

Food Security for Rural Elderly in Thailand

1. Background

Thailand is rapidly entering an aging society. By 2024, the elderly population is projected to exceed 14.6 million, making up about 21% of the total population. The demographic shift calls for support in various areas, particularly food security and income generation in rural areas.

Data show that approximately 5.1 million or 40% of elderly people in rural areas struggle with poverty and inadequate food supply, especially those whose health conditions prevent them from working as they once did. This situation is worsened by the migration of younger family members to urban areas, which leaves elderly relatives with less family support. Additionally, elderly people increasingly rely on a social welfare system that does not fully meet their needs.

Agriculture in these areas also faces challenges from recurring droughts and floods due to climate change. Although many elderly people possess valuable agricultural skills, physical limitations prevent them from farming.

In response to these challenges, the Population and Community Development Association will launch the “Food Security for Rural Elderly in Thailand” in the belief that the elderly are a fresh source of development, growth, and transformation for rural communities. This initiative aligns with the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), particularly Goal 1 (No Poverty), Goal 2 (Zero Hunger), Goal 3 (Good Health and Well-being), SDG 7 (Affordable and Clean Energy) and Goal 10 (Reduced Inequality).

This project empowers the rural elderly by enhancing food security, enabling sustainable income through safe food production, reducing poverty, tackling social inequality, and improving their quality of life through greater self-reliance.

2. Objectives

- 2.1 Create sources of safe vegetable production: Encourage elderly people to grow home garden vegetables for their own consumption, which will help lower household expenses. Any surplus can be sold to generate additional income.
- 2.2 Enhance psychological and economic value: Support elderly people to be involved in vegetable production, which enables them to gain financial independence and dignity.
- 2.3 Serve as a learning resource for the community: The project will set as a model for vegetable growing and income generation that can be expanded to other communities, strengthening food security at the local level.
- 2.4 Promote affordable and clean energy utilizing in vegetable production to improve efficiency and reduce maintenance costs.

3. Target area

30 underprivileged elderly families from 6 villages in Nang Rong District, Buriram Province.

4. Implementation

- 4.1 Preliminary meetings: Organize meetings with relevant stakeholders, including local administrative organizations, community leaders, temples, and elderly groups, to explain the project's objectives and implementation approach.
- 4.2 Study trips: Arrange study visits for elderly people to areas with successful vegetable gardening projects, providing an opportunity to exchange techniques and methods suited to local conditions.
- 4.3 Designing vegetable plots: Work with elderly people and the community to design accessible, raised vegetable plots that meet their needs, with consideration for easy maintenance and sustainability.
- 4.4 Training on vegetable planting: Conduct training sessions to provide elderly people and their family members with essential knowledge and skills for vegetable planting and garden management.
- 4.5 Setting up vegetable plots: Distribute planting tools and seed starter kit, install solar powered water system.
- 4.6 Monitoring and follow up: The Nang Rong District Integrated Rural Development Center will monitor the progress of the project, providing guidance and support to the 30 participating elderly families across the six villages.
- 4.7 Reporting: A progress report will be prepared six months into the project, followed by a final report at the project's conclusion, including recommendations for future expansion.

5. Timeline

The project has a total duration of 12 months.

Activities	Months of implementation											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Preliminary meetings	■											
2. Study trip		■	■									
3. Design vegetable plots		■	■									
4. Training on vegetable planting		■	■									
5. Setting up vegetable plots and solar system			■	■								
6. Monitoring and follow up			■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
7. Report						■						■

6. Total budget of 900,000 Baht (nine hundred thousand Baht)

		Budget (Baht)	
ACTIVITIES cost			720,000
1	Preliminary meetings	20,000	
2	Study trip	75,000	
3	Design vegetable plots	10,000	
4	Training on vegetable planting	100,000	
5	Setting up vegetable plots and solar system	450,000	
6	Monitoring and follow up	50,000	
7	Reporting	15,000	
ADMIN cost			180,000
	Project management		
Total			900,000

7. Expected Outcomes

7.1 Enhanced food security: Elderly people will be able to reduce household expenses by growing their own vegetable. They will benefit from sufficient food supply for personal consumption.

7.2 Regained dignity and economic value: By participating in vegetable production, elderly people gain not only income but also a sense of pride, both in their self-reliance and in their contribution to the household income.

7.3 Model for food security and learning resource: The project will serve as a model for food security and income generation that other communities can learn from. It will promote food production by utilizing solar energy and low-maintenance method. Sustainable food security is strengthened for elderly people over time.