

Lessons for Women Group Enterprises Management from One Tambon One Product Rural Development Programme in Thailand

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Abstract

An examination of the literature on One Tambon One Product rural economic management programme performances of Thailand shows the unequal impact between men and women with women group-based enterprises bears the major brunt. In the wake of OTOP neo-liberalist policy break-through of Thai government rural economic restructuring was instrumental for revitalising livelihood diversities and reinforcing community-based enterprises management. The present research is based on case study analysis and narrative method of field inquiry in Saraburi Province to draw evidence from women group-based agriculture and nonfarm enterprises' experience and insights on achievements and challenges they faced. One major issue emerges from the research—need for a holistic approach to comprehend how the process of product champion competitions has contrasted the meaning of grassroots women's collectivism, network and flow and exhibits a heightened sense of accountability in developing possible policy strategies with a feminist institutional framework to transform the intangible benefits and scale up women's entrepreneurial capabilities.

Keywords: Rural economic management, OTOP policy Thailand, women-group-enterprises, a feminist institutional framework

Introduction

The relationship between One Tambon One Product (OTOP) policy practices and community-based rural enterprises (CBREs) management performance has debated been long among the researchers. OTOP project was introduced as a key policy innovation in the year 2001 for reinforcing CBREs development in Thailand. The dependency economic system, Asian financial crisis in 1997, imbalanced growth and wealth distribution, urban-rural divide, political unrest and the major flood in 2011 have occurred as critical socio-economic problems of the country. In such a geopolitical environment, Thaksin Shinawatra, the Prime Minister of Thailand, launched a series of neo-liberalist poverty alleviation strategies since February 2001 and OTOP project for CBREs management is one of them. The general strategy of the OTOP movement is about how local communities can optimize their resources to diversify rural livelihood system through specialized agriculture, micro and small enterprises (MSEs) and cottage industries to create new business opportunities of high international standard unique to their wisdom and the culture. The spirit is to combat poverty and be self-reliant of the

economy through community's creativity in preserving indigenous knowledge (Shinawatra 2005; Routray 2007). Even 2006 witnessed the OTOP product championship initiative based on a grading system. These induced certification and branding of products, established linkages between OTOP international platforms and promoted tourism in harmony with local peoples' ways of life (Mukai and Fujikura 2015).

It is well known that a large number of rural women in Thailand have always been contributors to the agriculture and nonfarm based micro and small-scale enterprises as means of their livelihoods and household food securities considerably before the introduction of the OTOP project (UNDP-HDIR 2004). In the arrival of OTOP project intervention, thus, women in rural communities grouped under the local bodies have restructured their so-called 'new workspaces', for creating value-added products on harvesting natural resources, agriculture and non-farm innovation with own capability, assets and resources (DFID 2007; Schumann 2016). However, the 'product championship' aims at trade, triggered competitions among established community's cooperatives and given top priorities for decision-making on branding and pricing, and control the quality and quantity of specific products (Torri 2010; Phonsuwan *et al.* 2011). The local people then adopted innovative strategies to link their livelihoods to MSEs and harvest natural resources to take advantages of trade offers while taking responsibility of household chores and food security (FAO 2005).

In view of this, the growing concern is that OTOP initiatives in these directions demonstrate that therefore both the project design and system are more likely resonant with the need and interest of previously existing women group-based entrepreneurship (WGEs), growing CBREs production system (Phadungkiatiet *et al.* 2011) and effective strategies for conservation of natural resources (Phonsuwan *et al.* 2011). Consequently, the OTOP initiatives leading to rural women participation is more likely to result in the creation of 'new workspace', efficient to accelerate endogenous products, process and engagement of women in the income generations, thereby ensure sustainable livelihood and women empowerment. However, there has been limited literature to explain how an OTOP project intervention with its execution to strengthen the rural management has an effect upon community producer's collectives in the emergence of new grassroots institutions (Peredo *et al.* 2006; Natsuda *et al.* 2012).

Although there are factors which enabled increasing the number of women workforce to register their products for competition but their effective participation, performances and creativity raise specific questions among the industrial sociologists, welfare economics, and grassroots feminists (Phadungkiatiet *et al.* 2011; Natsuda *et al.* 2012). Despite a set of nuance objectives of the OTOP projects, literature evident that the wholesale manufacture and marketing preoccupied with development has obstructed many small community industrial businesses to be qualified because they are not able to produce a large amount of goods or often retain star brand on their products (Denpaiboon *et al.* 2012). Nonetheless, there remains very limited literature to design a system to address those problems and obstacles that women groups or individual have faced in terms of taking seriously producers' feedbacks, monitoring and evaluation of the flow of products, its backward and forward integration including their social capital and self-reliance (Phonsuwan 2011; Shumann 2016). Furthermore, innovative rural management model to promote women enterprises is still quite important for the governing of micro-economic

activities, supply chain management, sustaining grassroots institutions and reducing gender disparities.

