

## **ELDER TREATMENT DEVELOPMENT PROJECT FOR LOCAL COMMUNITY**

Darunee Rujkorakarn\* and Roslan Bin Amirudin \*\*

### **Abstract**

This project aims to help and improve the quality of life for elders implemented by teachers and students in the Ban Yang, Maha Sarakham, Thailand. The students discussed with the elders to determine their needs and problems. This project is a jointed work between 3 faculties, Faculty of Nursing, Faculty of Architecture, Urban Design and Creative Arts and Faculty of Engineering, Mahasarakham University, Thailand. Each faculty has different responsibility. The Faculty of Nursing mainly focused on taking care of the elders' health. The Faculty of Architecture, Urban Design and Creative Art, and the Faculty of Engineering worked together to rebuild the most suitable houses for the elders. The research activities were firstly provided activities that the elders could join and helped reducing their stresses. Secondly, recreated the activities that could help the elders doing exercises for improving physical health. Thirdly, rebuilt the elders' houses suitable for their needs. Finally, improved the temples to be more comfortable and easier for usage for the elders. The results of this project showed significant improvement in quality of life for the elders under the research areas, which could be both during getting the local people to involve and teach the elders regarding the proposed knowledge and skills and after the project completed.

**Keywords:** health, quality of life, elders, improvement

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

From the survey among elder about their need we found that, the top 5 diseases among elder are Gastritis, Osteoarthritis, Gout, Rheumatoid arthritis, and Dementia. Most of them are diseases that affect body

movement and causing problem in their daily life. There are also other problem like sighting and falling. Some of them had fallen more than 4 times and most of the time it's happened in their own home. Other than is by using TUGT to treat their

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\* Assoc.Prof.Dr. Darunee Rujkorakarn is currently the Dean of Faculty of Nursing, Mahasarakham University, Thailand.

\*\* Prof.Dr. Roslan Bin Amirudin is currently a professor of the Department of Quantity Surveying, Faculty of Built Environment, Universiti Teknologi, Malaysia.

falling we found that the probability that most of them falling is 15.38% and people that unable to walk is 3.85, this mean that these elder have a total of 19.23 to fall over. This fall over can also lead to disability or paralysis and caused them to become elder that stuck at home or elder stuck to bed eventually. For mental note, this elder also have 21.81% to become depressing.

## 2. PURPOSES OF THE PROJECT

The purposes of the project are to create and design a new plan for the community where the local people must be involved and to increase the knowledge for the elders and young people who may become the elder persons in the future to be able to look after themselves.

## 3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### 3.1 Preparation

Step 1: Regarding the preparation for the research project, the authors launched the project under program named “One Community One Project”, which was the compulsory program for all the Mahasarakham University students. The participants under the project included of students and teachers from 3 faculties: Faculty of Nursing, Faculty of Architecture, Urban Design and Creative Art, and Faculty of Engineering. Then, proceeded to discuss about the project and review the data from last year, as well as, used the data as the reference bases for the project. After that, each of the faculties was assigned the roles

under the project. The research adapted the well-known Health Department frame work to be used for taking care of the elders. Those frame works were:

*No Fall*: Faculty of Architecture, Urban Design and Creative Arts was the main in-charge for this work part.

*No Forget*: Faculty of Engineering was the main in-charge of this work part.

*No Depress*: Faculty of Nursing was the main in-charge of this work part.

Step 2: determine the relevant problems and the needs of the elders by interviewing them together with the teachers, university students, local people, and students from the senior citizen schools. The surveying forms were designed and tested by the Faculty of Nursing under the control of the project manager.

Step 3: Creating the activity called “Prachanikhom” (gather local people from the community to discuss something that may effect the community) at the Thammanimit temple. The purpose of the activity was to get feedbacks from the community. The participating people were the local people, directors and officers from the local hospitals, village chiefs, temple managers, local volunteers, and the elders. The Mahasarakham University students were the activity leaders, while the teachers provided them the advice. The results obtained from this activity are listed as follows:

- The elders required someone to help them move around and to organize some useful exercises or activities for them.

- The elders wanted to use the local herbs to help them to relieve the pain, which could be found easily in the local areas like lemon grass, lime leaf, etc.

- The elders required to reduce the amount of MSG (Monosodium Glutamate) in the foods. They wanted to replace MSG with the local herbs, as well as, having more fish and fruits to be included in their regular meals.

- The elders wanted to have some activities that could help them become more relaxing and could be done by someone in their community.

- The elders wanted to improve the toilets in the temple because they had some problems related to their backs, which would be difficult for them to sit or stand up. For example, installing an assisted bar on the wall of the toilets.

