

Empowerment of the Socially Vulnerable –

*Social Inclusion Through Theater Workshops
and Arts Management:
A Case Study in an Urban Slum of Bangkok*

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to focus on the social vulnerability of slum residents in times of disaster and to consider the possibilities of self-empowerment by the cultivation of “actual abilities” through theater workshops. The author has focused on the Nang Loeng Community, occupying an urban slum in Bangkok, and with the cooperation of a Japanese theater company, has carried out a four-day theater workshop for elementary school students in the name of an “evacuation drill.” Interviews and questionnaires were conducted to the residents and participants to examine the possibilities of adopting this method in the community. It was found that, in order to utilize theater workshops for self-empowerment, there is a need to investigate concrete means of improving the living environment and solving family discord, as well as a necessity to consider the possibilities of social participation through bottom-up discussions.

Keywords: *Social Inclusion, Arts Management, Theater Workshop, Urban Slum, Self-Empowerment, Nang Loeng Community*

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Introduction

In the investigation of social inclusion through arts management, the purpose of this paper is to focus on current conditions wherein residents of urban slums are likely to find themselves vulnerable in times of disaster¹ and to consider the possibilities of self-empowerment through the cultivation of “actual abilities”² from the practice of theater workshops.

The large-scale flood that hit Thailand in 2011 left 815 dead and 3 missing, and impacted the daily lives of approximately 14 million people.³ Especially in the urban areas of Bangkok, the confusion of media information triggered a shortage of food and drinking water. At the same time the deterioration of sanitary conditions and psychological anxiety laid a great amount of stress on the people, putting the government’s support system and crisis management skills into question.⁴ Large-scale disasters that urban areas of Bangkok are likely to encounter in the future are not limited to natural disasters like floods or fire; political strife may be given as an example of one such disaster in close proximity to daily life. However, many citizens are still not able to receive education on the prevention of such disasters.⁵ At the same time, disaster vulnerable populations are described as “those that bear some handicap in the chain of activities in the event of a disaster”⁶ and refer to those who fall under at least one of the following definitions:⁷

1. Those who do not have the ability to sense danger when it approaches them, or find it difficult to do so.
2. Those who cannot ask for help when danger approaches them, or find it difficult to do so, even if they are able to sense it.
3. Those who are unable to receive information notifying them of danger, or find it difficult to do so.
4. Those who, even if information notifying danger is given to them, cannot act in response to it, or find it difficult to do so.

The field of research for this paper is the Nang Loeng community in Bangkok (hereafter referred to as Nang Loeng), where, due to the advance of community restructuring through art, it was thought easier to provide research results relative to other urban slums that meet the definitions above. The author focused on disasters liable to be suffered by Nang Loeng slum residents in daily life and conducted an evacuation drill using a theater workshop. This was done in order to examine, through practice, the possibilities of the participants self-empowering themselves while acquiring actual abilities.

Nang Loeng is a place where, about a century ago, the first land market in Bangkok was born when the water markets moved onto the land. Afterwards, a movie theater was built and, through its growth into a major entertainment area with commercial theaters and brothels, Nang Loeng’s economy flourished. However, because land routes were greatly developed, after World War II, modern markets and commercial facilities were built one after the other in undeveloped lands, trans-

ferring out Nang Loeng's position as an economic and entertainment center in Bangkok and gradually pushing Nang Loeng into decline. At the same time, as the poor class entered the community, slums emerged and Nang Loeng became the target of social exclusion. In 2006, the Thai artist Preeyachanok Katsuwon became involved in the community and developed an interest in the realities of slums in Nang Loeng. She continued to implement art projects centered on the slum's children in collaboration with community leaders and this act came to draw in many residents as well as strangers. Furthermore, in 2010 she succeeded in holding a large-scale art event using cultural resources, which not only contributed to the heightening of the residents' sense of regional identity, but led to a re-recognition of the social value of cultural resources in Nang Loeng by the nation's citizens. This community art activity has created a widespread social acknowledgement of Nang Loeng as a community working towards regeneration through a social inclusion method using culture/art and its activities are continued even today.⁹

Through action research conducted by the author with the community leader since 2010, it has become clear that community art in Nang Loeng plays the role of a "link" with outside society, in addition to heightening the residents' sense of regional identity,¹⁰ however, it has not led to the cultivation of "actual abilities"¹¹ that directly relate to the residents.

