

An extract from

# NURTURING

## SUSTAINABLE CHANGE



### THE DOI TUNG CASE 1988-2017

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by Mr. Javier Sagredo Fernandez



มูลนิธิแม่ฟ้าหลวง ในพระบรมราชูปถัมภ์  
Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage

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National Library of Thailand Cataloging in Publication Data

Fernandez, Javier Sagredo.

An extract from nurturing sustainable change : The Doi Tung case 1988-2017.-- 2nd ed.-- Bangkok : Mae Fah Luang Foundation Under Royal Patronage, 2020.

27 p.

1. Community development. 2. Doi Tung. I. Title.

307.09593

ISBN 978-616-7681-47-4

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First Printing: September 2017

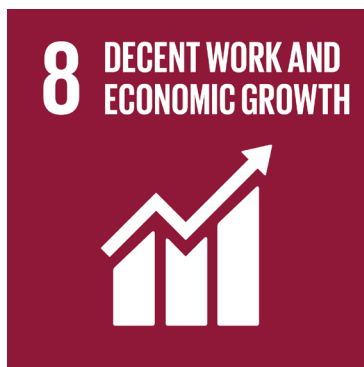
Second Printing: September 2020

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Published by

The Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage

Printer: Kiratithanapat Co.,Ltd. 4/2 Soi Chareonnakorn 10, Chareonnakorn Rd., Klongtonsai, Klongsarn, Bangkok 10600  
TEL. 0-2439-6000



**10** REDUCED INEQUALITIES



**11** SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



**12** RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



**13** CLIMATE ACTION



**14** LIFE BELOW WATER



**15** LIFE ON LAND



**16** PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



**17** PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS



  
**SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS**



*“Every person should develop towards the essential truth of his or her being, and not be trapped in the cloak of ignorance. The capacities and gifts that each are born with should be used to the best of each one’s ability.”*

**HRH Princess Srinagarindra**

*“We resolve to build a better future for all people, including the millions who have been denied the chance to lead decent, dignified and rewarding lives and to achieve their full human potential. We can be the first generation to succeed in ending poverty; just as we may be the last to have a chance of saving the planet. The world will be a better place in 2030 if we succeed in our objectives.”*

**Transforming our world:  
the 2030 Agenda for  
Sustainable Development**



# NURTURING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE

## THE DOI TUNG CASE (1988-2017)

### Executive Summary

The Doi Tung Development Project (DTDP), initiated in 1998 by the late Princess Mother, HRH Princess Srinagarindara, is the flagship project of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation (MFLF). It has unfolded for 30 years in northern Thailand's Chiang Rai province, which covers large portions of the Mae Fah Luang and Mae Sai Districts along the border between Thailand and Myanmar.

The history of the DTDP is the story of human transformation. By embarking on a development approach that focused on people's needs as the central concern, the Foundation was able to help people out of poverty while stewarding the natural environment. The ethnic minorities dwelling in the mountains were able to access viable job opportunities, education, and the chance to realize their full potential.

The focus on empowering people to be at the center of their own development comes from the words and actions of the Princess Mother. Her direction is the origin of the process in Doi Tung and at the core of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation's approach to development, which operates under the motto of "helping people to help themselves". Because the Princess Mother was able to understand that the villagers' opium cultivation and connection with illicit activities and deforestation were symptoms of poverty and other structural problems, the Doi Tung approach focused on reducing poverty and inequality by targeting the most in need first, which represents one of the most important cornerstones of the UN 2030 Global Agenda for Sustainable Development.

Through working humbly alongside the inhabitants of the Nang Non Mountains in northern Chiang Rai for over thirty years, the Foundation has developed a blueprint for development that is respectful of people's aspirations and their ability to help themselves, environmentally sustainable, and replicable. MFLF has since been able to implement this development model in other provinces and in Myanmar, Afghanistan and Indonesia. It is important to understand what happened at Doi Tung and how those principles can be implemented elsewhere. The story of Doi Tung is a vivid account of generations of families resisting and surviving decades of hunger, poverty, isolation, displacement, and conflict to emerge as active participants in the twenty-first century economy of modern Thailand.

### 1. Life in Doi Tung before the DTDP

The Nang Non Mountains in Thailand were the gateway to Shan State, Myanmar for centuries. The mountains have regained their lush forest cover in 30 years, much less than a lifetime for the many elders that still remember Doi Tung, which means "flag mountain", as a parched, desolate summit.

Opium cultivated as a cash crop came to Northern Thailand in the aftermath of Britain's Opium War with China (1839-1942). Minority groups like the Miao (Hmong) and Yao (Mien), originally from the Yunnan and Sichuan areas, were joined by Akha, Lahu and Liso peoples, who all made their home in the region. After the Chinese Revolution in 1949, Mao Zedong's government moved to eliminate opium production in China, which allowed for an expansion of cultivation in Thailand and Laos.



*Opium field at Doi Tung before 1988*

Until 1956, opium production, sale and use were legal in Thailand. It helped finance more than a third of the tax revenue of the Thai state. After becoming illegal in 1959, the ethnic minorities were able to keep cultivating opium because they lived in a remote region hard to access by the central government. There was no other crop that provided the guaranteed cash that opium did. They sold opium to local militias who controlled trafficking, transporting the sticky blocks of opium out of the region on the backs of donkeys.

The hill-dwelling ethnic minorities were and are culturally and religiously distinctive. They worried about public officials, who saw them in some cases as alien and susceptible to engage in insurgency against the central government. Villagers felt threatened by police, local militias, and the milieu of criminal activities that came with drug trafficking and illegal logging.

Communication with the outside world was rare. Most villagers did not speak Thai and roads were almost inexistent. Locals had no recognized citizenship rights, no formal papers such as a state identification card, and thus lacked the freedom to move around. As a result, the communities in Doi Tung remained secluded, with limited livelihood options outside of the drug trade.

The only governmental presence felt in Doi Tung was from the Royal Forestry Department, which was engaged in reforestation work during the 1950s. Ethnic minorities traditionally engaged in slash-and-burn shifting cultivation, which led to extreme degradation of the forest, its soil and water sources, and the whole mountain ecosystem.

Access to formal education was also nonexistent as was any access to the health system. Local herb doctors, who still practiced, were the only option to deal with illness and disease. This lack of assistance regarding health issues generated a high rate of mortality, especially among mothers and infants. Additionally, because of its widespread availability and its traditional use as the only pain and cough medicine, many villagers, mainly men, were hooked on opium.



