

## ADVERTISEMENT

The village of Khao Din was facing disaster. Decades ago, the farmers in this community in central Thailand had abandoned traditional farming methods in favor of mono-cropping rice. By clearing forests, eliminating other types of plants and using more chemical fertilizers, the soil had become dry, lost its fertility and was eroding away - an example of human activities that have resulted in environmental degradation and global warming.

Today, the farmers of Khao Din are prospering once again - but this time in a manner that is sustainable and environmentally friendly. They turned their situation around by adopting more natural methods, diversifying crops and vegetation, and replanting and caring for the forest as a community resource. Khao Din, which had begun to resemble a desert, is green and thriving again as a community living in harmony with nature.

The experience of Khao Din has been replicated in many villages across Thailand and beyond its borders. In recent decades, the rapid pace of development and industrialization succeeded in lifting millions of people out of poverty. The cost of this progress, however, has been high. Forests are disappearing. The air, water and soil are increasingly contaminated. Moreover, greenhouse gases released by factories, cars and even farms are raising global temperatures. Climate change is threatening human existence.

Taking urgent action on climate change is one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations. The question remains, however, what is the most successful way to counter climate change? While some are searching for new systems or methodologies, the approach employed by the village of Khao Din is one that provides holistic and sustainable solutions. That approach is known as the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy and it was developed by the late constitutional monarch King Bhumibol Adulyadej of Thailand.

The Sufficiency Economy Philosophy goes far beyond farming in providing a framework to respond to climate change. Its principles support a menu of actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions including the increasing use of renewable energy, organic farming, waste recycling, protecting and replenishing our oceans, soil, forests and air.

That's why Thai businesses and government have also adopted a sufficiency mindset. Thailand is already the leader in solar and wind power generation in Southeast Asia. The government has set a goal of sourcing 30 percent of the Kingdom's energy needs from renewables by 2036. Thailand has formulated a Climate Change Master Plan and pledged to cut greenhouse gas emissions by 20 to 25 percent by 2030 as part of the Paris Climate Accords.

Two of nature's best defenses against climate change are the forests and the oceans. Both absorb carbon. Thailand has turned the tide on deforestation. Between 1990 and 2010, government, the private sector and communities have planted 1.4 million hectares of trees. Forest cover is now increasing, and 20 percent of the Kingdom's land is protected with 128 national parks, 60 wildlife sanctuaries and 60 non-hunting areas.

Along its coasts, Thailand is restoring mangrove forests, cracking down on polluters, limiting access to coral reefs and restoring damaged reefs through transplants. Most importantly, it is implementing new laws and rules against illegal, unreported and unregulated fishing to conserve and regenerate marine resources that keep the ecology of oceans in balance and provide food for millions.

Onshore, water is also essential to the environment. Using the sufficiency mindset, Thailand has adopted wiser water management methods. Villagers now build small check dams to irrigate fields, rather than relying on huge concrete government-built dams that alter ecosystems. Water is stored in 'monkey cheek' reservoirs advocated by King Bhumibol, cleansed with his patented aerators and replenished through cloud seeding in the "Royal Rainmaking Project."

When put into practice the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy addresses at least 7 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals directly related to climate change: Clean Water and Sanitation (SDG6), Affordable and Clean Energy (SDG7), Industry, Innovation and Infrastructure (SDG9), Responsible Consumption and Production (SDG12), Climate Action (SDG13), Life Below Water (SDG14) and Life on Land (SDG15).

If a menu of actions is required to counter climate change, the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy provides a recipe for an effective response. Thailand shared its experience when it chaired the G77 (Group of 77), comprising 134 developing nations, in 2016. "The SEP is particularly relevant in a time of shrinking resources and climate change," said Nigeria's Minister of Foreign Affairs Geoffrey Onyeama. Because climate change knows no borders, and partnerships are crucial to protecting our planet and preserving its delicate environmental balance for the benefits of all.