In other words, while community art activities may provide the strength of unity in the event of a disaster, it has not directly linked to the cultivation of actual abilities necessary to act appropriately at such times. Furthermore, due to the exceptionally high density characteristic of slums, there is an extremely high risk of fire, with two large fires having broken out over the past fifty years. Even now, there is still a high probability of disaster due to accidental fires.¹² From this as well as interview surveys, it has become clear that residents of the Nang Loeng slums have a strong sense of anxiety towards fire,¹³ but even so, there is currently no preventive education in place and it is apparent that they do not know the strategies for reacting to it in the event it occurs.¹⁴ At the same time, while they did not actually suffer damage from the large-scale flood, slum residents exhibited unfounded optimism such as "I'm not afraid because I have nothing to lose," or "we're close to the Grand Palace, so the government will surely take care of it," or "the flood will never come here."¹⁵ The low level of crisis management skills in the people can also be observed from such statements.

In this paper, those who are (with the help of outside society) in the position to implement empowerment of the slums will be referred to as "residents" and slum residents on the receiving end will be referred to as "slum residents." The "disaster vulnerable population" of Nang Loeng point to the slum residents; the children who participated in the WS consisted of such slum residents. Below is an image of empowerment in Nang Loeng.

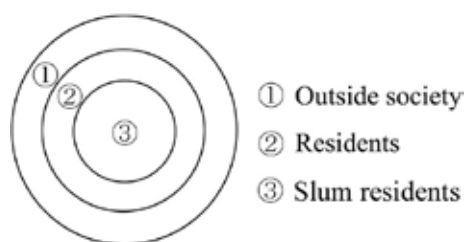


Figure 1. Image of Empowerment in Nang Loeng. Empowering (3) slum residents through the cooperation of (1) outside society and (2) residents.

Precedent Research and Its Relationship to This Research

The effectiveness of communication education using theater has been widely acknowledged and the introduction of it into personnel training and schools is rapidly progressing.¹⁶ In *Engeki WS o Koa to Sita Tiiki Bouhan Nettowaaku Koutiku Purozye-kuto* [Regional Crime Prevention Network Building Project Centered on Theater Workshops] led by Oriza Hirata, the children created an educational play on crime prevention themselves and, in the process of presenting it, an educational program on crime prevention using communication education methods was developed.¹⁷ At the same time, the project's joint researcher Rengyo also published *Training Program Based on Drama Method vs Human Interface Society* (2011), which, in addition to proposing a development method for workshops and their effects, investigated the means of measuring these effects. The above are the precedents for this research.

In the research project above, “a method of using the educational power of ‘theater’ (expression, understanding other cultures, communication, group work, etc.) and not only gaining an understanding of it in the brain but sharing the knowledge as a group along with the bodily senses and emotion” was used as the workshop's principle.¹⁸ “By gaining the experience of having been able (or unable) to act appropriately through the proper linking of correct knowledge to the simulated experience, [they are able to] acquire the ability to act appropriately in time of need.”¹⁹

Using the above research precedents and by invoking the power of “awareness”²⁰ present in theater, this paper investigates, through practice, the possibility of self-empowering the Nang Loeng slum residents who are likely to become the disaster vulnerable population. In other words, it is the practice of social inclusion through art, not only by protecting those who have been socially excluded but by promoting their independence and establishing a mutual relationship between them and others.²¹ It aims to solve social problems in an entirely different context from traditional art such as concerts or exhibits, which depend on the autonomous quality of art.²² By making use of the creative influence of art, the focus is placed on everybody being included as a member of society and being able to live with a purpose. What this means is, by raising children who possess actual abilities in the face of disaster, surrounding residents (adults) become involved as well,²³ the

environment of the urban slum that gives rise to the disaster vulnerable is improved, and this can all be said to lead to empowerment.

