairman of the village and urban community fund committee and former deputy prime minister in the government at the respective time (in-depth interview, March 17, 2015) advised that the village and urban community fund system was designed to stimulate the Thai economy with limited funding in the system. The speed of injecting money into the system was advised in order to create a multiplier effect, leading to high turnover. This method allowed for stimulation of the

economy with a limited amount of money but effectively enriched the money supply in the system.

3.2 Social Strength Policy

Not only determined to support the economy, the objective of the village and urban community fund policy was to strengthen the society. The main goal was to strengthen local economic development. Strong organization and networks formed through collaborative learning emerged. The expertise cascaded to the people and was used as a model for self-development. Moreover, it affects various social dimensions, including community unification. Communities facing a narcotics problem have unified their prevention plan, resulting from the policy (Director of the village and urban community fund office, in-depth interview, March 16, 2015).

Another social dimension includes increasing social interaction among communities, which is a major tool for social development equipped with helpful committees supporting their members and promoting employment. Moreover, collaborative learning in the community and self-process management of the village and urban community fund has formed the learning process, leading to the creation of a 'Great Community Leader'.

The processes of the village and urban community fund, and the ability to guide the community's collaborative learning, including cohabitation, democracy and process management, are mechanisms by which the people may acquire the learning process (Head of village and community fund office branch 2, Chiang Mai, in-depth interview, March 16, 2015). This is a core feature of the policy in addition to the economic and political aspects.

Similarly, the former chairman of the village and urban community fund committee and former deputy prime minister in the government at that time (in-depth interview, March 17, 2015) voiced the opinion that provision of learning to the people is also one

of the objectives of the policy, aiming to be the biggest learning organization with 1.3 million people comprising of 1.1 million village and urban community committees, and approximately 0.2 million network committees. As a result, this policy has aimed to strengthen 2 aspects: micro finance and democratic education.

3.3 The Former Governments' Policies to Tackle Poverty

In the past, the Community Development Department of the Ministry of Interior once expedited the Poverty Alleviation Project. The selection criteria for households in the target villages were based on data gathered and analyzed via the basic necessity database. Households with an average monthly household income less than the threshold criteria based on the basic necessity database were eligible for a loan. The project was supervised and managed by community committees in the form of a non-interest fund.

Furthermore, the government once expedited the Production Saving Policy in 1974, and Social Capital in the base level, which existed before the formation of 'T. Party', including Savings Groups and Cooperatives, and the Village Womens' Development Committee. The Production Saving Policy was a prototype influencing the village and urban community fund policy.

Consistent with the former director of community empowerment center at the department of community development, ministry of the interior, one senator (2015) gave the opinion that the beginning phase of saving groups is the 'Production saving policy' of the Ministry of the Interior, encouraging the people to form groups and initiate funding. The employment group and production group were later developed into community funding by the government, injecting the budget for a revolving loan.

However, even though there were several community funding projects from the government and public sectors, they tended to be discontinued as time passed. One suggested reason is that the funding was only

occasional (director of the village and urban community fund office, in-depth interview, March 16, 2015). This is the significant difference between these programs and the village and urban community fund policy.

3.4 Knowledge Base of Villagers' Saving Group

Before the formation of the village and urban community fund policy, villagers in some areas formed groups for self-development based on the Sufficient Economy Path, deviating from development according to the present stream, including Mai Rieng Community, Ampon's Saving Group, Chaba's Saving Group and Phra Ajarn Subin's Saving Group, which were considered to be 'Financial Community Funds' created from villagers' savings.

The success of this policy was derived from 'Grassroots to National Policy', meaning that the wisdom and experience of grassroots communities was expedited by a major political party and transformed into a readymade policy, in which the community's local wisdom regarding funding systems was able to fix the poverty problem and strengthen the community while other funding initiated by the government was not (senator, in-depth interview, June 18, 2015). This policy was implemented by experienced villagers of the community local wisdom. In addition, the former managing director of the small and medium enterprise development bank of Thailand (SME Bank) (in-depth interview, July 21, 2015) analyzed that the Prime Minister at that time had access to scholarly assessment of knowledge based on categorization and management of the community's financial organization for reference purposes during policy formation. After gathering data, the Prime Minister of that time visited the villages and communities for running the party campaign. He witnessed strong community financial organizations in several areas, leading to the formation of the policy. Ideally, politicians seek absolute