It is in the light of this, objective of this study explore and build knowledge on the OTOP programme performances in the context of its impact on sustainable rural economic management and on integrating women's group enterprises (WGEs) in Saraburi Province of Thailand. Consequently, present research aims to address how explorations through the narrative method of inquiry of case studies have contributed in-depth insights into the multifaceted complex issues in their real-life settings and fill in the research gaps. In response to the gender equal participation in the economy, the paper looks at transitional development strategy if any for scaling up the human economy and organizing collective actions of CBREs while it deliver a range of support and service products.

Section two reviews the literature and presents the research questions and conceptual model. Data collection process and methodology is presented in section three. Section four discusses the outcomes of OTOP project interventions more generally and case studies more specifically. Case studies describe in detail an entrepreneurs' episode of OTOP. Section five presents a set of key findings in an interpretive manner to address possible strategic intervention through a feminist institutional framework for rural management on a sustainable approach. Section six concludes the research with policy implications for transforming the intangible benefits by scaling up collective insights and CBREs' socio-economic ventures in Thailand and in context of India.

Literature Review

OTOP Philosophy and Concept

OTOP policy draws attention into the One Village One Product (OVOP) philosophy and strategies of the regional development movement originated in 1979 by then-Oita Governor Hiramatsu in Japan (see figure 1). In the last decades, the spirit of OVOP strategy has become more globalized. One reason might be its commercial success for optimizing the local resource utilization.

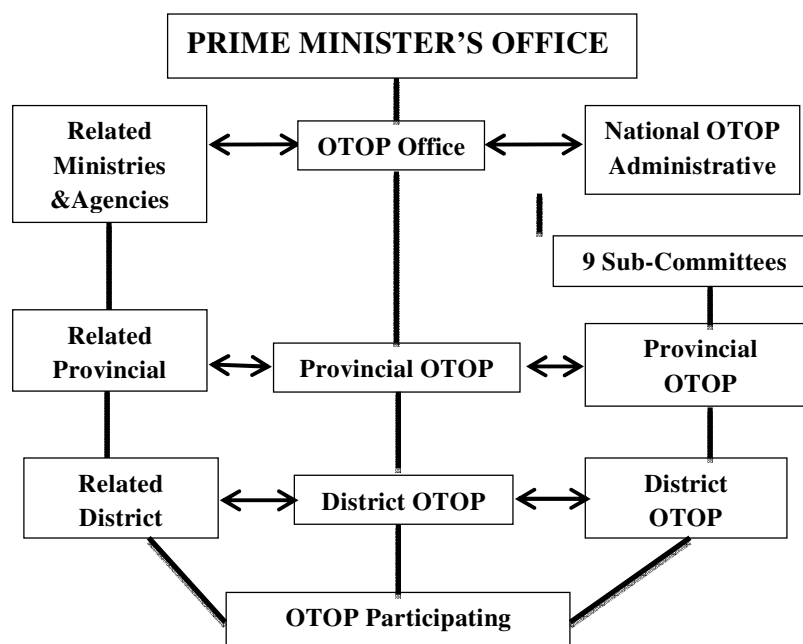
Precarious Condition of CBREs Participation

As per the estimation in the year 2010, the total 85,173 items were registered as OTOP products by 33, 228 producers. The composition of these items constituted of food, beverages, fabrics and dressing wares, non-medicinal herbs, furnishing, decoration and souvenirs. In 2014, producers of the community-based enterprises (CBEs) and WGEs accounted for 66.8 percent, single owner enterprises 31.1 percent and SMEs 2.2 percent respectively (CDD office Bangkok 2014). Further, approximately 65,000 groups were registered as only CBEs in Thailand. Thus, it is assessed that 34 percent of CBEs in the country were engaged in OTOP activities alone. Furthermore, only 10,982 products were selected out of the 85,173 items to receive one star to 'five stars' product champion certification. Hence in the year 2010 almost 87 per cent of products and its producers' were rejected for further participation. As per the estimation the total those received five stars, four stars, three stars and only one star were 1449, 3500, 2904 and 2652 respectively (CDC office Bangkok 2014).