In adopting a method of cultivating “actual abilities” as proposed by Hirata’s workshop, the next section will state the contents of a workshop implemented with the cooperation of a theater company from Japan in order to discuss the validity of self-empowering those in the Nang Loeng slum liable to find themselves vulnerable to disaster. In the discussion section, these results will be analyzed through examining the results of the questionnaires and interviews. The final section will give an overall evaluation and conclusion.

The Theater Workshop in Practice

The theater workshop (hereafter referred to as WS) was conducted by the author with the cooperation of FAIFAI, a theater company in Japan. It was targeted towards elementary school students residing in the slum of Nang Loeng and conducted for four days from the 19th to the 22nd of April, 2012. Structured with a focus on bringing the three factors of “playing, creating, and learning” to the forefront and, in order to create the opportunity for thinking about strategies in the face of disaster, it strove to “have fun experiencing the simulation of things/ ideas/ actions useful in the event of a disaster.”

3-1: Contents of the Theater Workshop

Day 1: April 19, 2012 14:00 – 19:00	Explain the content and precedent research to the community leader and interpreter
	Draw out the “Worst Imaginable Day” and present orally
	Instruction on the Japanese-style evacuation drill and slogans
Day 2: April 20, 2012 17:00 – 19:00	Create “Cute Waterproof Necklace” to have in the event of an evacuation
	Create evacuation site
Day 3: April 21, 2012 17:00 – 19:00	Discuss the disasters that could happen in Nang Loeng and create Thai-style evacuation drill story and slogans
	Practice evacuation exercise
Day 4: April 22, 2012 17:00 – 19:00	Practice Thai-style evacuation drill

Figure 2. FAIFAI’s Evacuation drill workshop schedule.

Between 14:00 and 16:00 on the first day, an explanation of the WS content and precedent research was provided to the interpreter and community leader (the community leader is the person who takes the initiative of caring for the children of the slum). Then in the three hours from 16:00 to 19:00, the WS was held mainly at the community library in the precincts of the temple owned by Nang Loeng (Figure 2). First, a survey was conducted with the participating children (hereafter referred to as participants) regarding flood damage. Afterwards, as a means of creating an image of disaster, the “Worst Imaginable Days” (Figure 2) were discussed

with the participants based on the Great East Japan Earthquake experienced by the theater company members. Next, the children were asked to draw the “Worst Imaginable Day” and, after presenting this as a story, each child was given five minutes to discuss this with theater company members. Through this work, the personalities and character of each participant came to be understood and a shared image of disaster emerged.



Figure 3. Theater company member showing how to draw an image of disaster. ©Hiroyuki Nobuto 2012.

1. A flood occurs, and fish swim into my house's field.

2. I can't go to school because of a flood.

3. My house begins to float because of a flood.

4. We all pile sandbags so that the water from the flood does not come in.
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5. There is a flood and we carry the TV up to the roof.

6. An alligator comes into my house because of the flood.

7. Somebody's soccer ball comes flying and I get hurt.
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8. I fall and get hurt while playing soccer.
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9. The trees in the forest are cut down and the people and animals living in the forest don't know what to do.
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10. The sun is shining but it's extremely hot and rainy.
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11. Lightning strikes my house.

12. My brother drives a motorcycle taxi, so if he crashes it's dangerous.

13. My foot falls into my bike tire.

14. I step in poo.
15. The snake in the zoo escapes and comes into my home.
16. A robber escapes after stealing something, then falls off a building.
17. After I eat a banana at school, I step on the peel.
18. I get lice in my hair and shave my head.
19. A fire, volcanic eruption, flood, and rains come at the same time.
20. An earthquake hits, a siren sounds throughout the city, a volcano erupts, there's a flood, and the buses and trains stop.

Figure 4. List of “Worst Imaginable Days”

Next, in order for the participants to understand what an evacuation drill is, evacuation drills carried out in Japan were explained as “Japanese-style evacuation drills.” Because evacuation drills have not taken root socially in Thailand, the goal was to share this image with the participants. First the four slogans of “*Osa-nai, KAkenai, SHaberanai, MOdorana* (OKASHMO) [Don't Push, Don't Run, Don't Talk, Don't Return]” were acted out by the theater company.²⁴ Then, mats were laid out on the floor and four participants were stationed atop each one. Four theater company members shook each of the mats to simulate an earthquake.