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In this environment, life was far from easy. Poverty made families more dependent on opium and on shifting cultivation. Land use was not formalized. Rice, the basic food source, was not available year-long. Its annual harvest depended on variable weather conditions. The situation was worrying regarding children's nutrition and stunting cases. Water for household consumption had to be fetched at the river and carried up to the villages through steep hills. Houses were precariously perched on the mountain. They were made of bamboo with grass roofs, and had no sanitation.

For women, traditional patriarchal expectations regarding religious ceremonies, marriage and care of children and elders made life harder. Many men stayed at home using opium while women had to fetch water, grow rice, and clean and care for their families. Many families in Doi Tung saw girls as an important commodity and drove them into prostitution, making them more vulnerable to abuse and extortion. The involvement of villagers in prostitution also brought an increase in HIV/AIDS to Doi Tung.

## 2. Three decades of intervention

*The arrival of Mae Fah Luang, "Royal Mother from the Sky"*

The spirit and the thinking of the Princess Mother are still felt in Doi Tung. Without her presence and determination, things could have been very different in the mountains. Her arrival in 1987 kicked off the development project with some of the principles that turned out to be crucial for the Project's success:

- The fundamental **principles of her thinking** on the development process were: the belief in people's goodness, potential and dignity, and therefore the necessity in providing them the opportunity to realize these fundamentals.
- Moreover, her fondness of democratic ideals, her respect for all who worked with her, her critical and rational thinking and her openness to new knowledge instilled in the project team a way of working on development: simple, practical, logical, holistic, integrated, time-sensitive and inclusive (regardless of race, religion or nationality).



*The Princess Mother arrived in Doi Tung in 1987, and declared "I will reforest Doi Tung"*

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In 1988, the Princess Mother decided to build a home in Doi Tung. She made the Royal Villa her primary residence, which brought government infrastructure and other crucial factors to the remote region. These included:

- The strong **leadership** needed to connect the people of Doi Tung to the 35 agencies and governmental bodies her team mobilized to transform Doi Tung over 30 years.
- The Royal Family's **soft power capital** to put **health, education and livelihoods** as important priorities and fundamental blocks for the development process in Doi Tung also helped transform power relations in the Doi Tung area, displaced illegal activities and actors and opened possibilities for different social and economic dynamics to grow.
- The **continuous presence of state officials**, which aided the disarmament of the area. It also brought the rule of law to the area without the use of repressive measures.
- The development of **basic infrastructure**. Roads were built, electricity run through the region, and water tanks and infrastructure set up to give local inhabitants access to basic services.

### *Proper sequencing of interventions: Survival – Sufficiency – Sustainability*

The development plan laid out to start the project was characteristically simple, practical, and logical. It consisted of:

- A **bottom-up approach** to identify the needs and problems as identified by the community. This meant there was a continuous presence of MFLF team members, learning from people and meeting with the community, as they conducted socio-economic survey of every household and ground surveys.
- A **well sequenced blueprint** of three phases of the development intervention: short-term survival, medium-term sufficiency and long-term sustainability.
- A **flexible framework** and an impact management revision process that allowed for enough trial and error space to continuously improve the development processes.

Because of the extensive surveys conducted among the villagers, the MFLF team were able to clearly identify the structural issues and root causes of local hardship. They found poverty, hunger, debt, deforestation, addiction, involvement in illicit activities, prostitution, and vulnerability to abuse. Then the Foundation team sat down to sequence interventions that would maximize benefits and opportunities for local people.

#### *1. Phase I: Survival (1988-1993)*

##### *Security and Foundation*

HRH the late Princess Mother started with the construction of the Royal Villa as a symbolic first step. This sent a message of trust to the local people about the long-term nature of the Princess Mother's involvement.

Most initial efforts were concentrated on improving health and ensuring people had enough food for their families, so there was no need to get further indebted. With these priorities in mind, the following areas of work began:

- The Social Development Department within the project was created as a coordination mechanism with the local community. It hired villagers to work hand in hand MFL team to facilitate communication, trust and transparency.
- For the first time, **roads** connected all villages to the outside world. New supply systems brought drinking **water** to every village all year long. **Electricity** allowed for lighting and use of appliances, including TV and radios, which brought additional knowledge and exposure to the Thai language to villagers.

- There was additional **security** in the Project area. The Royal Forestry Department ceded responsibility to the Army to look after the area because of the presence of the Princess Mother.
- Job creation: local people were hired for three years to do reforestation, generating an income for their families. The reduction of arable land due to the reforestation efforts was compensated for with the establishment of high potential Economic Forest, a type of forest whose yields are of high value and have high value-added potential; thus generating stable income to the community. In addition, the Royal Forestry Department agreed to allow people to collect food and other non-timber products from certain areas in the forest, making legal what was a common practice. This was called the Sustenance Forest.
- Land was distributed with an eye to sustainability. The protected watershed area, the economic forest, sustenance forest, cultivation areas, and those designated for residential and infrastructure use allowed for balance between environmental protection of natural resources and income-generating activities.
- Planning for when the reforestation process would be finished and people would require other sources of income. This included training on how to grow new crops to the area such as Arabica coffee and macadamia; improving and marketing handicrafts; introducing new weaving techniques and designs; planning for an increase in tourism due to the improved infrastructure.
- The new income provided by the participation in the Project's reforestation activities allowed families to improve their survival and **nutrition**.
- The Foundation provided access to **health care**, including treatment for drug addiction. Seven health centers for maternal care resulted in a reduction of mortality rates of women and children.
- Doi Tung Development Project created a census and registered every person in each household. They delivered Project ID cards to people. These were not legally bonding but accepted by the military, police and government officials as they all participated in the survey process. This was an important change, because it provided people with a sense of security, because now the government had registered that they belonged in the area.

## 2. Phase II: Mid-term Sufficiency (1994-2002)

### *Financial Sustainability*

The main objective of this phase was to transition to financial sustainability for the people in Doi Tung, increasing per-capita income through more diverse, profitable and sustainable occupations. This could be obtained by capturing the added value of post-harvest processing through quality branding strategies.

People's wellbeing and dignity remained central to the process. There was continuous work on additional infrastructure, health and education. Telephone lines arrived in 1995; phone booths were installed in all villages, with some landlines going into households. Wireless phones arrived in 2000.

Regarding health, work was concentrated on prevention and promotion as well as dealing with an increase in HIV/AIDS. Beginning 1993 there was an increase in mortality due to HIV/AIDS, particularly among the Shan people. Later, awareness and retroviral treatment arrived for HIV-affected people. There was continuous care by medical staff from the hospital. A small support group of affected people was created called The Lotus Group to consult, share coping approaches, empower one another and for a sense of community. It began with very few people and today has more than 60 members. The central and local



*Example of products under brand Doi Tung*

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government, the Sub-District Administrative Organization, have support programs for those affected, and also run STD prevention and protection initiatives.