OTOP Administrative Structure

Thailand consists of 76 provinces, 877 Districts (*Amphoe*), 7,255 Sub-Districts (called *Tambonin Thai*) and 79,830 Villages (*Moobaa*) including Bangkok metro and Pattaya city (*Thaitamboon2012*). OTOB scheme was implemented at *Tambon* level. However, sub-district is the basic administrative unit in Thailand. Figure 1 shows that Thailand's OTOB policy development procedure has a concrete administrative system with a Top-down approach. The study area Phukhae production development and promotion centre under Saraburi Province demonstrate one of the local level administrations. At village level, member of the OTOB group commonly elect the Local administrators.

Figure 1 OTOB Administrative Structure.



Source: Adapted from Takanashi (2009:8)

Gendered Work place and Women Group-Based Enterprises

There are factors which increased more number of CBEs and WGEs to register their products for competition but the precarious condition of workforce participation in OTOB projects raise specific questions among the industrial sociologists and grassroots feminists about their performances, creativity and sustainability (Phadungkiatiet *al.* 2011, Natsudaet *al.* 2012). Feminist geography literature emphasizes that studying women enterprises or self-employment is to study gendered being in the gendered spaces. Further, Gendered workplace is intertwined with the social construction of space and people's perception of women's entrepreneurship or self-employment (Berg 1997; Acharya and Lund 2002). Southern feminism and welfare economics scholars call attention to the fact that woman enterprises or self-employment do not function on a pure economic rationality. Such economic ventures can also be motivated by the non-

economic factors that stem from their multi-complex gendered positioning—geo-political and socio-economic condition of the paid and unpaid domains of work relationships—and expectations that possess in society at large (Mohanty 1997; Acharya and Lund 2002; Phadungkiati *et al.* 2011).

My own observation at the time of field enquiry made me clear that a large number of WGEs in the OTOP are still concentrating into certain agriculture and non-farm sectors, tend to remain micro and small, indigenous base and hence earn less. Nonetheless, women performances do not seem up to the mark of star grades but still are continuing as piece rate workers. The better score producers were found to be especially men and work as owner managers (Mukai and Fujikura 2015). Hence, it is significant to understand why and how women's ability to access workplace opportunities of neo-liberalist economy remains precarious (Mohanty 1997; Acharya 2011)

CBREs from Social Capital Perspectives

Most government agencies think inside out—the number of activities or spread—'we strategized so many rural management schemes and spend so much money hence we are a socially responsible government'. However, while economic geography, competing environment and product expansion performances of OTOP are largely researched, its informal expansion, human economy and intangible benefits in a micro-organizational environment within a geographical proximity lacks extensive research (NESDB 2010; Phadungkiati *et al.* 2011). Thus a lack of reflexivity on obscured respondents' perception and experience which add value to the subjective measures. As per the OTOP objectives, CBEs are collective business ventures and community entrepreneurs are the significant sets of actors in OTOP development value chain. Both men and women in the community act systematically as both entrepreneur and enterprise in the generation of social capital and recreation of common goods.

Growing evidence demonstrates that social capital is critical for communities to sustain the result based management of projects. According to Anirudh Krishna (2007) the levels of social capital influence collective actions may capture the multidimensional effects of social capital. In the present these are CBEs and WGEs and their network, norms of reciprocity, cooperation and trust. In recent decades the government and corporates are pursuing significant partnerships with NGOs and community organizations for a strategic intervention and measure its impact to empower the farmers and peasants. Integrating the concerns of women entrepreneurs' capabilities and bargaining position is actually intended to mainstream discourses of human economy, social capital and wellbeing (Mies 1998; Sen 1992: 40; 49; Acharya 2011). Although there are factors which enabled increasing the number of women workforce to register their products for competition but their effective participation, collective agendas, creativity, leadership, and performances raise specific questions among the industrial sociologists and grassroots feminists (Phadungkiati *et al.* 2011; Natsuda *et al.* 2012).

Research Questions

The key research questions are as below:

1. Is OTOP project design and system empathetic towards a holistic community engagement, gender equity and sustainable rural economic management approach?

