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The Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage (MFLF) is a private non-profit organization established to improve the quality of life of the people in poverty and deprived of opportunities. The Foundation provides the people in the project area with education, proper infrastructure, and legitimate ways to earn their living, while fostering co-existence between man and nature. It also encourages the conservation of Lanna and tribal arts, traditions and cultures.

The MFLF was originally founded in 1972 by the late Princess Srinagarindra, the Princess Mother of the present King of Thailand as the Thai Hill Crafts Foundation under the Royal Patronage of Her Royal Highness.

Following her visits to remote areas of the country, the late Princess Mother discovered that the ethnic minorities in Northern Thailand were disenfranchised—poor, lacking citizenship and the right to live on the land they farmed, they were often preyed and taken advantage of by opportunist. They were caught in a downward spiral of sickness, poverty, and ignorance. The Princess Mother was aware of their ability in craftsmanship, and as a means of supplementing their income, wanted to help market their work. Her initiative was quite successful, as handicrafts by the ethnic minorities became popular both at home and abroad.

In 1979, the Thai Hill Crafts Foundation under the Royal Patronage of Her Royal Highness initiated the 8-month training for hill tribe youth at Rai Mae Fah Luang, (today known as the Mae Fah Luang Art and Culture Park) instilling skills and disciplines necessary for daily living such as the Thai language, basic math, health education, honesty, independence, etc. This training then expanded into the Hill Tribe Youth Leadership, in collaboration with USAID (United States Agency for International Development).

In 1985, as the Thai Hill Crafts Foundation began to incorporate rural development in its activities benefiting more than the hill tribes, the Princess Mother, granted permission for the foundation to be renamed as the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under the Royal Patronage of Her Royal Highness the Princess Mother. It then assumed an increasingly important role as a focal point of state and private organizations at both the local and international levels.

It was not until 1988 that the Mae Fah Luang Foundation undertook a comprehensive development project in the Doi Tung area to tackle opium cultivation at its root cause—poverty and lack of opportunity. Today, this work has become the recognized Sustainable Alternative Livelihood Development model implemented in Thailand, Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Indonesia.

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