In terms of education, DTDP concentrated on helping students to continue studying after high school; the school curriculum was adapted towards a “learning by doing” approach, emphasizing skills and problem-solving methodologies to prepare students for the future.

Four business units were established under the DoiTung brand to transition from the production of commodities to product and market-driven approaches, adding value by processing:

1. **Agro-forestry**, which began in Phase I. This was scaled up, with more knowledge gradually getting transferred to local farmers. A coffee roasting facility was put in place, along with Doi Tung Cafes which opened throughout Thailand to provide exponential added value for local producers. The goal was to capture higher value. One kilogram of green coffee beans was worth US\$ 1, but sold in the café a kilogram was worth US\$241. A macadamia processing plant was developed for similar reasons.
2. **Cottage industries** such as pottery, hand-woven textiles, tufted carpets and mulberry paper were developed. New designers joined the Project to work with weavers to create prêt-a-porter clothes and home textiles.
3. **Horticulture**, cultivating cold-weather flowers and plants for the Mae Fah Lung Garden was introduced. The Garden became a tourist destination. Plants were also sold to other customers. A plant tissue culture lab was created.
4. **Tourism** became viable up in the mountains, where tourists came to enjoy the relatively cool weather and change in natural landscape. Tourists visited a new restaurant, toured the Royal Villa, and took in new attractions that included the Mae Fah Luang Garden. Doi Tung Lodge and other related services were added and bundled into packages.

All four areas benefited from the inclusion of technology adapted to people’s skill levels, allowing for the generation of a large number of jobs. All of this was managed by local people.

The Project also transferred responsibility to coffee laborers and leased the coffee trees at a symbolic price of 2 US cents. Growers were in charge of the entire process and became independent farmers. The new scheme brought a sharp improvement in quality and a three-fold increase in production. Ownership of the plant nursery was also transferred to local laborers.

The Social Development Department was consolidated as a close communication channel with villagers. It worked to promote livelihood opportunities and conserve local culture and traditions; the SDD was also in close coordination with local government to support their work in the area. They were the coordinating body with public agencies involved in the DTDP.

### 3. Phase III: Long-term Sustainability (2003-present)

#### *Sustainability and Exit*

The last phase of the DTDP is focused on the sustainability of the development processes. It puts the Project in the hands of local communities in Doi Tung. In practical terms, it means the transformation of the communities into the owners of their own future.

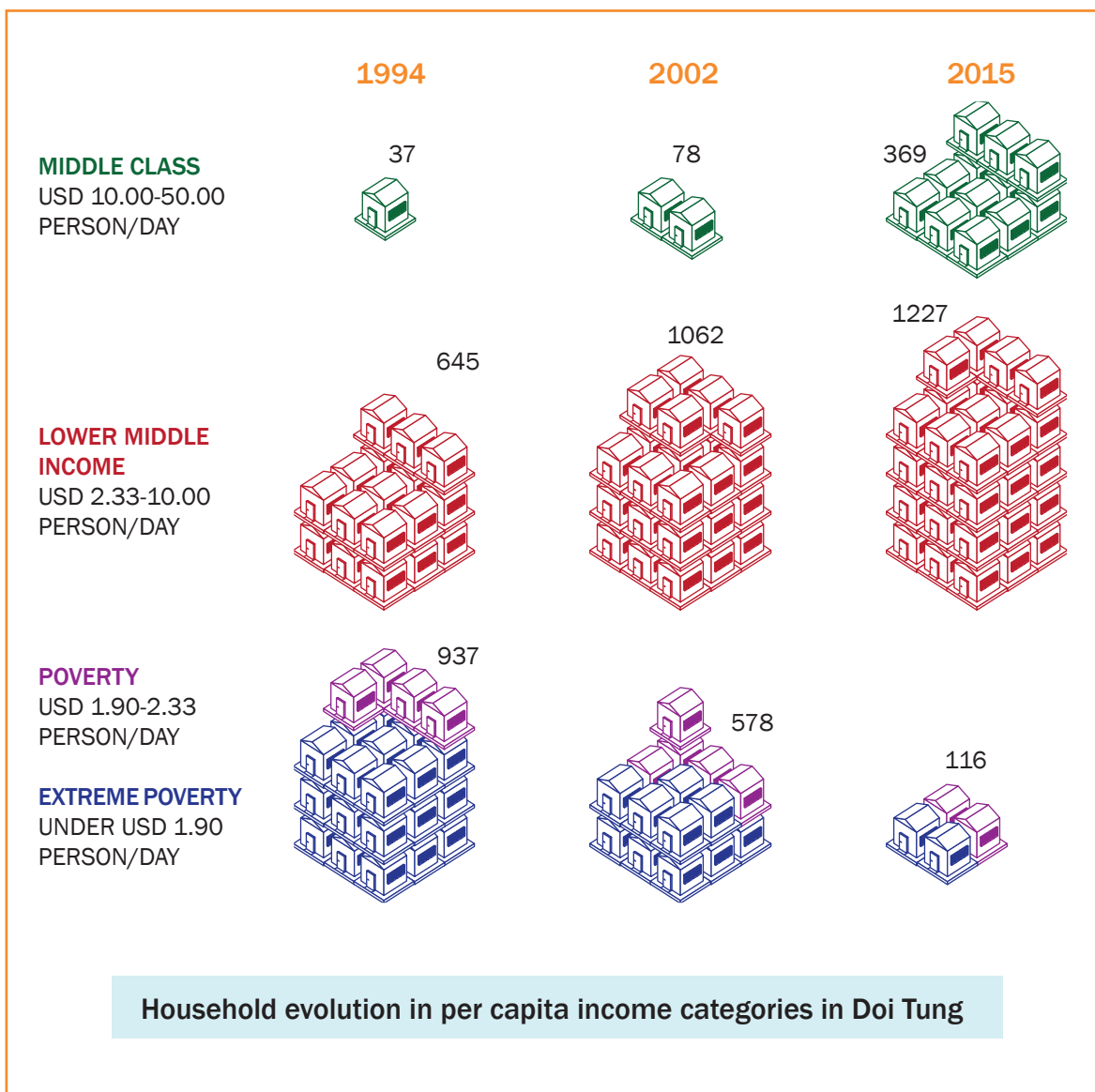
Change has arrived to everyone in Doi Tung, leaving no one behind. Many families have members working



*Young generation embrace their tradition and culture*

abroad. They get regular income from remittances. The younger generation of Doi Tung access all the rights that Thai citizenship offers. For the older generation, access to government services, including health, has been possible through a special resident “pink card.” There’s a path to full citizenship after more than ten years holding a pink card. Many older residents of Doi Tung have applied for full citizenship.

