

# Network Construction Food Security of Local Fishing Community in Thailand

Supanut Subnawin, Anurak Singchai

Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Phetchaburi Rajabhat University, Phetchaburi, Thailand

Email: Simgchai99@gmail.com

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## Abstract

The objectives of this research are 1) to study the process of creating a security of food community network for local fishing community in Thailand and 2) to study network management in order to create food security in local fishing community in Thailand. The research is a case study using a qualitative research method using the depth-interview as a tool, and the data was collected from the Fish Raft Community Enterprise Group in Phetchaburi, Thailand. The researcher used purposive sampling method as a criterion for selecting key informants who were 1 head of local fishing group, 40 representatives of local fishing group, and 3 representatives from related government agency which were Phetchaburi Provincial Community Development Office, Provincial Fishery Office and Sub-district Administrative Organization. The results of the study found that the process of creating the security of food network for local fishing community in Thailand can be divided to 2 phases. First phase included a study from the model community forming into groups to create food security in the community. Second phase was the operation in accordance with the community objectives including campaigning against inappropriate and illegal fishing, planning and promoting the management of natural resources in the community to generate income, and economic conservation of animals. Managing the network to create food security in the local fishing community in Thailand found that local fishing community had made agreements together to organize network structures, define roles and responsibilities for the members, and establish rules for the network community to be functional.

## Keywords

Network, Food Security, Local Fishing Group

## 1. Introduction

Thailand has given importance to food security policy, the 20-year National

Strategic Plan (Phetchaburi Provincial Office of the Prime Minister, 2022), mentions food security policy as national growth and the well-being of the people sustainability of the natural resource base and environment energy and food security in line with the National Economic and Social Development Plan No. 13, 2023-2027 (Office of the National Economic and Social Development Council, 2024). The plan has set goals for the development of Food security has the goal of developing infrastructure and management systems for quality, food security and sustainability. Developing a management system for food security promotes communities to have access to food security in terms of quantity and complete nutrition including a food reserve system to have a variety of formats, safe, adequate, and support the creation of a model area for community food reserves. It reflects that Food security is important in terms of policy leading to practice including having enough food. Safe according to nutritional principles access to sustainable food sources and reserves.

Phetchaburi is located in the western region of Thailand. It is a creative food city and has abundant resources with an identity, especially the local fishing community, which has a way of life and community culture creating a career that creates income for the community. From the statistical data of the Phetchaburi Province Fisheries Office of Thailand, it was found that there were 2691 fishermen, 2484 fishing boats, divided into 566 commercial fishing boats and 1918 local fishing boats, with the largest number in Ban Laem district. 1281 boats, followed by Cha-am district with 419 boats, Mueang district with 188 boats, and Tha Yang district with 30 boats, respectively, with a catch volume of 14,401 tons. The value of aquatic animal production is 1210 million baht (Phetchaburi Province Fisheries Office, 2024) showing that local fishing community in Phetchaburi is one mechanism that is economically important at the community level. It has a relationship with natural resources, way of life and community culture reflected the picture of food security in Thai communities. The value of aquatic animal production is 1210 million baht (Phetchaburi Province Fisheries Office, 2024) showing that Local fishing community in Phetchaburi Province, Thailand. It is one mechanism that is economically important at the community level. It has a relationship with natural resources, ways of life and community culture reflecting the picture of food security in Thai communities.

