

The need to return home: The Lesu at Huai Ja Kan Village

After 13 years of involuntary relocation from Lung Muang Village, Omkoi District, Chiangmai Province the Lesu here have face the difficulties of living at Huai Ja Kan village. The new home was not well prepared for their relocation. Due to the limitation of land both for living and cultivation, poor soil and lacking of water their living standard declined comparing with their homeland.

The villagers here have tried to consult the responsible organization both at local level and national level how to solve the problems at Huai Ja Kan. Unfortunately, there is no progressive of problems solutions.

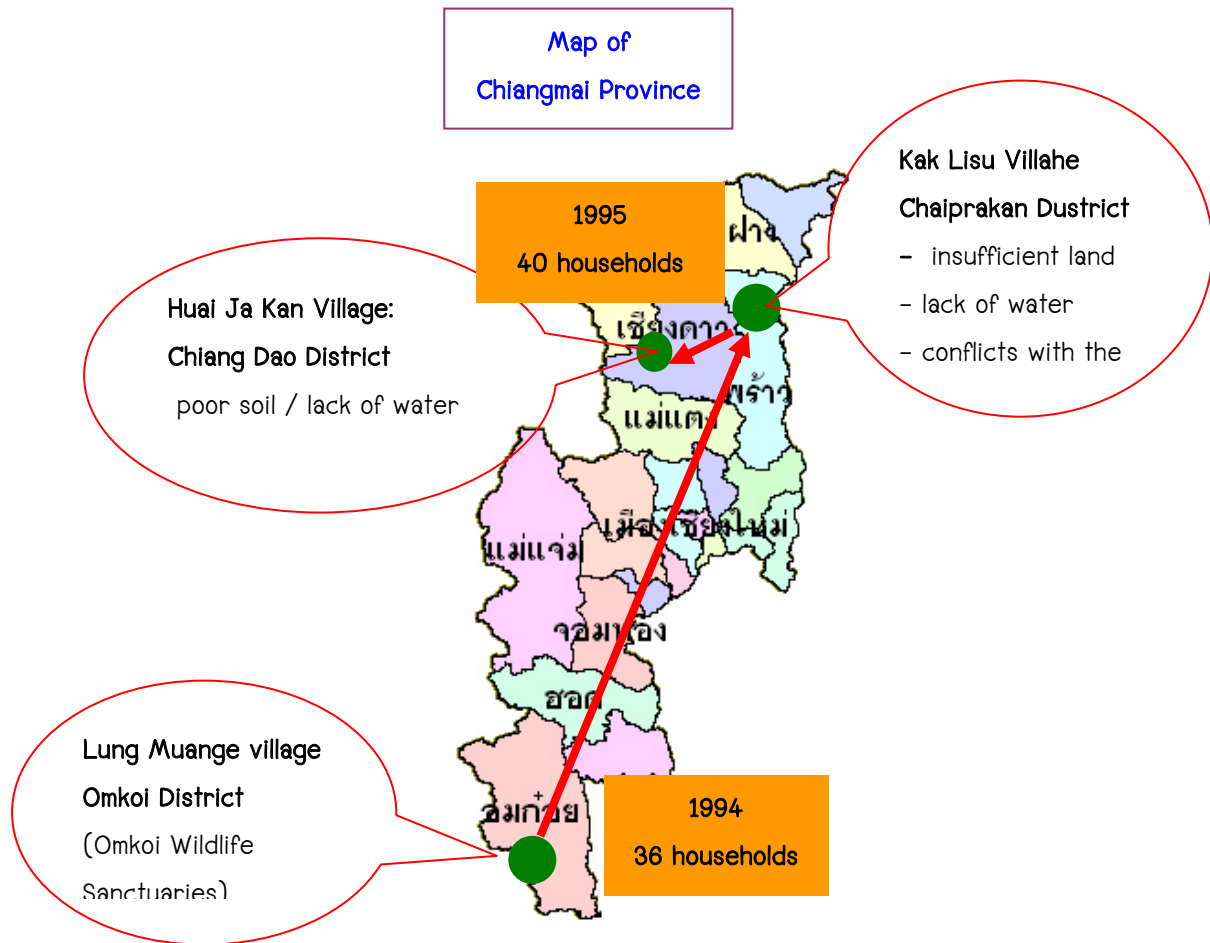
The problems in Huai Ja Kan is quite complex when we get to know that the responsible officers had taken the land of the Lahu who were the local population for the Lisu at the early time of relocation. So there were conflicts between the Lahu and the displaced Lisu on land and water.

Now the villagers have to decide for their future alone, then. They proposed to the responsible organizations of the options to solve their problem; 1) To solve the problems of land and water at Huai ja Kan 2) To find out new fertile land for them or 3) To let them return home.

According to the Guiding Principles on Internal Displacement, they have rights to return home with the protection and assistance of responsible organizations. It is the time to consider human rights practically. So let the villagers of Huai Ja Kan take part in the decision making and find out durable solutions to stop this involuntary displacement.

The involuntary Relocation and rights to self-determination

These displaced Lisu had been at Lunamuang village for 40 years before the first involuntary relocation to Kak Lisu village under the government policy on forest. Their homeland was declared as "Omko Wildlife Sanctuaries". They stayed at Kak Lisu village only one year due to the conflict between them and the local Chinese. Then they have to relocate to Huai Ja Kan and face the difficulties of living again.



The settlement at Huai Ja Kan

The area of some 345 rai was provided to the villagers. A half rai was distributed to each household for a living area and 5 rai was distributed as cultivation area. I have learnt that the yield of upland rice varies, ranging from less than 100kg/rai to 400 kg/rai. If we get 300kg/rai, it is considered to be a good yield. The rice consumption per adult is about 300 kg of paddy rice (unmilled rice) per year. The yield of upland rice at Huai Ja Kan was 250 kg /rai in 2006. So we can imagine that the rice yield is not enough for the households' consumptions.



Poor soil...poor life



Lacking of Water

Huai Ja Kan stream is the only natural water resource for the villagers. So there always be conflicts between the Lisu and the Lahu here. Even two dams were constructed but they did not provide enough water for the villagers. One dam is lower than the village and cultivation while another can not keep water. Then rain seems to be the only source of potable water.