The formal aspects of the Doi Tung Development Project are transitioning out. Local communities and institutions are ready to work for their own development, much the way any other region in the country operates.



**Remark :** Income measurement is only of cash income, not including food crops and other resources the community may have access to which contributes to their livelihood without translating directly into cash.

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Most of the initiatives have matured to a point of profitability. Local management of each business unit guarantees local participation in future operations. Business units have been financially profitable since 2000, while the average income per capita has multiplied more than six-fold in the last 10 years within the project area from 431 US\$ in 2006 to 2,922 US\$ in 2016.

Additionally, the need for the economic units to keep sustaining the wellbeing of the people in Doi Tung while competing in the market has obliged leaders to put continuing effort into improving the added value processes. They are trying to increase productivity levels and pioneer innovative approaches. Research into new materials like natural dyes refined from indigenous plants is happening. The business units are experimenting with the use of biofuel to recycling waste material from the agro-industrial process. These efforts have reduced costs, waste, emissions, and improved product quality.

Economic and market challenges, including Thailand's recent entrance in the ASEAN Economic Community, have also created a realignment of the agriculture-related business initiatives, reevaluating the market potential and improvement of their products and enhancing innovation. Doi Tung has invested in its brand, and gained the geographic indication certification which has protected the quality that makes Doi Tung Coffee internationally competitive.

New crops are being identified for the economic forest, such as vanilla, tea-oil and the pine trees initially used for reforestation, while assessing the improvement of native botanical diversity and wildlife in the watershed forest.

The Project is also researching new added value opportunities and considering entering other promising sectors. Macadamia oil for cosmetic use would add 70% more value to the amount gleaned from harvesting just the macadamia nut. Bamboo shoots are also a promising sector that could be developed in the forest. Some of the goods and services being delivered in Doi Tung like cleaning and gardening could also benefit from adding incentives for greater productivity, reducing costs and increasing income. The area has potential for all these improvements, but the balance with environmental sustainability and social development will be vital.

Due to the increase in household income, many villagers have started business initiatives of their own, creating local brands of agro-industrial products that are being commercialized outside of the Doi Tung area. Individuals and families have more opportunities and do not depend on specific development activities provided by the Project. They are engaging in diverse economic activities and growing other economic crops like Assam tea, Sacha inchi (Inca peanut) and bamboo to provide additional income to their family.

Access to credit is available through budget allocated to villages. There is also a line of credit for cooperatives, which has served to jumpstart businesses around the production, processing and marketing of tea, bamboo, coffee and other products. The DTDP offers training to local farmers, which allows them to improve their skills and access to knowledge related to these promising sectors.

Every year about one million tourists visit Doi Tung. The Doi Tung Tourism Business Unit has generated quite a diversified offering. There is the annual festival, the Colors of Doi Tung, which offers opportunities for local people to develop local products, practice entrepreneurship and meet customers from various sectors directly. Additional restaurants and souvenir shops generate income and skills for local families. Other MFLF flagship projects in the Chiang Rai area like the Hall of Opium and the Mae Fah Luang Art and Cultural Park have helped attract more tourists to the area. Along with it, many villages and the Sub-district Administrative Organization are developing community-based tourism initiatives. This includes new initiatives connected with the forest such as trekking and home stays.

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During this last phase, the DTDP has focused also on improving education in partnership with the Ministry of Education. Child-centered learning, life skills development and the Princess Mother's values are at the core of this process. New initiatives, the expansion of Montessori learning approach into all the schools in the Project area and an Open Approach to Education (based on problem solving), are being tested with promising preliminary results. Vocational training has been included in high-school curriculum. Environmental education has been integrated into the curriculum so that new generations can continue to be stewards of environmental sustainability.

The DTDP has put in place a scholarship program to allow families to send children to universities across the country providing around 10 scholarships a year, covering 255 students in total, opening the way for the young people of Doi Tung to be the most educated member of their family.

Many responsibilities previously managed by the DTDP have been transferred to local inhabitants and government. This includes water, landslide and forest fire prevention, and participatory planning and budgeting in concert with the Sub-district Administrative Organization. Irrigation systems are maintained by villages through irrigation funds, paid by beneficiaries. Quite a few of the development volunteers of the DTDP, villagers who worked with the DTDP since the beginning, have become community leaders. They work with government officials, ensuring the natural transmission of some of the fundamental principles and processes of the DTDP to ensure the future sustainable development of the area.



### 3. Towards a brighter future

The last three decades of sustainable human development have profoundly transformed the environmental conditions and livelihood options of the people living in Doi Tung.

The success story of Doi Tung avoided some of the most common mistakes that still happen in many development interventions. The first mistake is overlooking issues related with power and inequality. Fortunately, when the Doi Tung Project started, the soft power of the Princess Mother's presence had a focusing on the state institutions, which were drawn together to work for the wellbeing of the people. In Doi Tung there was a multidisciplinary conceptualization that was carried out with room for trial and error.

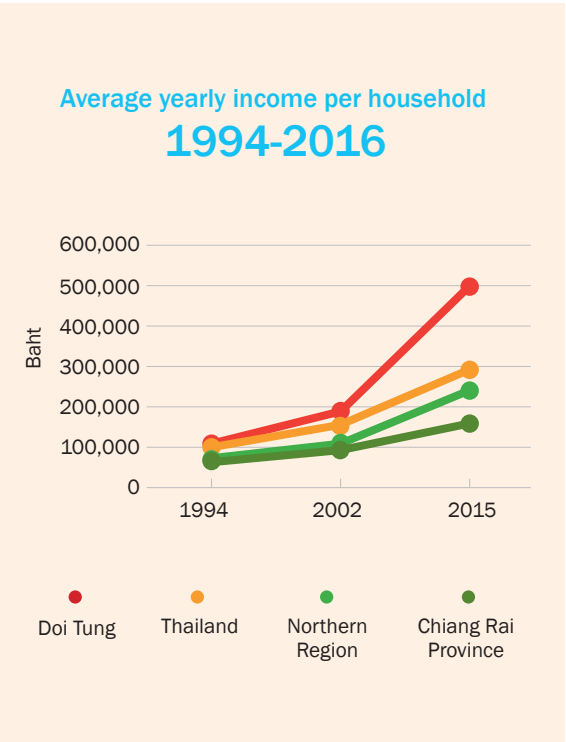
The environmental degradation, isolation, and precariousness of the community, as well as the lack of state presence, were not taken as difficulties but as opportunities to facilitate the needed transformation for Doi Tung. Moreover, the thinking of the Princess Mother was tuned to an exceptional awareness of the fact that the environmental conditions of the forest were the key to meaningful and sustainable development for Doi Tung's people. Being able to create co-existence between the people and the forest allows the forest to recover.