However, nowadays, local fishing community in Phetchaburi, Thailand has been facing problems in terms of lifestyle and source of livelihood because aquatic animal resources that were once abundant in the past are decreasing. They are becoming more difficult to find even though the efficiency of fishing gear has been increased to have the ability to catch more animals, which requires more time to fish and the income from catching aquatic animals is not enough to cover daily expenses. This has changed the simple way of life, full of generosity towards one another, like the brothers and sisters of the local fishing community that used to be in the past. The people have different lifestyles and have to struggle to earn a living competing for resources and fishing areas has become a conflict between resource users (Mukkaew, 2022). Consistent with the situation of

marine and coastal resources in Phetchaburi, it was found that access to the utilization of aquatic animal resources often faces problems due to wastewater from households, garbage problem from tourists and the use of illegal or illegal fishing gear. This has impacted the local fishing community. Aspects of utilization of resources which are in the public domain. This leads to conflicts between those affected and those creating the impact (Phetchaburi Provincial Office, 2023) that reflects the problem of food security in local fishing community, the utilization of natural resources food insecurity situation in local fishing community, and the impact on local fishing community in Phetchaburi. At the same time, local fishing community in Phetchaburi has established a food security network among local fishing community and external agencies to solve problems.

This research article focuses activities that create groups, which may be a group of organizations or group of people for exchange purposes organizing activities or production between member organizations. It requires mutual interaction before making an agreement to become a network organization, social network for food security in local fishing community in Thailand. That will be beneficial and a guideline for community development to be strong and sustainable in the future.

## 2. Research Objectives

- 1) To study the process of creating a security of food community network for local fishing community in Thailand.
- 2) To study network management in order to create food security in local fishing community in Thailand.

## 3. Literature Reviews

### 3.1. Social Network in Community Concept

The social network in community concept is the main concept that summarized important ideas of creating the network in the community.

Thanaphruek Chamarat (2011) explained the “common ground” concept of social networks, which is rooted in the theory of exchange (Exchange Theory). This theory focuses on studying the actions of people in society at the micro level. There is an assumption that whatever we do, people have a reason and expect a reward. This is considered based on incentives and being punished until it developed to study the actions of people in society at the macro level.

Social networking refers to the process of creating social relationships among individuals, groups, and communities through social interaction by doing activities together, setting objectives, the desired goals of individuals, groups, and communities. There are types of social networks are as follows:

Types of social network can be described in various ways according to various criteria. There are (some) academics who classify social networks according to their goals. Seri Phongphit (2022) explained that there are many types of networks depended on the members, area, objectives, activities, and organizational

structure of the network such as:

1) Horizontal network—By coordinating people who are at the same “level” and in the same profession to join together to form a network, for instance, agriculture network, developer network, research network, etc. It may be an individual or it may be an institution or community such as a network of research institutes, data center network, community networks, etc. Some networks may be open to the general public, general institutions, anyone interested in the same topic or issue.

2) Vertical networks—They bring together people from different professions to form a network together, such as farmers, developers, academics, businessmen, politicians, organizations, communities, etc.

3) Most networks have been existed to enable communication, exchange of information and experiences to become better and easier. Also, there has been more convenient and better cooperation in various matters. Some of them can make a bargaining towards various powers better whether it is a government or private organization, community organization, which makes it easier to receive attention and assistance.

4) A number of networks are existed to foster cooperation in research, education, training, and resource management, market management. Some networks exchange resources such as communities and local agricultural products. Some focus on coming together for the environment conservation of resources in the community campaigns to make society aware of certain matters.

This research article focuses on the process of building social networks, a horizontal network, by coordinating people at the same level of the same profession come together to form a network, and a vertical network that brings people from many different professions into the same network.

### **3.2. The Food Security Concept**

Thailand has defined the meaning in the National Food Commission Act 2008 as follows: Food security means people in the country are able to access the food that is sufficient for consumption. Food must be safe and has appropriate nutritional value according to age needs for good health including having a supporting production system maintain ecological balance and the stability of the country’s natural food resource base in both normal and disaster situations. Public disasters or terrorism related to food, which can be seen that the above definition refers to food security in terms of where food comes from production process and natural resource and environmental context.

The study of [Shongsiri Wichiranon \(2022\)](#) has defined food security to cover the issues of “right to access resources” and “local wisdom in resource management for sustainable self-reliance” by giving the definition that “food security means the well-being of families and communities and being able to be self-sufficient in food. They must have rights and have easy access to soil, water, forest and natural food resources and use knowledge, wisdom, skills, ability, and

technology available in the community to organize and collect those resources in a manner appropriate to the way of life. Community culture and ecosystem will also enable families and communities to have sufficient food for consumption at all times of need. Moreover, the food must be able to be used sustainably.