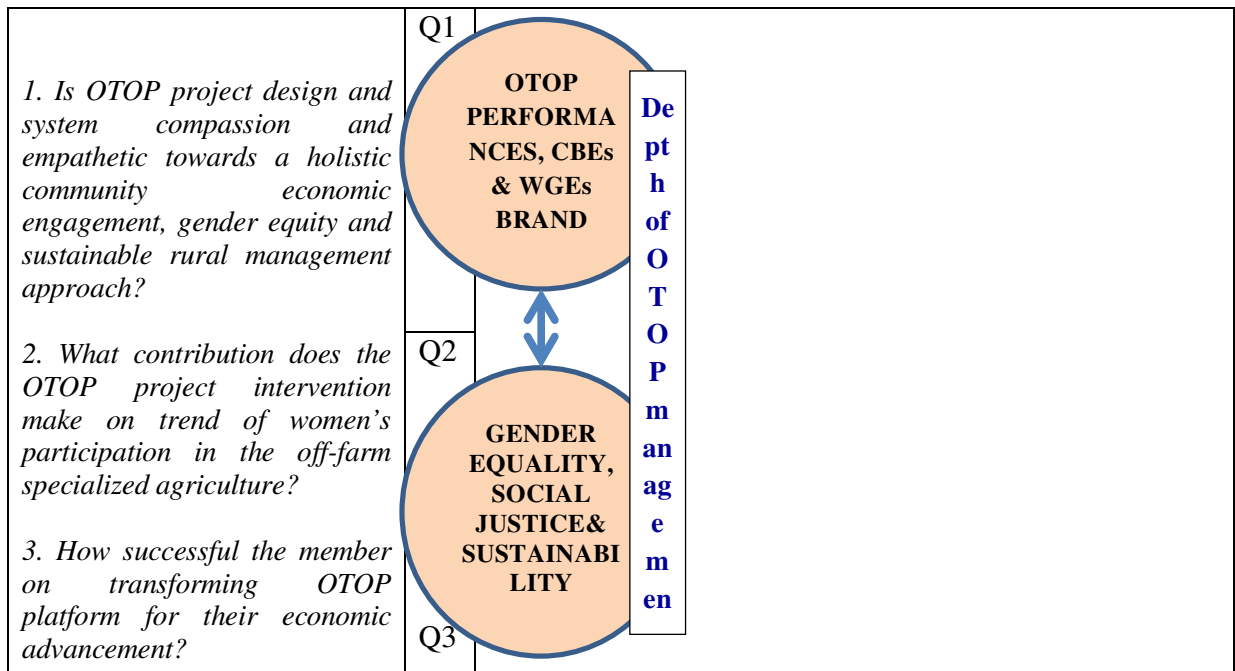
2. What contribution does the OTOP project intervention make to bring about change on the trend of women’s participation in the off-farm livelihoods and specialized agricultural production based economy in Thailand?
3. How can the member producers whose products have been rejected be successful on transforming OTOP platform for their future advancement?

By placing the women producer’s capabilities in the centre of enquiry, next section discuss how experience and perception of women be informed for re-conceptualizing the marginalization processes to which they are subjected.

Conceptual Framework

Dismantling and comprehending the precarious condition of women community-based enterprises and self-employment in the OTOP semi-regulatory institutional space from the perspective of feminist geography theory are actually not only situating women’s experience at their sites of struggle as victims of the structural environment of commercial mode of production promotion or masculine entrepreneurship environment or as sufferers of a global commodification process but also comprehending the capabilities and wellbeing of women. The concept of ‘well-being’ is a person’s achievement of their ‘beings’ and ‘doings’ – or their ‘capabilities’ to function (Sen1992). Nevertheless, this enables me to explore the narratives of the women’s entrepreneurial ‘experiences’ and perceptions. This is in this light, that the non-feminist discourses and texts on women’s identity in the CBREs, human economy and social capital this study emphasized that a feminist conceptual framework may serve an alternative to create space for women’s capabilities and sustainable OTOP.

Figure 2 conceptual models depicting the depth and breadth of OTOP performances for scaling up CBEs and WGEs’ economic ventures and sustainability.



		Low Breadth of management strategy	High Depth, Low breadth	High Depth, High breadth	OTOP
			Low depth, Low breadth	Low depth, High breadth	

Source: Authors’ research 2016

In view of the backdrop, this article considers the grassroots feminist and post-colonial scholars’ emphasis on reflexivity and the self in the knowledge production process. Figure 2 first, depicts the three above questions to map OTOP performances towards emerging number of CBREs and especially WGEs. Second, four quadrants of the conceptual model represents different level of performances on the basis of the breadth of project interventions and the depth of CBRE’s engagement, and third revitalizing the high-high outcomes, particularly fascinating to me is the carrying into the being of the “new new” (Spivak 1999; Shiva 1988:68; Lund et. al. 2016) network, connection and flow of innovation. This conceptual model would enable design a feminist framework for transforming individual and collective capabilities, women entrepreneurship and inclusive growth.