success for the people, for example by utilizing mechanisms and management.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Every Thai government has attempted to solve the problems of poverty and disparity. The village and urban community fund policy is one policy that aims to tackle poverty. In addition, the essence of stimulating the grassroots economy on a macroeconomic level was also realized and streamlined in the course of Thailand's Economic Development Plan, following the economic crisis in 1997. This is in line with Kingdon's Multiple Stream framework which elaborates on the problem stream as the stream arising from the concerns of changes or the effects of a group of people in the society, leading to collective perceptions and emotions in the public. The problem stream might arise due to cumulative micro-level problems developed in response to a crisis. The knowledge base regarding poverty, economic disparity, and the attempts of the government in searching for a solution to the poverty problem, along with the perception of the crisis in 1997, which had affected the people in all classes, has led the political leaders, political parties, and the benefit groups to realize the problem stream. As a consequence, the mentioned problem stream has also been realized by the people that are directly affected by it, such that the way of life in the society is also altered. Hence, the opportunity allows the village and urban community fund policy to be pushed forward in the political agenda.

The background concept used in the formation of the village and urban community fund policy comes from the policy stream. In line with Kingdon's framework, the policy stream is metaphorically compared as the remaining soup in the bottom of a pot in which, at some point in time, ideas will be precipitated just like the soup in the bottom of the pot, and are awaiting to be formed into policy.

The government's policy on poverty prior to the acquisition of base knowledge

from savings groups and non-governmental organizations, forms the background used in the development of the village and urban community fund policy, as well as acting as a reference policy to be used by supporters in the agenda setting of the village and urban community fund policy, regarding both those with direct and indirect influence. Therefore, it can be perceived that the policy stream sheds light on politicians adaptations of the framework and issues in running the country, or establishing the mentioned issue as a campaign in the next election (Kingdon, 1995). Moreover, this policy was brought to the attention of the integration of objectives to stimulate the economy as well as simultaneously strengthen the society.

The political stream is the stream resulting from a change in the political system and bureaucracy, including a change of administration, election, political views, and the general mood of the electorate during that relevant time. Here, stated cases might have an effect on the society at the same time as other streams. It is highlighted that 'T. Party' attempted to strategize its policy in order to win the election; the policies targeted the grassroots communities and rural people, who make up the majority of Thailand's population. This political stream has indeed affected the agenda setting of the village and urban community fund policy. Furthermore, the act of 'T. Party' in gathering a political base from various political groups and benefit groups generated a great opportunity and was an important approach in allowing policy entrepreneurs to play a significant role in the Political Stream. Besides this, 'T. Party' has expanded the original policies from previous political parties, leading to the selection and formation of this political policy. 'T. Party' took advantage of this policy to simultaneously build up a political stronghold for benefit groups and political parties.

In addition, the political stream also depicts the significant roles of related policy supporters, e.g. government officers who have the decision rights. The role of this group is crucial for any decision made regarding this policy. Therefore, it might be concluded that

political factors are very important to policy setting or its termination. Whereas, political factors and economic factors embedded in the village and urban community fund policy are significant factors drawing other streams together, and enhancing the agenda setting, leading to the opening of the policy window.

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- Assistant to the Abbot of Wat Phai Lom and Founder of the Trad Honesty Savings (Sajja Sasomsap), February 2015.
- Former Deputy Secretary-General Office of the Political Development Council, March 2015.
- Head of Support Bureau, Community Organizations Community Development Institute (CODI.), March 2015.
- Director of the Village and Urban Community Fund Office, March 2015.
- Head of Village and Community Fund Office Branch 2, Chiang Mai, March 2015.
- Head of Village and Urban Community Fund Office, Branch 8, Ubon Ratchathani, March 2015.
- Former Chairman of the Village and Urban Community Fund Committee and Former Deputy Prime Minister in Government of Thaksin Shinawatra, March 2015.
- Former Member of the House of Representatives (People Power Party) and Former Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Secretary to the Minister Ministry of Finance, March 2015.
- Former Director of Community Empowerment Center Department of Community Development, Ministry of the Interior, June 2015.
- Senator and Secretary General of the National Health Commission and Secretary General of the Local Community Development Institute, June 2015.
- Founder of Savings Group Klong Piaa Songkla and Former Member of the Village and Urban Fund committee, June 2015.
- Former Director of the Social Investment Fund (SIF) and Former Consultant of Minister of Social Development and Human Security, July 2015.
- Former Commissioner, Department of Community Development responsibility of the Village Fund, July 2015.
- Former Director of Village and Urban Community Fund Office, July 2015.
- Former Managing Director, Small and Medium Enterprise Development Bank of Thailand (SME Bank), July 2015.