Kritsana Mukkaew (2022) has added the definition of food security to cover the dimensions of community life, biodiversity, self-reliance and sustainable development by defining food security as “a state in which all people have the right to receive adequate, nutritious, and safe food, and that local communities have the right to access and utilize natural resources. Biodiversity can be self-reliant in terms of production factors from the community level to the national level at a high level. There is a system for producing and distributing food to consumers in a sustainable, supportive and fair manner. People can participate in policy making at all levels including being able to inherit food culture and local ways of life that firmly support health and the environment”.

It was noted that defining food security as having “common points” includes: access to adequate food, safety is consistent with the natural resources in the community, the right to access food and resource management for self-reliance that is appropriate for one’s way of life, community cultural ecosystem, the use of natural resources for food security, and be able to be self-reliant in terms of production factors from the community level and food distribution to consumers. According to the observations data, it can be divided into 4 aspects: the first aspect is resource and ecosystem management in order to have food sources in the community, the second aspect is community rights, the third aspect is community lifestyle and culture, and self-reliance in taking advantage of resources in the community.

In conclusion, the concept of food security in this article focuses on 4 aspects: the first aspect is resource and ecosystem management in order to have food sources in the community, the second aspect is the community rights, the third aspect is community lifestyle and culture, and the fourth aspect is self-reliance in taking advantage of resources in the community.

## **4. Research Methodology**

This study is a qualitative research and case study research. Population and sample group, research tools, data collection and data analysis are as followed.

### **4.1. Research Area**

The research area was the local fishing community in Laem Phak Bia sub-district, Ban Laem district, Phetchaburi. The community has the strength of being a local fishing group as a model for creating food security in community in Phetchaburi.

### **4.2. Key Informants**

This research studied the local fishing group, namely the Fish Raft Community Enterprise Group in Phetchaburi. There were key informants who were 1 local

fishing group president and 40 local fishing group members. The research used the purposive sampling design as the researcher selected a local fishing group member for at least 3 years, 3 representatives of relevant government agencies, including the Community Development Office, Phetchaburi Provincial Fisheries Office, and representative of the Subdistrict Administrative Organization. The overall number of key informants was 44.

### **4.3. Data Collection**

In-depth interview was used for the research tool as it was conducted using interview guideline as the tool to interview the key informants who were the president of the local fishing group, the members of the local fishing group and the representatives of the related government agency. The main points according to the interview guideline were the process of network creation and management of community food security network of local fishing group in Phetchaburi.

### **4.4. Data Analysis**

Data analysis included driving group unity and group management process to create food security in the local fishing community in Phetchaburi from in-depth interviews. The data were separated and categorized to make comparison to find relationships of the data for similarity and difference using theoretical concepts as a guideline to explain the objectives and to find patterns conclusion which was to be analyzed using qualitative method with content analysis technique in order to find inductive analytic conclusion then presented the data in the form of analytical description.

## **5. Research Conclusions**

### **5.1. The Process of Creating Social Network Community Food Security of Local Fishing Group in Thailand**

The results of the study found that the process of creating social network for community food security of the local fishing group in Thailand can be divided into 2 phases: the first phase was study and learning and the second phase was the implementation of group objectives.

