

Decentralising Rural Governance for Sustainability: Thailand's experiences

Decentralising rural governance provides a policy framework for sharing resources and responsibilities between central and local governments, and between local governments and other non-state actors; and brings local levels on the front lines of planning and management of the rural development process. In decentralised governance, local actors play main roles in ensuring rural primary education, water, sanitation, environmental health and promoting local economic development and the social contract between governmental and non-governmental agencies and civil societies, and enhancing citizens' participation, equity, and transparency in decision making. This study presents the process of decentralising rural governance in Thailand through several stages of development aiming at improving the rural socio-economic and environmental landscape. It critically examines the impact of the contemporary rural decentralised governance on rural land-use change, socio-economic development, and environmental issues in Thai's rural areas. Two case studies of decentralising governance of rural groundwater and built environment will be also presented; thus, challenges and suggestions for a sustainable decentralised governance model will be discussed.