According to the above results, the participating students and the elders decided to start 6 projects as follows:

Project 1 “Safer Traveling, aging don’t make you fall” (*No Fall*)

Project 2 “Happy with herbal remedy” (*No Depress*)

Project 3 “Minced Fish Chili Paste, Herbal food with good taste” (*Eat Well*)

Project 4 “Be Healthy Elder With Exercise” (*No Fall*)

Project 5 “Herbal Product for Soothing and Good Sleeping” (*No Depress*)

Project 6 “Keep Yourselves Healthy With Herbal Seasoning” (*Eat Well*)

Step 4: Conducted the training for the participating students that were assigned to take care of the elders in the community. In order to achieve this, the guideline from the project “Different Generation Buddy Take Care Each Other Health”, which was the project operated by the authors’ team in 2017 to help shaping this project plan. The

activities were focused mainly on the elders’ behavior that had a habit of staying in their beds or houses. The activities were run by students who came and visited the elders at their houses and then conducted experiment there. The project also conducted the training for the elders’ leader to initiate them to regain their knowledge, which would help expanding a number of active leaders in the community.

### 3.2 Experiment Periods

Step 1: All participants including students, elders and local people in the research area worked together along the 6 projects aforementioned. The participants develop the event called “Healthy Fair for Ban Yang’s Elder”, which allows everyone to join and share experiences, which had the purposes to identify the problems and issues related to how to be healthy for the elder persons. The activities gave also the possible solutions for those problems and issues.

Step 2: allow 40 students to involve the on the job training projects; where half of them passed the special training called “Different Generation Buddy Take Care Each Other Health”. These trainings included both theoretical and on-site practice. The students had to study

theoretical knowledge and skills for 2 days and then self-practice for another 2 days in the areas of the focused community. For the practical activities, all the students had to visit the elders at home in group and started to implement the treatments obtained from the trainings for the elders. In this project, there were 4 houses with 7 elders involved in the training courses. These elders were the persons who had already supervised by the specialists (the university teachers).

Step 3: Launch the activity called “House planning and Environment Changing”. The idea behind this activity came from the fact that what is the house should look like for the elders so that they could spend their daily life simpler and more comfortable. Parts of the study showed that the elders, in fact, require someone to rearrange the house and things in the proper conditions for them. This should be included also for the person who looked after them. This activity was implemented and headed by the supervision of the senior teachers from all the 3 faculties, which was to design and reconstruct the house for the elders. However, the local people were also involved in the design and test processes to ensure that the reconstructed house was really in the suitable conditions. There were 3 houses completed the implementation for this project due to limitation of time and budget as detailed bellows:

**House #1:** The site survey and discussion found that the toilet of the house had improper conditions for the elder. Therefore, the toilet was

redesigned and reconstructed to support the elder with the wheelchair. The calling system was also installed in the toilet, where the elder could be used when needing help.

**House #2:** In this house, the elder had a problem of weak body. He could not use the stair. Therefore, he had to live in the ground floor which was the plain soil ground that eases to be dirty. The project team therefore decided to make the cement concrete floor as well as all the ways to toilet to prevent the falling.

**House #3:** Most elders in the research area had problems of bad eye sight. They had to walk to the toilet alone, which was about 6-7 meters away from the main house. The project team decided to remodel the guiding way to the toilet by installing the fence to brick fence and made the sign to the toilet as well as to show if there was someone inside the toilet.

Step 4: Remodel parts and environment in the temple to suit for the elders. Most elders in the research area were like to go to the temple to do some activities related to Buddhism ceremony and group meetings. Going temple was one of the most important activities for the elders in the local community. Some of them had problems of sitting and stand while doing the activities; therefore, some of them decided not to go to the temple but, indeed, stay at home and isolate themselves away from the society.

After discussed and consulted with the temple manager and the elders, the project team came to the agreement to develop the “elder corner” where special chairs were designed and provided for the elders who may have problems of sitting and standing. The project had some problems on the budget. To solve this problem, the village chief started to ask help from the local people to donate chairs both new and unused ones. Those chairs were checked and fixed to be in good condition to be used.

Under this project stage implementation, there were 5 toilets in the temple which were re-modified into modern toilets for the elders. Several equipment and tools were installed in the toilets and around in order to reduce risk of the falling for the elders.

During the experiment period, all the participants: Mahasarakham University students and teachers, the elders, care takers and people in the local community helped each other to identify the problems, determined the needs of the elders. Then the experiment tasks were done by all of the participants. This activity therefore not only served the needs and solves problems for the elder, but also led the people in the community to learn to help themselves and their elders. Even after the project had been finished, the people in the community still keep continue the projects.

