

# **Journey with the IDPs<sup>⊗</sup>**

**“A Comparative Study through Enhancing  
Process on the Rights to Life and Rights to Self  
Determination for the Internally Displaced  
Persons among Risky Area under the Thai  
Government Policy”**

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<sup>⊗</sup> Lessons and experiences learnt from working with the project...by Muaykae Intaramanon

## General discussion

As I have involved myself in a project named “**A Comparative Study through Enhancing Process on the Rights to Life and Rights to Self Determination for the Internally Displaced Persons among Risky Area under the Thai Government Policy**” during December 2005- December 2006 here I would like to discuss lessons and experiences learnt from working with the IDPs in the project areas from the beginning to the end of the project. The discussion focuses on project implement, activities and achievements. Since the contexts in the three project areas are different, each area will be discussed separately.

The discussion starts with a summary of each journey and facts finding, historical background of the IDPs in each area, policies declared for the relocation, the relocation process and life after the relocation, and the project intervention. Some pictures will be shown to illustrate the events. Milestone of working will be used to summarize the journey as well.

## Conclusion of lessons and experiences learnt from the journey

### The Huai - Wad Village

Issues of working with the IDPs in Huai Wad were based on their problems after the involuntary relocation which was drought, poor soil condition for cultivation and legal status. We attempted to motivate these IDPs to participate in solving their problems and dealing with the local organizations i.e. the Jae –Hom District Office and the Thung Phung TAO<sup>1</sup>, the office of Tham<sup>2</sup> Pha Tai national park, the Mae Sook forestry unit and the Catholic Center through formal and informal discussions, and setting up people forums in the village but it was disappointed. The villagers seemed to ignore working with the project and paid very little attention to the people forums. Mr. Phanuwat Jahaela<sup>3</sup> then worked very hard to promote the villagers cooperation and coordination among the local organizations to solve the problems. However there were only a few progressive activities at the early stage according to the serious drought in the village which led to low quality of living. After the resignation of Mr. Phanuwat in May, Mr. Suphinanthachai Sae Lee volunteered himself to work in Huai Wad with a belief of the villagers’ potential to work for their community. Some activities i.e. vegetable planting, building up water containers and repairing the damaged road were implemented together and informal leaders of each cluster played quite active roles in the activities.

We would like to conclude that one year of working with the IDPs in Huai Wad is an unforgettable and challenge journey. As the new home was not well prepared, the IDPs had to struggle for survival and could not participate the project activities actively at the beginning.

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<sup>1</sup> TAO refers to The Tambol Administrative Organization.

<sup>2</sup> Tham is a Thai term which means cave

<sup>3</sup> The project field personnel of Huai Wad during December 2004 - May 2005

From a process of working together, not only the IDPs who learnt about human rights but we also learnt a lot. We learnt that **in order to implement human rights approach project in Huai Wad, to fulfill their basic needs should be the first priority. Positive thinking of the project staffs, respect of the IDPS culture, and considering their needs were also crucial for the project implementations. Thus the IDPs in Huai Wad learnt about human rights through activities better than from formal trainings.**

Even we could not work as much within one year and the participations of the IDPs in solving their problem on drought has only just begun. We hope that our attempts to promote the accessibility of basic human rights through the participations of working together on their problems would lead to other development activities which based on the fully participation of these IDPs in the future.

The informal leaders who have been working with us throughout the year and become our friends would share their knowledge and experiences of basic human rights to others IDPs in the village especially the youth. Their rights to self determinations and rights to developments through participation would be confirmed rightfully to the local organizations working in the village.

#### The Pong Hi Village

The main issues of working with the IDPs in Pong Hi were related to income generations according to the limitation of land used under the national park. Mr. Suphinanthachai Sae Lee<sup>4</sup> and the village's leaders held up some discussions on bamboo shoots processing as short term solutions before handed in the project to the Mae Sao TAO but it was rejected. It was recommended that the villagers should grow bamboos in the village area and in their cultivation lands as a long term solution. Rearing livestock was also discussed as another source of income. The villagers then took a study tour to a swine bank in Chiangrai Province and planned to set up a swine bank after the study tour. Discussions on implementing a swine bank were held up in order to create the bank committees, rules and action plans. The project allocated an amount of 20000 baht to initiate the bank activities under the agreement that the leaders must set up concrete rules to run the bank. However there was no progressive since the members did not have time to plan together. After Mr. Suphinanthachai moved to work in Huai Wad in May, Mr. Suttichai Sae Lee was appointed to work in Pong Hi. A swine group was implemented instead of a swine bank because the group's members could not set up concrete rules of the bank and they preferred to work more individually. The new project personnel carried on the activities through some discussions but there were no progressive activities at all.

We would like to conclude that working with the IDPs in Pong Hi mostly based on the cooperation of the village's leaders who participate in the project activities very actively throughout the project. We learnt that to work on a project of human rights approach should be integrated with development activities which based on the contexts, needs and situations of the IDPs. Beside trainings and workshops which these leaders learn about human rights, they also learn from working together. The

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<sup>4</sup> A project field personnel who work in Pong Hi during December – May 2005

more they participate in the activities the more they learn to access the basic human rights. We found that **the high potential of Pong Hi leaders contributed to the possibility problems solutions. They had both good knowledge and skill on human rights. However they needed cooperation and coordination from local organizations to solve their problems better.** Even we can not implement all activities to solve the village' problems as planned together; we believe that these leaders can carry on the tasks with a confidence of their rights to self determinations and rights to development successfully.

### The Sunchareun Village

According to the likelihood of relocation under the government policies on natural resources, the leaders of Sunchareun and Mr. Pracha Sae Jao<sup>5</sup> worked out together on proactive activities to re-act such policies. Information on The project named “New forestry village” and the “Royal Project” was informed to the villagers continuously through formal, informal discussions, forums, study tours and some documents. Thus they rejected two projects which proposed to be implemented in the village. The leaders and villagers of Sunchareun had a strong belief in their potential to develop their community by themselves. They recognized that their community was an outstanding in natural resources management and being self- reliance community. Moreover the coffee group of Sunchareun was very successful in marketing their products and became an OTOP<sup>6</sup> of Tambol<sup>7</sup> Pha Tong. Recently, the villagers prepared some proactive activities through mapping and modeling on forest management. **It was learnt that both formal and informal village's leaders played very crucial roles to access rights on self determinations and rights to development while the project support related information and educate them through trainings, workshops, forums, study tours and discussions. However the cooperation among the villagers was very important to keep their power to manage their community in a long term.** We hope that all lessons and experiences learnt from proactive activities we have done together would bring up mechanisms to deal with the government policies. The villagers of Sunchareun would contribute their knowledge and skill on basic human rights to other villages nearby as well.

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<sup>5</sup> A project field personnel in Sunchareun

<sup>6</sup> OTOP refers to One Tambol One Product

<sup>7</sup> Tambol refers to sub district