#### **5.1.1. The Study Phase**

Laem Phak Bia community is a community on the coast. There has been a long-standing occupation of local fishing on the coast. In the past, the prices of aquatic animals in the area were very low. Fishermen have also been facing problems of poverty, debt, and exploitation by middlemen and most fishing boats are in debt to middlemen. In 2007, the Thai Sea Conservation Association supported a group of 8 housewives and village committee members had the opportunity to study on the management of community fish rafts in Sathing Phra district, Songkhla, and they came up with an idea to solve the problems of local fishermen. After that, the meeting was held with local fishermen who were interested in this idea. They explained details about the operation of the commu-

nity fish raft for meeting participants to understand and raised initial funds to manage the community fish raft from group members. There were 37 members in total and thus formed the Laem Phak Bia Community Fish Raft Group. And there was an idea that if they could join together as a group, the government agency would certify them which would give opportunities for them to request budget support from the government agency, state enterprise, educational institutions and the private sector.

Therefore, the group requested the registration as a community enterprise at the Ban Laem District Agricultural Office on 14 November 2008 and used the name, "Fish Raft Community Enterprise Group", Laem Phak Bia sub-district, Ban Laem District, Phetchaburi. There were two local fishing boats joining the group that are not in debt to participate in the project. The local fishing group used working capital of 28,100 baht to purchase aquatic animals from the local fishing boats that are members. For local fishing boats that were in debt who wish to join a local fishing group could use the money raised from shares from the members to redeem boats for members who were in debt from middlemen. Currently, there are 7 boats joining the local fishing group. As a result of having community fish rafts, the price of aquatic animals has increased. Since aquatic animals are conserved by building fish houses, crab banks, and community fish rafts were separated by size and type of aquatic animals. This has caused aquatic animals that have no price or economic value become valuable products. The fish raft determines the price of aquatic animals for members, which has a higher purchase price than middlemen. This also caused middlemen to increase the prices of aquatic animals purchased in the community as well.

### **5.1.2. The Implementation of Group Objectives Phase**

In 2014, Fish Raft Community Enterprise Group made a demand and did a campaign against inappropriate and illegal fishing, such as illegal shellfish rake. The use of folded fish trap in the sea area along the coast of Laem Phak Bia was called, "idiot" as the locals claimed it to be the type of destructive fishing that causes aquatic animals to become extinct because fishermen in the area use the method of collecting shellfish by hand. However, there were boats from outside the area that illegally rake shellfish, causing small, tiny shellfish to be caught in large numbers at a time by stealthily using the "idiot" catching all aquatic animals of all sizes. This has caused aquatic animals to decline and not be able to reproduce in time. Fishermen in the local area were unable to engage in fishing. A complaint was filed with the provincial governor and Provincial Fisheries Office in order to enact laws to support the criminalization and control equipment for fishing. As a result, laws have been issued to control coastal fishing successfully.

In 2015, the Fish Raft Community Enterprise Group was developed continuously. This year, the community was selected to be a representative in the community enterprise competition and was judged by the committee to receive the Provincial Community Enterprise Award and the District Level 1<sup>st</sup> Run-

ner-Up Award. And towards the end of 2015, fishing laws were strictly enforced. As a result, some ships were unable to go to sea, causing the price of seafood to increase. At first, the fish were sorted on the raft to sell in the community, later the local fishing group sorted the fish on the boat instead which made a better price than selling in the market in the community.

In 2016, the Fish Raft Community Enterprise Group was selected by the Department of Agricultural Extension as a group to study, analyze and plan the promotion and development of agritourism, managing natural resources and community areas to create income as an agricultural enterprise for the agritourism research project in the western region.

There were workshops and study visits on tourism in the eastern region to create a 1 day and 2 days 1 night tour course, which allowed the local fishing group to have a meeting to discuss and find ways to develop the group into an agricultural tourism destination due to its tourist attractions, study tour places and various learning stations in the community such as blue crab bank, basketry group, grape seaweed hydroponic vegetables and a boat trip to see the lifestyle of fishermen at the boundary between the muddy sea and the desert sea.

When the project was publicized in various media, the place has become popular to many tourists and customers. So the community came up with an idea to open a market for selling fresh, delicious, safe seafood and processed seafood. the community fish raft has been organized to sell and serve as a place to eat seafood and to accommodate tourists who come to study at the Fish Raft Community Enterprise Group, Laem Phak Bia sub-district, Ban Laem district, Phetchaburi.