Some evaluation results from the activities along the projects: case study of “Healthy Body, Happy Elder” project, which was the integration of the project to the main mission and to the class lessons

under “One Project One Community”. As the part of subject teaching, the students could achieve the following points of views:

- Students learned more about the community
- Students experienced working in the actual workplaces
- Students learned how to identify problems and the needs of the communities
- Students learned how to do the Prachakhom with community to find the possible solutions that could provide beneficial impacts to both university and community.
- Students learned how to work with community’s elders and learned about the local herbs in the research study area.
- Students learned how to work with community, how to develop and implement the project into the community and learned how to work in team.
- Students gained experiences how to treat elders together with their care takers
- Students could understand about the service learning (learning by doing)
- Students had experiences from the actual works, which could be applied for the future classes and future works.

### 3.3 Integration with research

The data and information obtained from the activities under this project study, “Better living condition for elder in community model”, was also integrated with other research projects named “Community that Supports Elders in Esan: Subject Ban Yang, Naseenuan Sub-district, Kantarawichai District, Maha Sarakham Province, Thailand”. This would provide an

even more success of the project implementation for the local community.

### 3.4 Education

This research project offered both theoretical knowledge and skills at the actual practices. We learned about theory through the training courses provided by the laboratory of the Faculty of Nursing as well as by the elder leaders who had been working in the fields of elder treatments from the local community. This curriculum composed of the theoretical learning for 2 days (8 hours), practice for 2 days (10 hours) and doing the activities in the community for 4 hours a day, which was 22 hours in total. For the results, not only the elder leaders using this knowledge to take care of the elders in the local community, but they could also use this information to take care of themselves and their families. In addition, not only the elders had knowledge to take care of themselves, they also had better environment suitable for them by the activities of redesigning and reconstructing their environment such as houses, toilets, walkways and equipment in the temples that was suitable for the elders.

### 3.5 Integration to cultural restoration

From this project, we learned that the elders had a strong link to the temple because in the rural area, the religious ceremonies were likely to be a very important part of their lives. However, because their bad health, most elders could not go to the temple. This led them to stay alone at home. By remodeling the temple to better accommodate with the elders, we,

again, provided them the possibility to come to participate the religious ceremony and see friends at the temple. Additionally, the project also provides opportunity for the university student to have a chance to learn about local community, local herbs and etc., which could be used for cooking healthy foods to/from the elders. The project also helped in boosting elder's pride and self-value while encouraging the students to have more grateful for elder people. This project would be the great platform for the young teacher to practice the real situations and conditions on how to take care of elders and how to help patients to solve their own issues such as the body, mind, spirit, mood, social, themselves, and family.

## 4. PROJECT RESULTS

### 4.1 Findings

It may be concluded that this research project gives some useful finding about the characteristics of the community as follows:

- Important skills for care takers in the community (had been trained)
- role model and best practice family regard taking care of the elders
- suitable house and temple that could accommodate well with the elders
- local people realize and understand how to help taking care of their own elders

### 4.2 Additional findings

To make a suitable environment for elder people, the house and the public places should be able to accommodate well with the elders. This finding also makes local

people to have more awareness of their own elders and family. In addition, by awarding a role model family that take care of elder very well via the public relations and announcement can make the family members to be proud of them and can be a good example for other families to follow as well. For the students who have trained from the elder leader, they have more confident and proud of themselves and realize a value of helping others.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

This paper presents the project for developing treatment for the elder persons in the local community. The project integrated the knowledge and skills on health care, engineering and architecting from the Faculty of Nursing, Faculty of Engineering and Faculty of Architecture, Urban Design and Creative Arts to improve the living quality of the elders in the community. The research work has been done throughout the trainings, experiment, evaluations and improvement. The action persons were the students from Mahasarakham University and other activities have been done together among students, teachers, local people and the elders. The project could achieve all the objectives. In every activity the students, teachers, local people, community leaders and the elders had participated the activities and able to make a great success. This achievement came from the teamwork when everyone works together while focusing on the elders' problems, issues and needs.

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## 6. PHOTOGRAPHS OF ACTIVITIES



*Figure 1: First day on-site activities*





Figure 2: Prachakhom activity



Figure 3: Ban Yang Elder Health Fairs



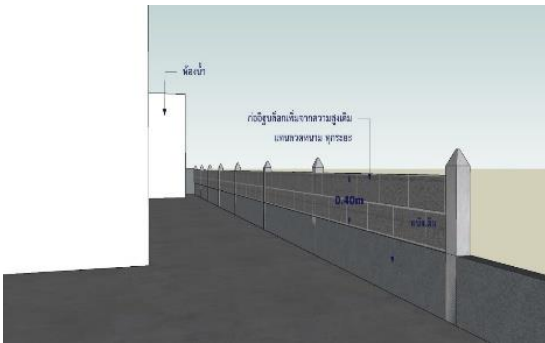


Figure 4: Example of toilet and house design



Figure 5: toilet and house before remodeling



Figure 6: toilet and house after remodeling

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