*The transformation of Doi Tung, Lahu Pakluay village*

Additionally, the leadership of the MFLF acknowledged from the beginning that communities and institutions are composed of a web of human relationships with enormous potential for change. Emphasis was given to discussion, debate, common learning and transparent communication in search of mutual understanding, individual and common empowerment, and the building of meaningful relationships, both within the communities and in the offices of the government. Partnership with the private sector was also created to transfer knowledge to the community in terms of quality, standard, access to wider market, efficiency and management. These private entities include Nestle, Mitsui Company (Thailand), Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation, Siam Commercial Bank, Crown Property Bureau, Euchukiat Bank, Bank of Asia, IKEA, Kaldi and Muji etc.

Diversity has been a factor in the range of income within the Doi Tung area. Some of the villages have developed their capacity to process their own coffee or tea, generating additional income; some have more villagers working abroad and sending remittances; some villages are more remote and further from the city; and in others, life is more relaxed and low key, and most families are happy having sufficient income to cover their basic needs. They supplement this by gathering additional resources from the forest. Nevertheless, inequality of income among villages has been gradually reduced from a 12:1 ratio in 1988 to a 3.4:1 ration in 2016. The village with the lowest average income in 2016 is equivalent to the income of the average household income for Thailand.





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### *Future Generation of Doi Tung*

The people of Doi Tung now face the future from a very different situation than the one they lived in three decades ago. They have many reasons to feel optimistic and to believe that they can improve their situation even further, now that they left behind the times of survival and scarcity. The older generation clearly knows and has a tangible memory of the hard work and years of sustained intervention it took to get free of subsistence living dependent on illicit activities. They want to secure a better future for them and for their children, mainly through diversification and increase of income, while acknowledging the importance of a holistic perspective to life and development in Doi Tung.

Nevertheless, perspectives have changed for younger members of the community who have lived all their lives in a gradually improving environment, and experienced the closing gap between Doi Tung and the rest of the country. They are more exposed and connected to the outside world and therefore, influenced by globalization and media, the same way the younger generation around the world are influenced.

People in Doi Tung are also living longer, due to improvements in health. There has a reduction in the number of children per family (2-3 is the average), and the temporary or long-term migration of many young people to study or work outside of Doi Tung means that the median age of Doi Tung residents is older.

Because of the rising expectations, one of the keys for the next period will be the generation of enough wealth and wellbeing to fulfill the hopes of the younger generation in order to continue to attract them to opportunities on the mountain. This will come about through the consolidation of the processes to add value to local products in Doi Tung, adding technology for better processing, branding, and marketing. There can also be further development of profitable sectors like tourism.

### *Doi Tung as a Living University*

The area has also become an example of knowledge-based tourism under the Princess Mother's philosophy of "cultivate land, cultivate people." The local people are faculty in this "Living University", which provides two-way learning opportunity for the local people as well as the like-minded and groups interested in sustainable development, social entrepreneurship and reforestation model.

The MFLF has converted Doi Tung into a Living University for rural development, environmental management, minority rights, and social entrepreneurship. Every year, around 900 study visits, internships and training visits allow many government officials (including Heads of State), villagers, non-profit organizations, private companies, academics, students and the general public, both Thai and international, to come to Doi Tung to learn. This learning happens directly from the people of Doi Tung and from development practitioners. Visitors go to villages to gain first-hand experience of the practical implementation of Doi Tung's approach. Direct exposure to sustainable development alongside a cultural immersion in the way of life of the ethnic minorities is complemented by a conception of learning as a two-way process. The MFLF also learns from those visiting Doi Tung.

The Doi Tung Living University offers capacity-building programs for development practitioners to become change agents, helping them identify real problems and needs of a community and plan to get results that benefit people. It includes training in many of the areas developed by the DTDP: water, healthcare, forest management, soil improvement, agriculture, livestock, handicraft and agro-industry. It also includes training on effective community engagement and mobilization.

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### *Scaling up: becoming a national reference for sustainable rural development*

The lessons learned from the DTDP are being exported and adapted both at the national level and in other international sites in Myanmar, Afghanistan, and Indonesia, where the Foundation has been an active facilitator of development in partnership with respective governments, local authorities and communities for the last decade. In each instance, the MFLF blueprint has been interpreted according to each specific context, which includes the political and socioeconomic circumstances and specific environmental characteristics.

In 2009, the Royal Initiative Discovery Foundation (RIDF) was initiated by the chairman of the MFLF and established by the Thai Government in order to accelerate and expand rural development in the country, implement model projects based on lessons learned from various Royal initiatives, and integrate them into the country's overarching development approach. The MFLF is considered one of the main contributors, particularly in on-the-ground implementation and development approach, to the institution who share the goal of seeking cooperation of all government agencies to create a set of multi-pronged approaches to sustainable socio-economic development under six main dimensions: water, renewable energy, forest, soil, farming and environment.

In 2009, along with the MFLF and national and local institutions, the RIDF initiated a pilot project in Nan Province. It is still on-going and has expanded to 21 villages in three districts. The goal is to transform a local reality of deforestation from slash and burn agriculture, pollution of the Nan river watershed from pesticides, associated health problems and heavily indebted communities. Another prototype project has been developed in Kalasin province with an interesting mix of applied Buddhist Teaching combined with the King's philosophy of Sufficiency Economy to confront a reality of poverty and lack of access to water.

The RIDF facilitates the incorporation of new technology to local development processes to increase productivity, reduce costs and connect the supply chain from the farmers to the factories. Using technology decreases the risk of price fluctuation by helping local farmers remain competitive. The RIDF also works with local universities and other experts to solve specific problems, find higher value crops, develop new techniques and open new markets.

A wider look to area-based local economic development has begun with the addition of private sector partners to develop added value chains alongside communities. Some corporations are helping villagers generate new enterprises, and plan to gradually transfer ownership back to villagers when conditions are optimal. After three years of operation, the RIDF has developed 17 area-based projects in 10 provinces. There are 142 small-scale water resource projects in a total of 46 provinces. Along with this effort, and within its Living University proposal, the MFLF has developed a training program for development volunteers to scale the Doi Tung approach to all rural areas in Thailand.