Furthermore, the local fishing community has also been selected from the province to be a pilot group of Pracharat company Rattha Samakkhi (the unity of state) Phetchaburi Co., Ltd. and attended the signing of the contract with Pracharat Rath Samakkhi Company between the Ministry of Commerce with the Fish Raft Community Enterprise Group and carry out important activities such as community tourism activities, OTOP products and community enterprises, building home for fish in the sea activity and driving groups to create community food security in local fishing groups in Phetchaburi. The summary is as shown in **Table 1**.

**Table 1.** Summary of the process of creating a social network for food security community of the local fishing groups in Thailand.

<b>Creating Social Network Process</b>	<b>Creating community food security process</b>
1. Phase 1 The study	-Study from a model community -Form a group to create food security in the community
2. Phase 2 The implementation of group objectives	-Create a campaign against inappropriate and illegal fishing—plan to promote natural resource management in the community -Conserve economic aquatic animals



## **5.2. Network Management to Create Community for Food Security of the Local Fishing Groups in Thailand**

The results of the study found that the management of the network to create food security in local fishing community in Thailand came from a mutual agreement among members. The objective was to create food security in the community by arranging the network structure defining roles and responsibilities for network members, and setting rules for the community in the network.

### **5.2.1. Network Structure Management**

Network structure from meetings to joint agreements was organized in the form of a committee of the fishing community, including the committee chairperson, vice chairman, secretary, treasurer, assistant treasurer, public relations, directors, business auditors of the group and group coordinator.

### **5.2.2. Appointing Role and Responsibility for Network Members**

The role and responsibility of the local fishing community network committee are appointed from meetings to make joint agreements. The chairman is responsible for managing affairs, inspecting and overseeing the work of the committee, act as a representative for contact, coordinate with third party, and act as a chairman of the meeting. The vice chairman is responsible for being an assistant to the chairman in managing the affairs of local fishing community, perform duty as an acting of the chairman when the chairman is not present, or unable to perform the duty. The treasurer is responsible for preparing income, expenditure, and balance sheets of the local fishing group and collect documents and evidence of local fishing communities for inspection. The secretary has duty regarding the administrative work of all community fish raft groups, take minutes of meetings and follow orders assigned by the local fishing community chairman. The public relations' duty is to disseminate the affairs of the local fishing community to members and the general public so that it is widely known. There are various procedures used in community operations such as group membership conditions. Those who bring aquatic animal products for the fish raft to manage must be members only. When applying for membership, the person must invest not more than 10 shares per person, at 100 baht per share. Members can bring their own products to sell. The percentage from sales will be shared with the group, 2 - 4 percent, as appropriate. In managing products for members, a management fee will be deducted from the price of fish sold in order to a management fee for the local fishing community group.

### **5.2.3. Rules and Regulations for Members**

Setting rules and regulations for members from meetings to come to an agreement together. Rules and regulations have been established for members to create regulations for joint conduct. All members must strictly follow the rules: 1) members must comply with fishing laws. It is prohibited to catch aquatic an-

imals using illegal fishing gear such as trawlers, run-of-the-mill nets, long net fish traps, grenades, toxins, etc., 2) use the size of each type of net not less than what is required by law, 3) do not use maggot fishing gear, dry catch net or crate net which has a small eye size of 2.5 centimeters, 4) fishing sites must be away from pollution sources, build a house for fish to conserve fish to have a place to live as a model community in many places. Therefore, there are activities to conserve coastal resources, for example, an activity that could continuously raising awareness among young fishermen in the area by doing joint conservation activity and setting spots for fish houses is considered the wisdom of the local fishing community. In the past, scraps of wood, branches, or coconut sap were used to tie into rafts or into piles and sank them near the canal or sea shore to allow aquatic animals to hide or eat the rotting remains of decaying branches. Then, fishing tools such as net would be used to surround the fish which later developed into large sap that was floated in the sea and used the light from a lantern to lure school of fish to gather into a large group.