Data Collection, Sample and Methods

How we discover what we know? The study is based on the qualitative research approach. In order to validate the research questions field information on the impact of various OTOP interventions upon CBREs, literature review and fieldwork and follow up communications were conducted in 2012. Hard data were organized from OTOP Annual reports (2011 and 2014). The present research is based on narrative method of field inquiry and case studies analysis. The native Thai language expert and field guide has facilitated the discussion and translated conversation of the researcher and research participants. Further, to avoid the research biases, opinion of few protagonists were translated into English language and quoted in original.

Narrative Inquiry in Subjective Perceptions

Qualitative research is deeply relying on researchers’ interpretation of the protagonists’ experiences, self-observation, events, documents, and interview material. Subjective measures of perception and experience are vital to situate and theorize the construct of gender knowledge. This is the way enabled our understanding of the community engagement in OTOP scheme in Saraburi and its requirements for WGEs performances. The feminist geography and development scholars as best seen in this context that there can also reasonably be other forms of social differences at the sites (workplace) of struggle, that can maximize the preference of satisfaction or strategic interest. The noted differences are on the basis of caste, class, ethnicity, age, education, personal traits, skills,

ownership and affiliation to the patriarchal ideologies (Mohanty 1997; Acharya 2017). How to legitimate the collective voices? Hence, subjective interpretation of value that affects individual ability to represent in OTOP product champions competition is mapped out both from the OTOP management authority's perspective of 'perceived contribution' and women producer's perspective of 'self-perception' (Sen 1992; Agrawal 1995).

Sample

Sample framing was organized with stratified random sampling. There are 26 female and six male committee members of four production cooperatives were selected on their willing to speak for the interview purpose. They are from cookies production and distribution groups of Phukhae Business Centre (PBC), Khon-Hu-Chang foot mat production cooperative, Sunthopaban handloom weaving cooperative and Huay-Thong-Lang women craft and basket making cooperative. In-depth open-end edinterview was conducted with the three WGEs female leaders and two male leaders including four community stakeholders and five officials. Besides the observation of day today activities, three focus group discussion (FGDs) were conducted after a transect walk. The advantage of conducting FGD was that cooperative malls and related OTOP offices are nearby. Relevant feedbacks received through FGD has provided a collective consent and reduced dependence upon individual opinion.

Case Studies on Women Group Entrepreneurship under OTOP Programme

Case studies of one well-established production centres were used to contrast the means by which business entrepreneurs succeed but have had little effect in situating the intangible benefits that these women producers obtain from collective actions, network and flow – that is the human economy and social capital. Narrative method of inquiry draws evidence through a conversational mode of counter and encounter of protagonists' experience and insights on their achievements and challenges they faced (Acharya and Lund 2002). Their perspective provides evidence of the professional attitudes to and experiences of CBREs towards OTOP policy initiative and challenges they faced.

Conversation with the Key Informants

As an alumina of the Batch of 1993-94 of Regional and Rural Development Planning, School of Environment, Resources and Development and Gender and Development Studies of Asian Institute of Technology (AIT), Bangkok, I had opportunity to approach the academic experts of AIT to discuss and understand the present governance system and situation of CDD, CBREs and WGEs. Literature was collected from AIT library and Gender development Centre. The letter from NRCT and a generous help of my host, field guide and translator from Suan Dusit Rajabhat University have facilitated me to identify field locations and to re-establish the networking with government offices and CBREs centres at Sara Buri Province. Open ended interview with the Director General (DG) and staff of CDD Bangkok facilitated our visit to map out a macro level picture of various project intervention and their linkages to promote agribusiness and cottage industries in Thailand. The Senior CD of Sara Buri Province was glad to find an AIT alumna. He introduced us to the CDD staff members and the Head of the CDPO. We then briefly planned our field visit and contacted various women's group leaders to hold meetings.

Saimai the leader of Khon-Hu-Chang women's groups guided us to various locations and arranged our stay at her home for few days.

Measures

Statements were measured on a five-point Likert rating scale. At the time of transact walk of village near to a production centre, two households who were never participated in the OTOP projects were also investigated. To validate the field data information and to monitor the research progress, NRCT organised one day seminar entitled "Dialogue on knowledge and experience gained through data collection in Thailand" held on 29 June 2012. Exchange of the pilot study experience among Thai and Indian research scholars had fine-tuned our experience and insights. Draft report was shared with the research participants to triangulate the field information and revised final report was submitted to NRCT and ICSSR.