## **4. Doi Tung and the UN 2030 Agenda**

### ***Embracing wider complexity and multi-dimensionality***

The multidimensionality of the process that has taken place in Doi Tung in the last three decades speaks directly to the goals and targets of the UN 2030 Global Sustainable Development Agenda. The results the DTDP was able to obtain concerning the wellbeing of people and nature coincide with the direction that the Agenda has set for the next 13 years. The investment and effort that the MFLF and the Thai Government are dedicating to scale up the Doi Tung model in order to reduce rural poverty, strengthen rural development, and protect the natural environment is one of the drivers to move Thailand toward sustainable growth in the next decades.

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### *Inspiration for the 2030 Agenda*

The concept of human development represents a landmark in the way development is conceived and understood by the international community. It recognizes that the true wealth of nations are their people, and that the main objective of development must point to the creation of conditions to allow people to experience long, healthy and creative lives, rather than just assuming that greater economic growth will necessarily bring wellbeing for everyone. It is understood as a process that enlarges the choices, liberties and capacities of people for their wellbeing, and allows them to access the necessary resources and knowledge.

This concept of enlarging people's capacities for "doing" and "being" has inspired and is embedded in the new global 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, which is an ambitious blueprint for a better world (People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership), with broad, universal and transformative goals that takes over the previous Millennium Development Goals. During the September 2015 high-level meeting of the UN General Assembly, the 2030 Agenda received acceptance from all member states of the UN. They committed to implement the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) and 169 targets, in order to engage in a "collective journey to shift the world on to a sustainable and resilient path."

The mountains of Doi Tung have been transformed from a survival world to a self-sufficient world. Putting the most vulnerable people as responsible and active protagonists of their own development is at the core of Doi Tung's success. It confirms the need for the paradigm shift in development thinking that is now widely accepted. The DTDP results in terms of impact on people's lives and wellbeing, along with national stability and peace.

The UN Global Agenda also outlines the fact that its goals are integrated and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. In Doi Tung, this integrated approach also considers the diverse needs of different generations, as well as the needs of the future ones, with particular details of its implementation.

- Environmental sustainability enables people's access to natural resources, especially of those most vulnerable, without compromising its conservation for the future generation's enjoyment and needs. Throughout the three decades of work along the Doi Tung experience, there has always been a clear conviction that the happiness of its people, its economy and the thriving and cohesion of its communities are intrinsically connected to the health of its soil, its water, its air and its forest. Clear allocation of land use namely conservation forest, sustenance forest, economic forest, cultivation area and residential and infrastructure area, through community participatory process and strict following up using GIS in collaboration with ground survey, has allowed the community to co-exist in harmony with nature. Additionally, this environmental recovery was necessary for the development of the economic forest initiatives that are at the base of the income generating activities in Doi Tung, as well as for providing villagers with additional food and forest products that have improved their nutrition, health and economy.
- The life cycle of every person is taken into account to adapt the interventions to the specific needs of people depending on what moment they are in their lives and also to their dynamic nature. This element is required to promote the transformation of family and work trajectories, the accumulation of assets, and the connection of past deprivations with present safeguards that improve people's capacity to become what they wish. The DTDP has taken into account the specific needs and risks of children (with emphasis on poverty reduction, nutrition, education and health), youth (training, education and employment), women with children (care for children to be able to work and health), adults (income generation, rights, access to jobs) and elders (care and health, income protection). The special focus on children is of importance, mainly because of the determinant weight that the first 5 years have in the capacity of people to progress in all development aspects along their life cycle, in order to break with the intergenerational transmission of poverty.

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The focus on people in Doi Tung has allowed it to address both the structural causes and the consequences of people's participation in illicit activities and economies. As a result, Doi Tung has become a primary reference point for many political leaders, Thai and abroad, and development practitioners to look beyond the traditional way in which one-sided securitization responses have been designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated. Any situation needing intervention is necessarily complex and multi-causal. Solutions must transcend simple, biased and fragmented thinking based on incorrect cause-effect relationships and theories of change.

#### *Anchored on the King's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy*

The process developed in Doi Tung, as well as the work of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation, is inspired by King Bhumibol Adulyadej's "Sufficiency Economy Philosophy" (SEP). SEP was a new paradigm that has become a fundamental reference for development strategies to overcome poverty in Thailand. It is now becoming a promising South-South cooperation platform to support other countries in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda (SEP for SDGs Partnership).

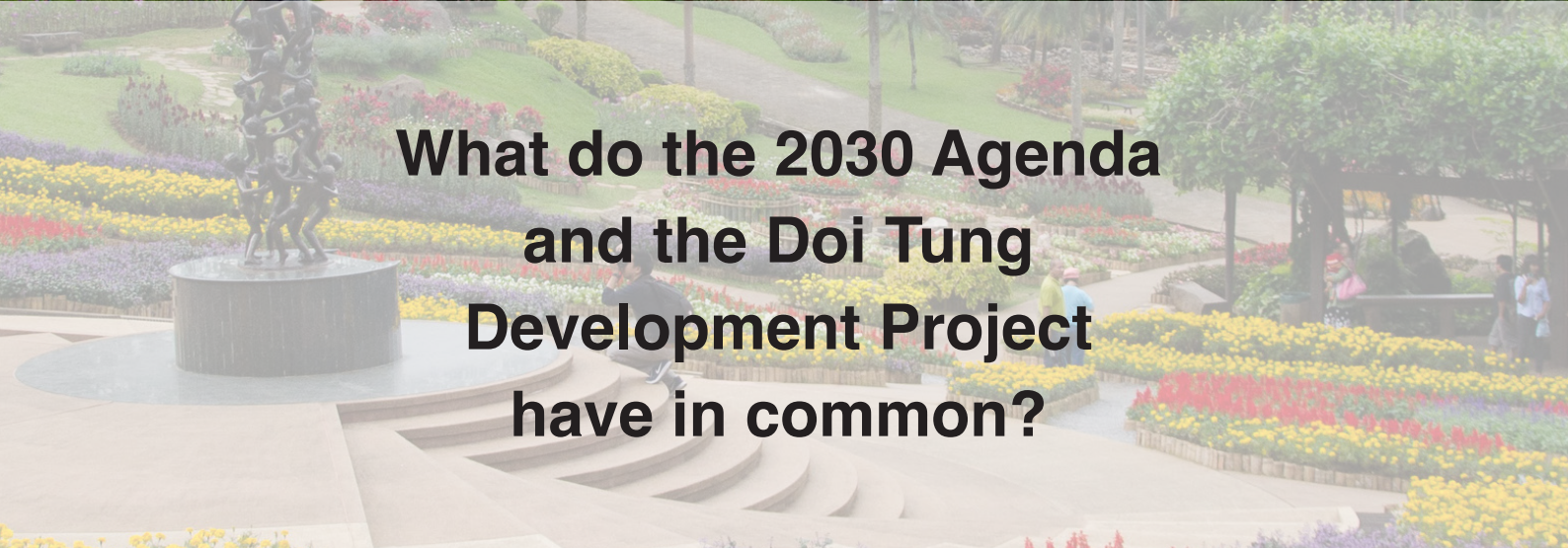
SEP advocates economic stability over rapid but unbridled growth. It emphasizes the benefits of economic prosperity while shuns excessive risk-taking which can lead to inequalities and the plundering of natural resources. Instead, SEP seeks to strengthen society's immunity to the negative effects of globalization. SEP has played a key balancing role in Thailand's steady growth path for decades. It remains the key principle of the country's sustainable development efforts.