In addition, the local fishing community has been working to conserve blue swimming crabs by taking blue swimming crabs that have eggs outside their shells and incubating them in plastic tanks. Later, when the eggs hatch, they will be released back into the wild. The blue swimming crabs that have eggs outside their shells that are hatched are obtained from fishermen. Another reason why fishermen are willing to give blue swimming crabs that have eggs outside their shells to the community is because fishermen see that at present there is an increase in the amount of blue swimming crabs in the wild not as little as before which means that the Blue Crab Bank had done it and got good results. Sacrificing a few blue crabs with eggs outside their shells in order to return them to themselves or nature. If a group of study visitors come to study during the time the eggs have hatched, the crabs would be ready to be released back into nature. The tourist can also take baby blue swimming crabs and release them into the sea. This is an activity that the study visitors are very interested in. The group management process for creating community food security in local fishing groups in Phetchaburi Province can be summarized in **Table 2**.

**Table 2.** Summarized the group management process for creating community food security among local fishing groups in Thailand.

<b>Network Management</b>	<b>Process of Network Management</b>
1. Network structure management	-Making an agreement -Network committee, network chairman
2. Making role and responsibility for the network members	-Role and responsibility of the network committee -Business inspection and work supervision of the committee
3. Creating rules for the network to operate	-Rules and regulations for network members -Economic conservation of aquatic animals

## 6. Discussion

### 6.1. The Process of Creating a Social Network for Community Food Security among Local Fishing Groups in Thailand

The process of creating a social network for community food security among local fishing groups in Thailand reflected an attempt to manage the community itself in solving problems that have been arising in the community.

If considering the concept of social capital that Anand Kanchanaphan has explained, social capital is a way of thinking and a knowledge system for managing the way of being in a community such as resource management, organizing relationships in living together in a community society whether it is the relationship between human beings and human beings man and nature or humans and supernatural things. This is a matter that requires complex thinking and involves knowledge systems and wisdom. Moreover, people must rely on rules to govern the use of that knowledge. This may be in the form of traditions, laws, or social rules. At the same time, there must be an organization that is responsible for managing knowledge in that matter, such as using various resources, social capital management, etc. (Kanchanaphan, 2013). Meanwhile, if considering the concept of social networks, Sathian Jirarangsiman (2006) and Seri Phongphit (2022) mentioned that social network, a social movement, that are the results from building relationships among individuals, groups, and organizations with goals and objectives, and some common needs. The activity that could be jointly carried out together and Thanapruek Chamarat (2011) divided the social network creation into 4 stages. The first phase has personal relationships and shared experiences which starts the social networking process where most of them started out having relationships in a narrow range of social activities. The second stage is transactional interaction after members form a loose network under the bond of a relationship of acquaintances and people who have already had experiences together. In this phase, exchange interactions begin to occur between each other, often by exchanging information and various resources. Next, the third phase is the coordination of interests. In this phase, there is a concrete exchange of benefits between each other. The last phase is the expansion of social networks by upgrading the network to be wider and stronger.

### 6.2. Network Management to Create Community Food Security among Local Fishing Groups in Thailand

Network management to create community food security among local fishing groups in Thailand reflected network management, network elements and network power. Such issues support the group concept in the community development dimension including two or more people who come together to carry out one activity joining together into this group would create power for community development. If there is effective management and operation, the community will gain more trust, faith, cooperation and support from other members, individuals, and other groups making the community stronger. This matter can be

used to solve problems and develop community. It also develops the ability of individuals to be ready to support other developments of the community. Supporting the group concept in the sociological dimension is when two or more people come together creating the activity among them. People interact with each other or are related according to a mutually accepted model where there is a feeling of connection and a sense of being one and the same. Narumon Niratorn (2010) suggested that activity that creates groups which can be both groups of individuals and groups of organizations that are intended for exchange and organized joint activity.

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### Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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