Result and Discussion

We observed that Phukhae Business Centre (PBC) was established with the contribution of 345 sq. meters of land worth 4 million baht by *Narirat* (eminent woman) in 2010. The daughter and granddaughter of *Narirat* have transformed the community enterprise venture to a social enterprise business model with the help of local farmers and producers' active participation and innovation. In the first phase of establishment of PBC, series of brainstorming workshops were conducted among stakeholders, community leaders, and production agencies to strategize phase wise agenda of the centre. The researcher and field guide have shared their field experience with around 30 cooperative leaders who were assembled in the monthly workshop at PBC training centre. A strength, weakness, opportunities and threat analysis exercise was conducted to deepen our insights. Feedback received from the key informants, women leaders and officials were analysed. Further, group exercises were presented by the members on how to strategize at large amount of goods production. For example newly launched lotus herbal flavoured drinks and ice creams. PBC of Saraburi is monitoring the work in progress on the basis of 8Ps. These are product, price, place, promotion, packaging, personal, public relations and power relationships. It is evident from two days monthly workshop participation that PBC is emphasizing on the aggressive marketing strategy.

Case Studies Analysis

Four numbers of case studies of OTOP project intervention are being narrated in detail to orchestrate an entrepreneurs' episode of OTOP. Their perspective provides evidence of the professional attitudes to and experiences of CBREs towards OTOP policy initiative and challenges they faced.

Case Study: Huay-Thong-Lang Women Craft and Basket Making Group

Huay-Thong-Lang village is named after a local tree that grows in pliantly in this part of Thailand. I became acquainted with Anurak Sriworason aged about 36 years old in the afternoon of 4th July 2012. Anurak present the identity of a highly innovative modern craft designer, master trainer and leading entrepreneur who loves parents and beliefs that craftswomen producers' skill in the communities can make a difference. Pong has a Graduation degree certificate from the Fishery Department while different varieties and

colour of cactus decorated at the Fishery Department were fascinating him since his student career. He has learnt the Cactus plant business nearby his college in the free time while working for the Fishery Department with a salary around 7500 baht per month for two years. Since childhood, however, Anurak keeps interest on various handicraft designs and techniques. Anurak as the elder son of the family felt responsive for his parents. He also learnt that utilisation of local resources would provide him with a better business opportunity.

Anurak started his own cactus plant nursery and distribution business at Huay-Thong-Lang village. Pong gains knowledge by visiting many exhibitions in Thailand and abroad. He closely observes the technological know-how and techniques required to produce things differently. Anurak collects cactus plant from JJ Market at Bangkok and cactus seeds from NE terminal of Bangkok where seeds come from New Zealand. While doing cactus and bonsai plant business in almost 1 hectare of homestead area, Anurak found the women group of her community under the Chairpersonship of her mother could be the potential producers given the right kind of awareness and training. Anurak with the help of his mother organised village women and imparted training on the basket, bag and lamp making designs. Of the total trainees at various locations, he found few were doing excellent. A total no of 150 women aged in an average between 35-60 years old had joined in Huay-Thong-Lang craft production cooperative from 9 different villages. Of which few disabled men and women, old aged women also got opportunities to earn a decent income. In an average 15 number of trained women from each village namely Huay-Thong-Lang, Banongtik, Pokpak, Nongthulaki, Pakhalsang Namyo, Wehangdang, Monklake, Watnongtadeang and Bangkhong Sai became the committee members.

A week before of my visit Anurak has imparted a six days training at Phaitang municipality province to 50 women one of which aged about 85 years old. Anurak says old are withdrawing from production and training process replacing with the young household members. Cooperative delivers all raw materials along with hand gloves and collects their products (baskets, bag, purses, lamps, decorative items etc.) from the doorstep. Producers who deposit products at his business centre receive immediate payment on piece rate basis as her mother could verify the product. In case products collected from the doorstep on Thursday, she receives payment the next week on the same day.

The benefit of being a part of OTOP because Anurak participates in the study tour and training, and business promotion platform at wholesale and retail distributaries at other provinces in Thailand, gets space at exhibitions and advertises his products at www.thaitamboon.com promotional channels. Anurak, however, perceives that unless one push up the matter no one can help. Much of his products rather are being sold at his own network and through trade channel of the private traders from Japan, Malaysia and Cambodia. Skhumbhit in Bangkok and few shopping malls around ordered his products as well. Anurak has used the website at www.thaicraftfaire.org and displayed the array of these products through Facebook. Anurak collect orders on a daily basis. Third, Anurak has applied for a loan to SME bank since long but is still on the waiting list. He has built up this 800 sq. meter of Production-cum-business centre part by part from the benefit so far. Anurak gives a rough estimation of one-month expenditure to buy different raw materials as below.