SEP is based on the concepts of moderation, knowledge and reasonableness, and on the underlying principles of knowledge and morality, all of them important guiding references of the Doi Tung initiative:

- **Moderation** is embedded in the Project's long-term focus on profitability balanced with a measured approach to economic development. DTDP initially focused on finding a way to meet the basic needs of the most vulnerable people within its project area. This ensured that economic growth would not leave anyone behind.
- **Reasonableness**, or the application of wisdom to decision-making, has also been a trademark in Doi Tung, mainly by transferring the responsibility for their development back to the people, as protagonists of their future.
- The third component, **prudence**, is understood as risk management. This was also rooted in the approach implemented in Doi Tung, which used soft power and a practical, empathic approach to people's problems. This allowed DTDP to target the structural issues behind poverty and exclusion.
- Regarding the principle of **knowledge**, flexible planning allowed for sufficient trial and error. Being open to course corrections facilitated the analysis and the improvement of the interventions. Through small iterative steps, the DTDP was able to test and incorporate innovative solutions. Local knowledge played a key role in this process: the project team (in which many local villagers got incorporated, initially as volunteers, later as staff members or community leaders), communities and families started to squeeze their minds, being creative, committing mistakes, but treated them as opportunities to learn how to do better.
- Finally, **morals and ethics** acted as a guide for the Project's application. In this sense, a profound ethic orientation is behind the transference of the responsibility back to the people and the recovery of their rights and freedoms. People from the ethnic minorities were finally treated as human beings. Every staff working for the Doi Tung Development Project knew they were only an instrument of the villagers' empowerment.



**What do the 2030 Agenda  
and the Doi Tung  
Development Project  
have in common?**



## 2030 AGENDA

A far reaching, ambitious and transformational vision.

Context specific, depending on local circumstances and priorities.

Integrated in all three economic, social and environmental dimensions.

States the need for additional resources for sustainable development.



## DOI TUNG

Profoundly transformed the human development dynamics and restored the environment in Doi Tung.

Generated specific solutions and appropriate sequencing of interventions adapted to Doi Tung.

Incorporates strong linkages between social, income generating and environmental components.

Showed that it is possible to mobilize enough public and private investment for an integrated initiative.

## 1. People



## 2030 AGENDA

## DOI TUNG

Pledges to end poverty and hunger in all its forms and dimensions.

ZERO HUNGER



Lifted most households out of poverty, improving their livelihood and access to food all year long.

Plans to combat inequalities, reaching those furthest behind first.

REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Focused on the most vulnerable to recover rights, access to health and education and basic income.

Promotes gender equity and the empowerment of women and girls.

1 NO POVERTY



Empowered women to be participants of their development, promoted girls' access to education.

Empowers vulnerable people: ethnic minorities, children, youth, and migrants.

1 NO POVERTY



Respected culture and dignity of the ethnic minority, raising the wellbeing of children, youth and elders.

Promotes every child and women being free from violence and exploitation.

1 NO POVERTY



Eliminated children and women's vulnerability to violence, prostitution & illicit economies.

Promotes equitable and universal access to quality education at all levels.

QUALITY EDUCATION



Allowed for universal access to primary and secondary education and paths for higher education.

Promotes physical and mental health and access to quality health care.

GOOD HEALTH AND WELL-BEING



Treatment for opium addiction & IDs allowed for free access to health care for everyone.

Promotes the right to safe drinking water and sanitation and improved hygiene.

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Safe drinking water distribution and sanitation was made available in all villages.



## 2. Planet



## 2030 AGENDA

## DOI TUNG

Humanity lives in harmony with nature and in which wildlife is protected.

LIFE ON LAND



Doi Tung was reforested, allowing for progressive wildlife and diversity to return.

Ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources.

LIFE ON LAND



Water, soil and other forest resources are managed in a sustainable way.

Protect the planet from degradation, including sustainable consumption and production.

RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION AND PRODUCTION



Clean & renewable agricultural and industrial production, environmental education & recycling.

Climate-sensitive technology, respectful of biodiversity and resilient.

CLIMATE ACTION



Innovative renewable energy systems, water treatment plants, biological pest control.

Tackles water scarcity and pollution, land degradation and drought.

CLEAN WATER AND SANITATION



Assured clean water access to everyone and restored soil, forest cover and watershed.

Promotes resilience and disaster risk reduction.

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Communities developed plans and mechanisms to prevent and fight fires, floods and landslides.