Figure 5. Members of the theater company shaking the matt to simulate an earthquake.

© Hiroyuki Nobuto 2012.

In order to escape, the participants had to put on coconut shells prepared by the theater company members as safety hats and head to the designated evacuation site following the four slogans (Figure 6).



Figure 6. Route for Japanese-style evacuation drill.

The theater company members acted out two hypothetical disasters during the evacuation drill, the goal being for the participants to gain an image of evacuation drills through the process of overcoming dangers while heading to the evacuation site along the designated route.

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|---|
| 1. Tourists that still think it is the Songkran season spray water on the participants with a water pistol. ²⁵ |
| 2. Two female Japanese tourists take many photos of the participants with a digital camera while commenting “how cute.” ²⁶ |

Figure 7. Two hypothetical disasters acted out by the theater company.



Figure 8. Heading to the designated evacuation site wearing a safety cap. © Hiroyuki Nobuto 2012.

On the second day, the participants were asked to bring a photo of somebody important to them and a “cute waterproof necklace” was made by waterproofing the photo and decorating it. An evacuation site was also created using cardboard. “In Japan, after the earthquake there was a general mood that pleasures should be reserved, especially in the Kanto area. Women did not even wear fancy high heels and people had to tolerate being without many things. Because we experienced this, I want to let the children have something that they think is cute. If you forget this feeling, it will be even harder when you have to evacuate.” (Rino Daidoji, theater company member). It was based on this kind of emotion felt by the theater company members that this project of creating a decorated cute (cool) necklace of a loved one was realized.



Figure 9 Participants with handmade waterproof necklaces in hand. © Kazuya Kato 2012.

At the same time, this activity was also based on theater company members’ opinions such as: “when a disaster so removed from my daily life occurred, I felt that the world suddenly turned into something different. It would be great if we could feel the same kind of happiness we usually feel in daily life, during times of disaster as well,” (Koji Yamazaki, theater company member) and “I wanted to make something that would give you power in times of hardship” (Chiharu Shinoda, theater company member). Later, an evacuation site was created with the theater company members. The participants also constructed tools for the “evacuation story” to be acted out on the last day, while coming to understand that pain during times of disaster is an awareness shared by all; the process of creation was a time for thinking through the meaning of this.

On the third day, the participants developed a Thai-style evacuation drill, invoking the Japanese-style evacuation drill conducted on the second day. An evacuation exercise was also practiced as a dance with simple steps. The goal of an evacua-

tion exercise is to refresh the mind and body of those at an evacuation site,²⁷ but this time, it also had an added purpose of providing “a break for the children to concentrate on the evacuation drill without getting tired of it” (Chiharu Shinoda).



Figure 10. Practicing the evacuation exercise. © Kazuya Kato 2012.

At the same time, a Nang Loeng version of the four slogans to follow in the event of a disaster was developed (Figure 11). The focus was placed on “disasters” with a high probability of occurring in Nang Loeng and the goal was to cultivate the power to take action against them.

1. Mai mai pen rai (Don't think it's okay)
2. Respect life.
3. Don't get close to broken power lines.
4. Don't stray away from everybody else.

Figure 11. Nang Loeng version four points.

The phrase Mai mai pen rai²⁸ in (1) was developed “focusing on the word mai pen rai, which is used in Thai daily life to mean not worrying about minute details and then adding mai (negative) to it so they gain an intuitive understanding ‘not to think it’s okay’” (Koji Yamazaki) and contains what the theater company members perceived as the Thai character. The slogans after (2) were brainstormed by the participants themselves. (2) comes from the fact that, because the slum is not a safe area, there is a need to protect yourself against drugs and alcohol or homicide. (3) is based off the fact that 10% of the victims of the flood suffered electrocution, and fatalities due to electrocution is coming to be perceived as a

social problem.²⁹ In terms of (4), it is extremely dangerous for a child to act alone in Nang Loeng and this slogan was devised as a means of protecting yourself by taking action in a group.

For the evacuation drill carried out on the fourth day, the focus was placed on floods (the social problem in focus at the time) and “eight disasters” (Figure 12) were included in the creation of an evacuation route. These were also developed based on the list of the “Worst Imaginable Days” created on the first day, centering on disasters liable to happen in daily life in Nang Loeng.