Table 3 Monthly Expenditure of Different Raw Materials.

Name of the raw material	Amount used in a month in ton	Cost in Bhat per kg
Long grass	1	76
GI steel thread	½	60
Plastic pipe of different colour & shapes	1	150
Cocoon	Three bora per year	85000

Source: Primary Survey 2012

Anurak estimates a profit of 25 percent per products after deduction of all raw material, labour, packaging, transportation and taxes cost. However, forecasts that down the year these products would be less profitable since he found that demand of few of his products has been reduced. He believes that producer must keep in mind the customer choices and its common utility. Hence, Ankur updates product innovation. He demonstrates the way money purse and lampshade made from silk cocoons can retain its quality after a water and detergent wash. So in a country like India, the household having dust accumulation problem can also dry-clean uses this beautiful lampshade. Anurak visited India for 15 days on a craft exchange study tour program. He was overwhelmed to see diversified craft productions and artisans in Delhi *Hatt* and craft Bazar.

Anurak loves Indian street food though in an exhibition trip to India was staying in a five-star hotel. He visits various exhibition ground to observe closely different craftworks. Anurak was interested to interact with students and show cash his products when heard that in Sri Sri University offer entrepreneurship and Agribusiness Management.

Anurak has a great faith on his 150 women members' association. His product delivery vehicle has a big logo of Huay-Thong-Lang Women's OTOP Group to avoid any unnecessary traffic checking and clearance while transporting products at various locations. Anurak expressed his much dissatisfaction on CDDs' 'utopian' rules for few important reasons. The long delay in processing the registration of few of his innovative products at CDO was compelled to loss patent right. OTOP charges 5000 baht per registration but as he could not satisfy the line agencies his new product lost popularity. The key perception emerged from the Huay-Thong-Lang FGD is that OTOP movement promoting CBREs without much focus on how to foster group solidarity, self-help and risk-taking attitudes and capability of poor individual women who do not achieved proven record of production in any selected trade. Multiple roles and responsibilities at home, and different motivations which women and men of the households might have when registering in the women's groups and cooperative societies are hardly tangible.

Key Findings

Based on the secondary data and narrative enquiry of four case studies analysis from the Saraburi province of Thailand it is observed that the strategic intervention of OTOP programme were to promote local entrepreneurs to maximize their command and control over their community's resources and economy (Routray, 2007; NESDB 2010). Six important key findings can evidence from the case studies. First, one of the strengths of OTOP movement is that it has been effective for business entrepreneurs with star certifications and they found to be protected from the macro-economic threat, trade

barriers and related external factors. The answer to address or will address the issues of those registered producers who could not able to achieve always a star score.

Second, Saimai and Ananda of KFC made possible to extent mushroom retail shop operating in a private market complex. The corporate and local demand of five different dishes has created employability for mushroom growers, chef and market managers in the value chain. Nelumbo of the cookies production centre, Chintana of handloom weaving centre or Anurak of basket and lampshade making centres are visionary leaders to work in collaboration. Leadership and cohesion are crucial to organize synergy of their group (Krishna 2002; Torri 2010).

Third, there are strong indications of change in women group workers identity. An OTOP rural development strategy as a process has greatest potential in creating a vibrant local economy. Internationalization of five star brand of the community making gained popularity in a global world with unavoidable market competitors and trade-related regulations.

Fourth, the aim of the OTOP is to move up the value chain. It is apparent from the case studies that member of WGEs work under different production centres cannot see OTOP support services or marketing criteria are enough (Phadungkiati et al. 2011; Natsuda et al. 2012) to represent their visibility, identity as producers, and drive their collective actions. However, the notion of business growth and socio-economic wealth created by the community collectives is one of the critical indicators to measure the management competencies in meeting challenges to attain business functioning and transform their intellectual capability. Social innovations, representation of OTOP reputation and insightful OTOP construct shall influence confidence and trust among CBREs and WGEs.

Fifth, the connected world no longer accepts the centralized model (Bhavnani et al. 2003) of one way OTOP communication that was the norm in the last century. This insight at a top level is necessary to tune OTOP activities to local CBEs collective needs and aspirations (Long 2001) rather than using a common approach across the global footprint (Phonsuwan 2011; Fujikura and Mukai 2015; Schumann 2016). Case studies enabled me to understand the combination of choices as means to maximize functioning of the economic behaviour or a vector of qualitatively diverse features and preference satisfaction of the WGEs (Sen 1992).