## THAILAND'S PATH FOR PROTECTING THE PLANET

Development in harmony with nature makes Thailand's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy a model pathway for countries to counteract Climate Change

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# THAILAND PROMOTES PARTNERSHIPS FOR A SUSTAINABLE WORLD

By sharing its Sufficiency Economy Philosophy as a model, Thailand is helping other developing nations achieve the Sustainable Development Goals.

Of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals of the United Nations, the final goal – revitalize the global partnership for sustainable development – may be the most compelling of all. Because the only way we can build a better world is by working together. So many of the challenges we face, from climate change to eradicating diseases, are borderless. Although we measure results on a nation-by-nation basis, unless nations can find ways to work together for the good of our planet and its peoples, our future will ultimately be unsustainable.

As the 2016 chair of the Group of 77 – the largest coalition of developing nations at the United Nations – the Kingdom of Thailand made its primary mission

to enhance cooperation between North and South and also to strengthen South-South Cooperation. This exchange of resources, technology and knowledge between developing countries, often referred to as the Global South, can be complementary to achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. As chair country, Thailand worked to transform this vision into action. Even before its chairmanship, Thailand had been sharing its own model of development among countries grappling with the challenges of a changing world. That model is known as the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy.

Initiated by the late constitutional monarch King Bhumibol Adulyadej through decades of working to uplift his nation's poor people, the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy is an approach to development and to life that is based on moderation, reasonableness and prudent decision-making. It prescribes living in harmony with the environment and making wise use of resources in order to build resilience and wellbeing. Its principles can be applied to farmers, communities, businesses and nations. In the context of the philosophy, sufficiency does not mean living in isolation. It calls for communities to work together for the common good – the essence of partnerships.

Thailand understands the value of working together. Once a country in need of development assistance, Thailand is now a donor nation, providing fund and sharing its resources of knowledge, technical assistance, scholarships and capacity building with less developed nations. In 2015, the Kingdom provided \$78 million in Official Development Assistance to other countries through the Thailand International Cooperation Agency, while foreign direct investment surpassed \$58 billion, with much of it going to the developing world.

While generous funding is important, even more value lies in Thailand's willingness to share its knowledge and experience with the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. To date, representatives from 105 countries have participated in workshops, seminars and training courses hosted by Thailand on the philosophy and its applications.

Thailand has been partnering with several countries to help them implement their own development projects based on Sufficiency Economy Philosophy principles and methods. Timor-Leste is employing decision-making processes based on the philosophy's framework for sustainable agriculture projects and to support the launch of small businesses. Cambodia has established a Sufficiency Economy village as a pilot for more communities. Indonesia is using sufficiency principles shared by Thai advisors for ecological farming projects that raise incomes and quality of life for villagers. And neighboring Myanmar is working with Thai partners to establish sustainable development centers and rural development projects on sufficiency principles.

Far beyond Asia, the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy is being adopted for the benefits of local peoples. In the southern African nation of Lesotho, Thailand has supported the establishment of a center to introduce integrated farming and agro-forestry farming that is protecting that nation's environment while providing greater food security and livelihoods for participants. Several nations in South America have also been applying approaches based on the philosophy.

"Development approaches like the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy of Thailand, that promotes development with values, which not only complement the [SDG] agenda, but our own national development framework, will certainly help us in implementing the SDGs," Guillame Long, Ecuador's Minister of Foreign Affairs, told the U.N. General Assembly last year.

Achieving the Sustainable Development Goals by 2030 will require commitment and perseverance. For some countries in the Global South with limited resources and capacities, the tasks at hand may appear enormous. Despite its own limitations, Thailand achieved the Millennium Development Goals ahead of schedule, owing a significant degree of that success to the Sufficiency Economy Philosophy. Thailand is willing to partner with any country seeking knowledge, expertise and a proven path to sustainable development. Because there is only one way to build a better world – and that way is together.