First, a review of evacuation drills by the theater company members
1. Reproduction of flood
2. Caution of banana peels
3. Caution of cars
4. Caution of dog poop
5. Caution of the temptation of drugs
6. Caution of murderers
7. Caution of lice
8. Caution of alligators floating towards you in a flood

Figure 12. “Eight disasters” used for the evacuation drill.



Figure 13. Developing the slogans and eight disasters with the participants. © Hiroyuki Nobuto 2012.



Figure 14. The “eight disasters” and evacuation drill route.

On the fourth day, there was first a review of evacuation drills. Then, three theater company members led the children along the route in Figure 14 while the other members acted out the “eight disasters.” The flood was acted out first and the children were prompted to quickly put on their rain coats and safety caps.



Figure 15. Participants wearing rain coats and safety caps, preparing to head towards the evacuation site. © Hiroyuki Nobuto 2012.

Next, the goal was to arrive at the evacuation site of the temple precincts, led by the theater company members. “Disasters” (2) to (8) awaited them en route to the evacuation site, and a Thai-style evacuation drill was taken place keeping in mind the Nang Loeng version slogans.



Figure 16. Participants overcoming the “eight disasters” and heading towards the evacuation site.
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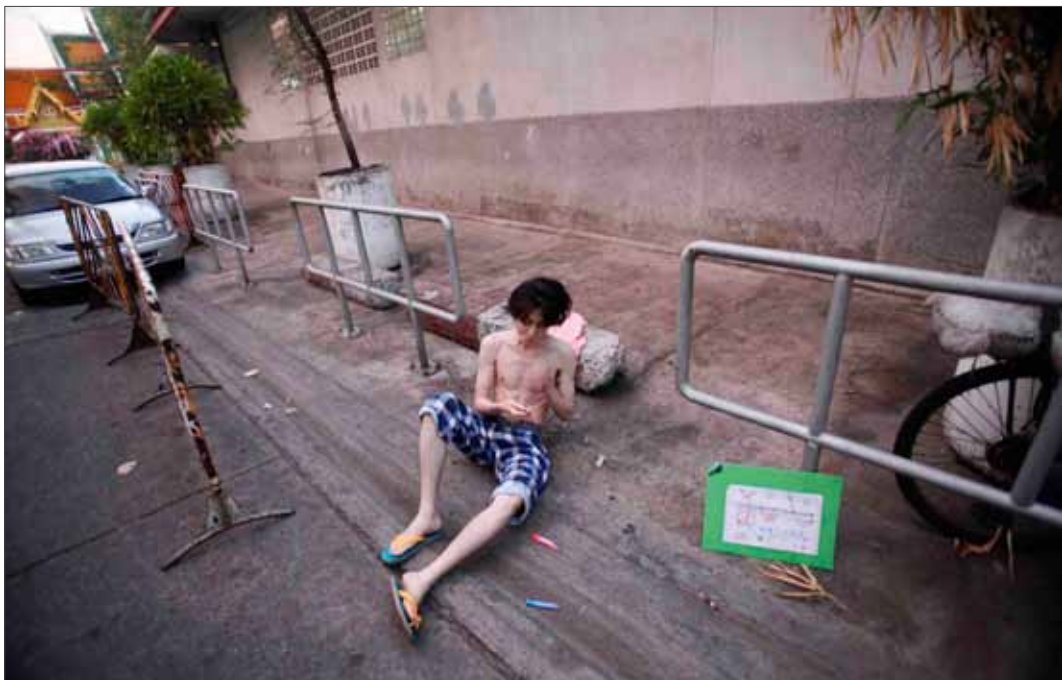


Figure 17. A theater company member playing the role of a drug addict. © Hiroyuki Nobuto 2012.

The goal of the drill was to “act out a story imagining that the disasters conceived by the children themselves actually occurred, while following the four slogans” (Chiharu Shinoda). When the group arrived at the evacuation site, emergency food was distributed to the children, and after eating it, the evacuation exercise was practiced marking an end to the evacuation drill.



Figure 18. Evacuation exercise. © Kazuya Kato 2012.