Sixth, a critical reflection of the case studies was the key to address possible strategic intervention for transforming the intangible benefits and to design a feminist institutional framework on a sustainable approach. As has been conceptualized in figure no 2 the study measured the breadth and depth of the OTOP project interventions and its implications for effective WGEs management strategies.

OTOP system for livelihood strengthening: WGEs in the wake of collective action, network and flow of resources exhibits a heightened sense of accountability in developing possible gender sensitive OTOP policy strategies to transform their production process, governance system, intangible benefits and scale up their social ventures. Considering the care economy can enable women the confidence to value the

intangible benefits that these women groups obtain from group solidarity and relationship (Krishna 2007; Phadungkiati *et al.* 2011).

Community enterprise governance: The study revealed that individual and groups of local producers have evolved with various new grassroots and people-centred leaderships in orchestrating alternative institutional architectures for capacitating larger individual and group including their social ventures.

Institutions and international business: A deeper and nuance understanding of the case analysis call for a feminist institutional framework better integrated into services and relationships to enhance inclusive and collective institutional space and transform producer group/individual interest, agency and capability (Acharya 2011). One major issue emerges from the case studies—the need for a holistic approach to understand how the process of product champion competitions has contrasted the meaning of grassroots women’s collectivism, network and flow. The five stars position, mass production of quality cookies to meet bulk order and its brand building are as important as leading the social capital generated by women producers collectives. OTOP intervention design with effective strategies can encourage group members to participate in the leadership training, strengthen their self-confidence and institutional cohesion.

Conclusion and Implication for Small Enterprise Promotion in India

The present study concludes that adaptation to changing needs, regulations and societal changes will be imperative. Linkages of OTOP to core business and strategic intelligence management will help government navigate the quickly changing rural landscape, production spheres (DFID 2007) and space for the transformation of CBREs’ social ventures and even manage unexpected twists. This can only happen if the OTOP administrators of tomorrow have not just knowledge and skill but insight. The learning insights will help the Thai government and elsewhere find breakthroughs that can help solve everyday problems, effective strategy for conservation of natural resources and management of relationships among the stakeholders.

The research on OTOP effect in supporting group based enterprises and activate partner in the economy evidenced that women entwined with their triple burdens and social positioning. In Micro, Small and Medium Entrepreneurship (MSME) context in India women’s self-employment or in public sector workplace women have access to but major constraint are their mobility, skill, assets and risk taking abilities to control the resources (Acharya 2011). In both the cases government insights and experience is vital however, require strong collaboration between practice of and access to the OTOP network, connection and flow of knowledge was limited. The economic sustainability would continue with the strong collaboration and solidarity of public and private sector organizations that have common goals through CSR. This in turn can facilitate a greater collective platform for such social-entrepreneurship ventures be it in India, Thailand or in the developing nation elsewhere rather than only depending upon existing OTOP government initiatives.

Further efforts is require to strategies platform for women and marginal entrepreneurs voices to be heard, engage human capital, mainstream gender issues and strategic framing of rural and regional management agendas. It means that the autonomy of the CBEs and

women group should lead the OTOP rural business management process in the long run. Withdrawal (or change of status) of external leadership to be replaced by local, legitimate and qualified leaders comprised of enterprising individuals, organized civil society and NGOs, and intellectual and creative assets managers (Acharya 2011). SEWA movement can be one of the outstanding examples provide evidence and insights to the women group based producers on how to organize and create a platform to articulate women producers' strategic interest, cooperation and security through visibility on their social ventures, legitimacy on community governance, gender justice and autonomy (SEWA 2012). The research demonstrate that to support such informal bottom-up activism OTOP ideology of cooperation shall adopt the 'new new' and in one sense can again go back to OVOP grassroots movement in Japan and SEWA holistic approach for the women workers of the informal economy (SEWA 2012) to capture the dynamics of women's collectives and transformation of stakeholders and their relationships.

Limitations and Implications for Future Research

An in-depth assessment is still required before drawing any recommendations out of this research work. Women group and the community leaders suggested in interviews that it is becoming increasingly important for the government to promote awareness of social entrepreneurship and bottom-up strategies for community enterprises. With growing numbers of the elderly and women joining in rural areas a larger and more representative sample and geographical coverage would be useful for addressing challenges and a more nuanced understanding of sustainable methods to achieve collective actions, gender equity, income, innovation, employment, local resource mapping and social capital through women group enterprises aligned with the principles of OTOP. Studies pertaining to specific regions within Thailand can investigate deeper understanding of OTOP impact and capture the regional ecosystems, challenges, needs, lessons, and nuances effectively.

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