

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 General

An infrastructure project is the basic structure of an organizational system such as highway, railroad, airport, power station, waste disposal facility, etc. To construct these infrastructures often causes pollution or environmental impact to the surroundings including many residents who are living near the projects. Obviously infrastructure projects in Thailand, (such as dam construction, incinerator, chemical elimination plant, gas pipe project, etc.) are supported or disputed by local people. Most people are very interested in all of these projects. There are many problems related to environmental resources usage between project's proponent and local people especially in terms of environmental impact and public participation in the project development.

In the past ten years, there have been clear items stating that the human right and liberty shall be protected for the first time in the history of Thai Constitution. For example, the community has the right to participate in management, maintenance and use of natural resources and environments in a sustainable manner. The community also has a right to receive information and news from governments before the approval of any projects that affect the life quality and environment of community. It is the right of everybody to the protection of his or her environment. It includes the right of all individuals to be informed of plans and projects which may deteriorate their environment, and to participate in the procedure leading to a decision. The Thai constitution defined three groups that related to the human right especially the public participation in maintenance, and investigation of projects (unit 56). It is important to recognize that the success of project depend on the public acceptance. The public become of a nation's greatest resources for developing and implementing infrastructure project development.

Although there are many related studies about the model of public participation in the infrastructure project development, it seems difficult to apply the obtained knowledge to real situations. One reason is that many of the projects' procedures depended on legal regulations and most of them are not based on actual surveys. Moreover, the current participation model is not designed to improve the government's decision process or increase the acceptability of the project, except in the narrow sense of trying to win people over to the government's position, or exercise a form of "damage-control." Therefore, this research targets to analyze and evaluate the present status of public participation in development of infrastructure projects. Many projects in Thailand have some problems about environmental and social impact. Transportation and power plant projects were selected as important case study projects in country development. The Thai case study projects were evaluated and compared with case study projects in Australia. Moreover, lessons learnt from Australia projects are shown for improving and promoting the public participation process to bring Thailand better development.

Chapter 2 gives the literature reviews to illustrate the concept and principles of public participation in infrastructure planning. There are many studies about public participation in Environmental Impact Assessment.

Chapter 3 gives a framework of the analysis and intends to give the examples of infrastructure projects under the public participation process. Outlines of Case two power plants, namely Hin Krut and BLCP Power Plant Projects and one road project, namely Distributed Road Project of the Second Stage Expressway are compared with three case study projects in Australia: Tarong North, Wind farm Energy and Eastern Freeway Project.

Chapter 4 shows the result and discussion related to the properties of the case studies, especially in terms of the public participation process.

The final Chapter is conclusion and recommendation from the case study projects to improve the more and better public participation process in Thailand.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Many countries have found that it is not always easy to attract the private sector, as the conditions for their participation are, in most cases, very different from those of their traditions. There are different levels of participation appropriate for different situations, and it is important to decide where you stand. There is not one community to consider but they related to many interests and stakeholders. Questions arise as to whether and how more participative process can be integrated into the development of infrastructure projects in Thailand, especially in the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process. It is important to consider how EIA can be integrated into broader decision-making processes based on a participative approach.

## **1.3 Objectives**

1. Provide an overview of the present situation of infrastructure project in Thailand with regard to evaluation and participation.
2. Examine the extent to the law and regulations related to the public participation and develop a planning and policy framework
3. Obtain a clearer picture and find the weak points and strong points of public participation process in each case study project.
4. Develop the techniques and strategies to improve the public participation on development of infrastructure projects in Thailand.
5. Extend knowledge and extract issues to study in public consensus making through the case study of projects in Thailand and Australia.

## 1.4 Scope of Study

Consider two significant types of infrastructure projects that are essential for Thailand development.

### 1) Power plant projects

The tendency of energy consumption is further continued in the future, following the industrialized countries. EGAT is set to expand the power generation capacity to keep up with growing demand. Many power plant projects in the past have been implemented under the decision of decision-maker without community consultation or public participation. Hin Krut power plant project is given as an example of an improper public participation process.

### 2) Transportation project

Transportation infrastructure has been developed continuously in Thailand involving public transportation, toll roadwork and railroad infrastructures. Population increases, growth of Bangkok Metropolis, and rapid economic development have increased transportation needs. Many transportation networks are provided for convenient connection in many areas, however most have impacts on the people in the project area. A case study, Distribution Road Project of the Second Stage Expressway System Project, showed the problem about the public protest against the construction of project. The construction of this project has never been started due to conflicting public opinion among residents in the project area especially the Bankrua community.