Opinion Poll and Discussion on the Theater Workshop

After the WS ended, an interview and questionnaire were given to the residents and children. The following are the results and discussion concerning it:

4-1. Survey Given to the Residents (Adults)

A discussion-style interview was conducted with the four residents (the community leader, the community leader's daughter, a local artist, and the manager of the community library) who took part in running the WS. The following five points were set as the questions around which a discussion took place. The following is a summary of the discussion:

(1) What is your perception of this WS?

It's a new kind of activity that we'd never even thought of before and it provided a great stimulus for our community. The children reacted extremely happily. They thoroughly enjoyed and were captivated by the stories established by the theater company. We got the impression that the children would never forget this experience. Furthermore, in the situation where they are likely to run off on their own in encountering a disaster, we believe they were able to understand how to properly help one another as well as the meaning of doing so.

(2) What kind of effect do you think it will have on the disaster vulnerable residents of the urban slum?

Learning about the types of disasters and ways of dealing with them through the novel means of theater would lead to managing ability in the event of a disaster.

Also, because there is no instruction on preventive measures against disaster at schools and, on top of that, children as well as their parents have no knowledge of disaster, I believe this practice enabled them to develop an image of guidelines for action in the event of a flood. We think it created a good opportunity for many residents to change their awareness of disaster.

(3) Do you believe this WS will have any effect or make any changes in the children's thought processes?

Because a lot of communication was required, the children were able to develop a close relationship with one another, but because it was only a "drill," they would not know what to do when a true disaster occurs. We believe it should be continually implemented.

(4) What kind of actual changes occurred because of the WS?

We believe the children were able to understand and enjoy art more than usual. At the same time, through the WS, not only were the children given time to think, we adults were also given the opportunity to understand what children are thinking about and this has led to thinking about how this activity should be carried out in the future.

(5) What is necessary for Nang Loeng in the event of a disaster?

The creation of a support network involving support groups that understand Nang Loeng's activities is necessary. At the same time, the continued implementation of the evacuation drill and a manual are also indispensable. By doing so, it will be possible to unify all of our activities and we will be able to expect further progress in the community. At the same time, the residents believe that human love is important for Nang Loeng and we can say that is the most important thing.

4-2. Summary

This WS made a different impression on the Nang Loeng residents, as compared to activities conducted heretofore. In addition to the lack of disaster prevention education and evacuation drills at school, because children and parents have no knowledge of disasters, this WS was an opportunity to think about disaster. While the continued implementation of the WS would be necessary for the children to acquire actual abilities, from the fact that the residents were aware of the possibility of acquiring actual abilities through the WS, we can say that the goal of providing an opportunity to think about the importance of evacuation drills in the event of a disaster was fulfilled. Furthermore, because it can be said that through the children's process of thinking about things, the adults were able to understand the children's awareness of problems, the activities conducted in Nang Loeng heretofore must not have provided a process for the children to think. However, it was also stated that support from outside the community would be necessary in times of disaster, thus, the WS was not able to fully establish an understanding of self-empowerment (of the disaster vulnerable) from within. But, from the fact that human love in the community is revered, we can say that the WS led to keeping the possibility of self-empowerment alive.

4-3. Survey Given to the Children

A simple questionnaire was carried out to hear the opinions of the twenty children who participated in the WS. Some time for freely discussing these questions was also provided to dig deeper into their answers. The participating children were between the ages of 7 and 12 (Four 7-year olds, five 8 year-olds, six 9-year olds, four 11-year olds, and one 12-year old), and were in elementary school. The ratio of boys to girls was 1 to 3 (5 boys, 15 girls).

(1) Was the workshop fun?

20 replied “it was fun.”

(2) Can you evacuate in the event of a disaster using your experience from this WS?

17 replied “I can”

(3) Have you talked about the workshop with your parents?

7 replied, “I have talked about it.”

