

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1. BACKGROUND OF THE MAE TAENG AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

One of the major problems confronting the average Mae Taeng farmer is the current low market price for many traditional crops. Part of the reason for this is that the present supply of many crops has been greater than the demand. For example, the price a farmer in Chiang Mai Province received for maize has never been higher than 3.00 Baht per kilogram. Those who live in the hills often have to pay as much as 1.00 Baht per kilogram to transport their maize to market. And also for several year, they realized very little income from maize, a popular cash crop. Rice prices, particularly for glutinous rice, have also been low for several years. Although the government's attempts to set a minimum rice price have helped, many farm families have only a very restricted income in the wake of these developments.

Low average incomes have led to a corresponding lack of adequate nutrition in many of the poorer villages in the hills. A higher incidence of many health problems among the poor has often been noted by various health workers and medical personnel. Many villagers must forage in the jungle for leaves and roots to eat with their rice because they lack the skill to grow even the most common vegetables. Fruits and protein foods are also largely absents from their diet. For the most part nutritional

problems are the result of deficiencies of a wide range of vitamins, minerals, and other essential nutrients. A bad harvest one year some times leads an entire village to the brink of starvation in the coming year.

Many other villagers, especially the Hilltribe peoples, have turned to opium cultivation and processing as a means of making a living. The province of Chiang Mai is located in the area commonly referred to as the "Golden Triangle", a region that produces a substantial portion of the world's opium and heroin. Many of the villagers also become slaves of the opium habit, an unfortunate condition that locks them even deeper into poverty than before. Both the problems of illegal logging and opium cultivation have been well-documented by a variety of organizations, and both pose serious threats to the District of Mae Taeng and its people.

However, the root problems of the farmers in this project area are:

1. Not knowing how to grow crops other than traditional ones.
2. Not having the capital to make an initial investment in new crops.
3. Not knowing how to market the new crops once they have been raised successfully.

2. OBJECTIVES OF THE MAE TAENG AGRICULTURAL DEVELOPMENT PROJECT

The main objectives of the Mae Taeng Agricultural Development Project are the following:

1. To assist tribal villagers with agricultural crop products.
2. To provide basic training to introduce the concepts of growing fruit trees, vegetables, and field crops.
3. To assist with installation of water supplies for the hilltribes.

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE EVALUATION

The main objective of the field study is to review the activities in the Mae Taeng Agricultural Development Project in order to identify means to improve the working processes and administration of this project. The objectives of the field evaluation are as follows:

1. To determine the impact of the project activities on project villages.
2. To assess the successes and problems of each of the activities under the project.
3. To determine possible alternatives and suggestions for successful continuation of the project.

4. EXPECTED BENEFITES

This field evaluation can be used by the project as a guideline to increase efficiency in systematic management. A suitable model can be developed from it that is consistent with the way of life of the hilltribe people in the project areas.

5. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation of activities of the Mae Taeng Agricultural Development Project included village sampling, data selection, collection and analysis.

5.1 Scope of the evaluation

The scope of the Mae Taeng Agricultural Development Project was determined from the activity reports supplied by the project administrators. Four villages were selected by the evaluation team at the suggestion of the project staff as follows:

Village	Tambol	Amphoe	Province
Ban Mae Jum	Yong Maun	Samoeng	Chiang Mai
Ban Mae Wae	Yong Maun	Samoeng	Chiang Mai
Ban Mae Ga Piang	Sa Luang	Mae Rim	Chiang Mai
Ban Huey Tao Lu	Sa Luang	Mae Rim	Chiang Mai

5.2 Sampling and Data Selection

A case study approach was used for village selection and the data sampling which is called purposive sampling. With this approach, project staff were selected for interview among the Karen and Hmong hilltribe people who were involved with the project.

5.3 Data Collection and Analysis

The Rapid Rural Appraisal technique (RRA) was chosen as the primary vehicle to obtain information. This method uses an interdisciplinary, iterative methodology based on the use of semi-structured interviews and direct observation. The questionnaire used provided a flexible guideline to be used under the direction of the evaluation team.

Using the Rapid Rural Appraisal technique (RRA), in-depth interviews were conducted and responses recorded. The data was also obtained from various project document.