4-4 Summary

In response to the question of whether the WS was fun, all participants answered “it was fun.” Thus, it can be said that the initial goal was fulfilled. At the same time, there were also six children who were able to provide concrete images of evacuation methods in the event of a disaster, such as: “If a flood comes, I will evacuate with my brothers towards the hill,” “If I meet a drug addict, I will try not to lock eyes and run away,” and “I will take some food with me and evacuate.” However, the other fourteen children stated that it would be impossible to run away from a disaster and, while the goal of creating an opportunity to think about disaster through the WS was met, it cannot be said that it has directly led to the cultivation of actual abilities. At the same time, there were many children who could not take the time to talk about the WS with their parents. Furthermore, while there were children who said they talked about the WS with their parents, because there were some who said they “forgot to tell them,” it can be said that the community art activities themselves, led by the community leader, may only be passively received by the children. The greatest reason for this may be that the activities themselves have come to be thought of as a daily ordeal. Meanwhile, there were also children who stated that “my parents take no notice of me,” “they’ll only ignore me,” or “I don’t want to tell them.” Furthermore, when children who said they talked about the WS with their parents were asked about their parents’ reactions, they stated that they were told, “we’ll soon die anyway,” or “there’s no point,” and there were even two who replied “they ignored me.” From this, a large gap can be observed in the awareness between residents who believe in the influence of this activity and the slum residents who do not understand its meaning. At the same time, the number of children who do not seem to have a good family relationship does rose to nine, more than half of the group. In other words, if the lives of the slum residents or their opinions themselves are not improved, it would be extremely difficult to spread this activity, including the WS, to the adults living in the slum. What this means is that there is a need, not only for a continued implementation of the activity, but for renewing the awareness of slum residents as well as solving discord in the family.

Conclusion

Through the interviews conducted after the WS, it was found that the continued implementation of the activity would be necessary to link the theater WS to self-empowerment. This point is also clear from the fact that precedent research has also been conducted as long-term projects. At the same time, all precedent research has been implemented only in Japan, and considering that it will not be easy to refer to it while simultaneously developing an understanding of practice in the context of slum residents in Nang Loeng, it is necessary to investigate implementation possibilities specific to Nang Loeng and to construct a methodology for it. And in order to realize this, the first priority is to discuss a means to lead the Nang Loeng slum community itself to a system of social participation. It is especially indispensable to solve family discord and to close the gap in awareness between the residents practicing community art and the slum residents receiving it.

Furthermore, through the investigation, it became apparent that the children are only passively receiving this community art activity. Thus, there is a need to investigate means of cultivating actual abilities through the implementation of activities that involve a thinking process and that stimulate awareness in the children. The key is to actually use the new knowledge brought about through the WS in the currently implemented activities. On the other hand, the evacuation drill based on the supposition that slum residents will become the disaster vulnerable provided new knowledge for people such as the community leader who carries out the community art activities. This is also apparent from the fact that, through the power of “awareness” present in theater and the provision of a process wherein children had to think for themselves, those on the implementation side were able to realize the importance of giving children the time to think. From this, in future activities, it may be said the construction of an interactive relationship between residents on the implementation side and children on the participants’ side is needed. In other words, there is a need to escape the one-sided structure of leading the slum residents to social participation, and only when this can be accomplished will empowerment from within be possible. However, no concrete means of solving discord in the family could be discovered, and there are still some issues to be solved in investigating the possibilities of empowerment through the involvement of children and their parents.

Here, however, we would like to propose one such means of solving this issue. In the slum district of Nang Loeng is a deserted house that the community leader is able to use freely. While it remains untouched at the moment due to the lack of funds, by using this place as an interactive material, self-empowerment from within can be realized involving both residents as well as slum residents; we believe there is a possibility of creating a base from which residents and slum residents can approach one another. By actively using this as a shared space for both residents and slum residents and by establishing bottom-up cooperation led by the community leader, social participation starting in their own living area would be possible.

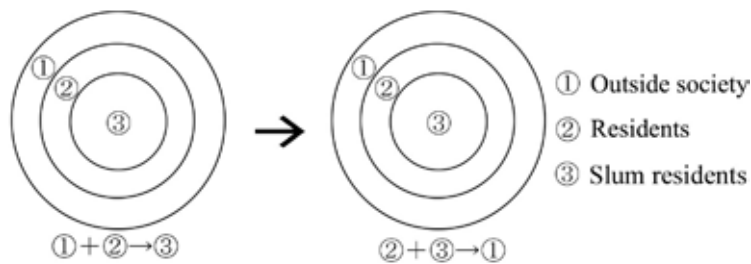


Figure 18. Image of the empowerment ideal for Nang Loeng

In other words, instead of the current structure wherein “(3) slum residents are empowered through the cooperation of (1) outside society and (2) the residents,” a system for “creating an environment for promoting self-empowerment through the bottom-up cooperation of (2) residents and (3) slum residents and presenting this to (1) the outside society,” is ideal.

Currently, one of the links to outside society includes support groups within Thailand. They have a strong interest in Nang Loeng, with its goal of restructuring its community through art culture, and invest much of the activity funds in businesses supporting social participation in the form of events. In other words, this may be seen as the community residents being drawn into measures centered on events proposed by outside society. However, what will be important in the future is the creation of a system where the residents draw in people from outside.

The Japanese theater company *FAIFAI*, who collaborated on this project, stands in a neutral position, neither on the side of outside support groups nor on that of the residents. They are currently searching for possibilities of realizing further activities in Nang Loeng and are aiming to receive subsidies from foundations such as the Japan Foundation. If any such activities are realized in the future, the optimistic outlook would be that not only would the residents actively assimilate the effects and methodology of theater and continue to practice it voluntarily, but through the theater company’s presence in Nang Loeng, a new kind of dialogue would be born. Not only are slum residents vulnerable to disaster, but they are, even before that, a socially vulnerable population in need of social inclusion. Thus, in order to aim towards self-empowerment, we need not only cling to the practice of community art, but must investigate a means of flexible restructuring through diverse perspectives, such as with the cooperation of neutrally positioned international NGOs leading slum development.

Endnotes

- 1 A survey was conducted with four residents, including the community leader, on the possibilities of Nang Loeng slum residents becoming the vulnerable population in times of disaster, based on the definition of a disaster vulnerable population from the *White Papers on Disaster Management* (1987) by the National Land Agency.
- 2 In: Rengyo et al., "Training Program Based on Drama Method vs Human Interface Society," *Communication-Design*, 4 (2010): 32, "actual abilities" is defined as "the power to properly link correct knowledge (at least at the time) with experience (simulated experience) and, by acquiring the experience of having been able (or unable) to act appropriately, be able to act appropriately when needed."
- 3 "Flooding Concerns Arouse Bangkokians to Hoard Supplies," *Mthai News*, October 9, 2011, <http://news.mthai.com/general-news/134131.html> (accessed July 4, 2012).
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- 24 Reo Kimura et al., "Development of Education Programs and Materials for Disaster Mitigation and Preparedness using Victims' Experiences of Local Historical Disaster," *Institute of Social Safety Science Journal*, 11 (2009): 219.
- 25 Songkran is the traditional New Year in Thailand, held between April 13th and 15th, with dates fixed by the government. In recent years a trend has developed, especially among the young, to throw water on one another in the city, it is commonly called the "Water Throwing Festival" in Japan. The first day of the workshop was on April 19, 2011 with the mood of the Songkran still in the air, although nobody was taking part in any water throwing.
- 26 Through the image of the theater company members where female Japanese tourists typically take many pictures at tourist attractions and react exaggeratedly towards things that are cute, calling out the word "kawaii (how cute)" repeatedly, this was incorporated as a danger (disaster) towards the cute children.

- 27 Miwa Nakashima et al., "Higasi Nihon Daisinsai ni okeru Hinanzyo de no Borantia no Taisou Sidou – Ibaraki-ken de no 'Sirubaa Rihabiri Taisou Sidousi' no Katudou [Exercise Instruction by Volunteers in Evacuation Sites of the Great East Japan Earthquake – Activities of the 'Senior Rehabilitation Exercise Instructors' in Ibaraki Prefecture]," *Kaigo Joho*, 12(2) (2011): 8-10.
- 28 Masako Hamada et al., "Influences from 'Mai pen rai' on Thai Learners of Japanese in the Context of Declination of Offer – as a Representation of Positive Politeness," *Japanese Language Teaching Association in Honor of Professor Fumiko Koide Journal*, 15 (2007): 39-41.
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