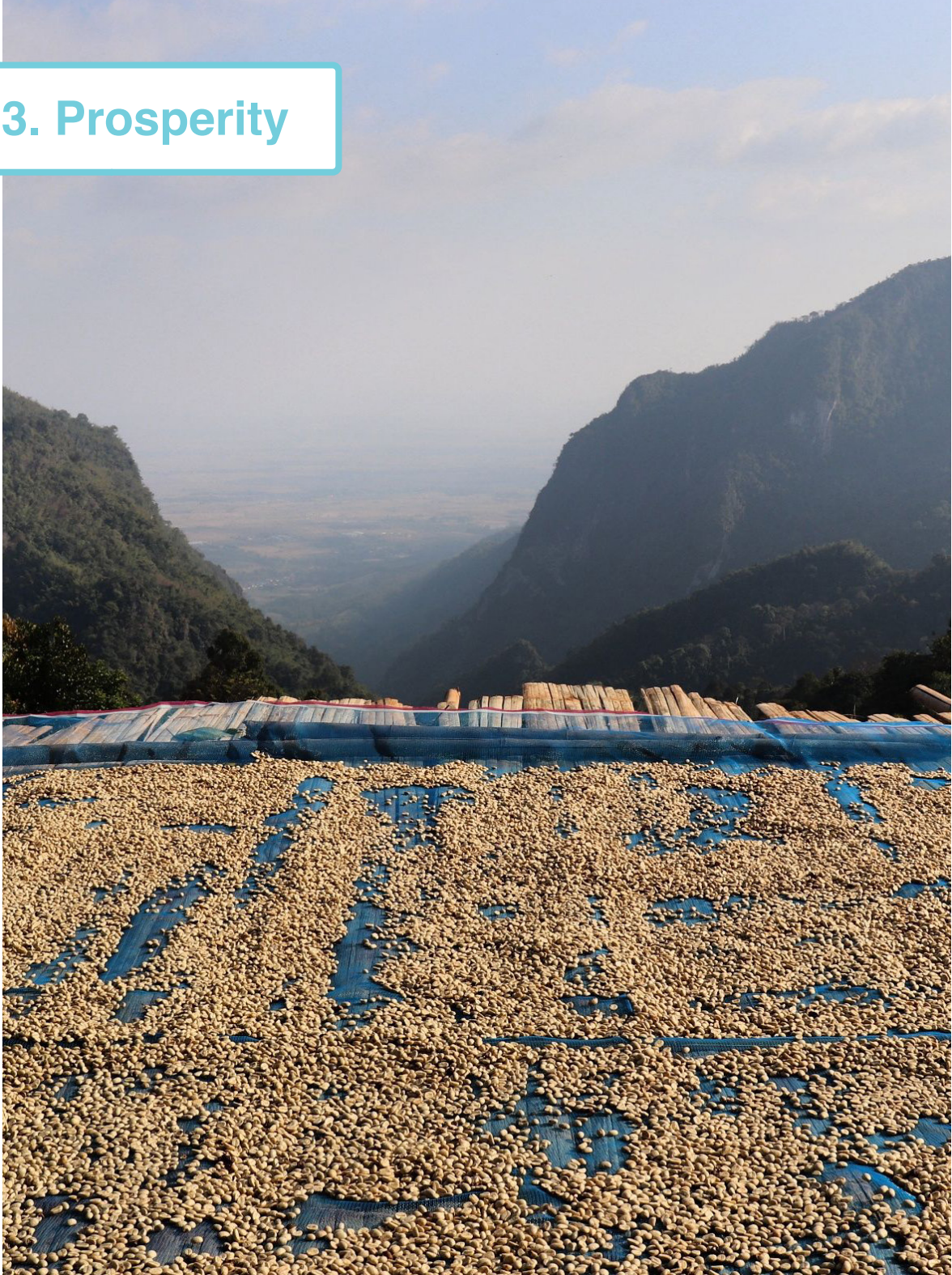
Promotes sustainable tourism.

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Doi Tung has developed environmentally and socially sustainable community-based tourism.

### 3. Prosperity



## 2030 AGENDA

## DOI TUNG

Ensure that all human beings can enjoy prosperous and fulfilling lives.	 <p>SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p>	Doi Tung offered livelihood opportunities and multiple options “to be” and “to do” for all its inhabitants.
Sustainable & inclusive economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all.	 <p>DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p>	Income generating opportunities have allowed for people to have decent jobs and living conditions.
Build dynamic, sustainable, innovative and people-centered economies.	 <p>INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE</p>	All economic activity in Doi Tung was developed to improve its people’s and forest’s wellbeing.
Promote youth employment.	 <p>1 NO POVERTY</p>	Youth have obtained multiple job opportunities by increased access to education and training.
Promote women’s economic empowerment.	 <p>1 NO POVERTY</p>	Job, education and childcare opportunities have allowed for major incorporation of women to work.
Eradicate forced labor and human trafficking and end child labor.	 <p>REDUCED INEQUALITIES</p>	Generation of additional income for families allowed women to work close to their home and children to go to school, ending human trafficking and child labor in DT.
Economic, social and technological progress occurs in harmony with nature.	 <p>DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p>	A healthy forest has been the foundation of all economic activities developed in Doi Tung.
Increase productive capacities, productivity and productive employment.	 <p>SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES</p>	Added-value chains have been developed in Doi Tung to increase productivity and stable income for people.
Promote financial inclusion.	 <p>DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH</p>	Increased income from diverse job opportunities for all walks of life allowed families to get assets and savings, reduce debt and expand their options.

## 4. Peace



## 2030 AGENDA

## DOI TUNG

Foster peaceful, just and inclusive societies, free from fear and violence.

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



The DTDP was successful in working all structural issues behind conflict, fear and violence in Doi Tung.

Protect human rights and human dignity.

REDUCED INEQUALITIES



Social, economic, civil and political rights of all are protected, promoted & respected.

Good governance and transparent, effective and accountable institutions.

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Open and inclusive political participation and transparency was assured at village and sub-district levels.

Rule of law, justice, equality and non-discrimination.

1 NO POVERTY



Self-established village rules and equal rights regardless of ethnicity, race, gender, sexual orientation, age & religion.

Respect for race, ethnicity and cultural diversity.

1 NO POVERTY



Multi-cultural approach allowed for a peaceful and cooperative co-existence among all ethnic groups.

Control of illicit flows of arms and drugs.

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Income generating activities and non-repressive law-enforcement displaced illicit economies.

Equitable, tolerant, open and socially inclusive world.

PEACE, JUSTICE AND STRONG INSTITUTIONS



Openness to the outside world has transformed closed ethnic societies into a more tolerant and open society.

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Doi Tung and the 2030 Agenda: Embracing wider complexity and multi-dimensionality in an integrated and indivisible agenda.

## 5. Partnership



## 2030 AGENDA

## DOI TUNG

<p>Mobilize the means required through a revitalized Partnership for Sustainable Development.</p>	<p>PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p> 	<p>Public and private partners were mobilized and sensitized to make the long-term DTDP possible.</p>
<p>Participation of all stakeholders and all people, especially those with most needs.</p>	<p>PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p> 	<p>Integrated and coordinated a wide group of public agencies, private firms and all the villagers.</p>
<p>Comprehensive agenda with interlinkages and integrated nature of the SDGs.</p>	<p>PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p> 	<p>Articulated sustainability objectives in all the components of the project and corrected course for best results for people.</p>
<p>Need for different approaches depending on local circumstances and priorities.</p>	<p>PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p> 	<p>Specific context in Doi Tung required specific conditions regarding partnerships and sequencing interventions.</p>
<p>Quality, coverage and availability of data to ensure that no one is left behind.</p>	<p>PARTNERSHIPS FOR THE GOALS</p> 	<p>Household surveys, natural resource survey and other tools have provided disaggregated data for monitoring and evaluation.</p>



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Towards a brighter future

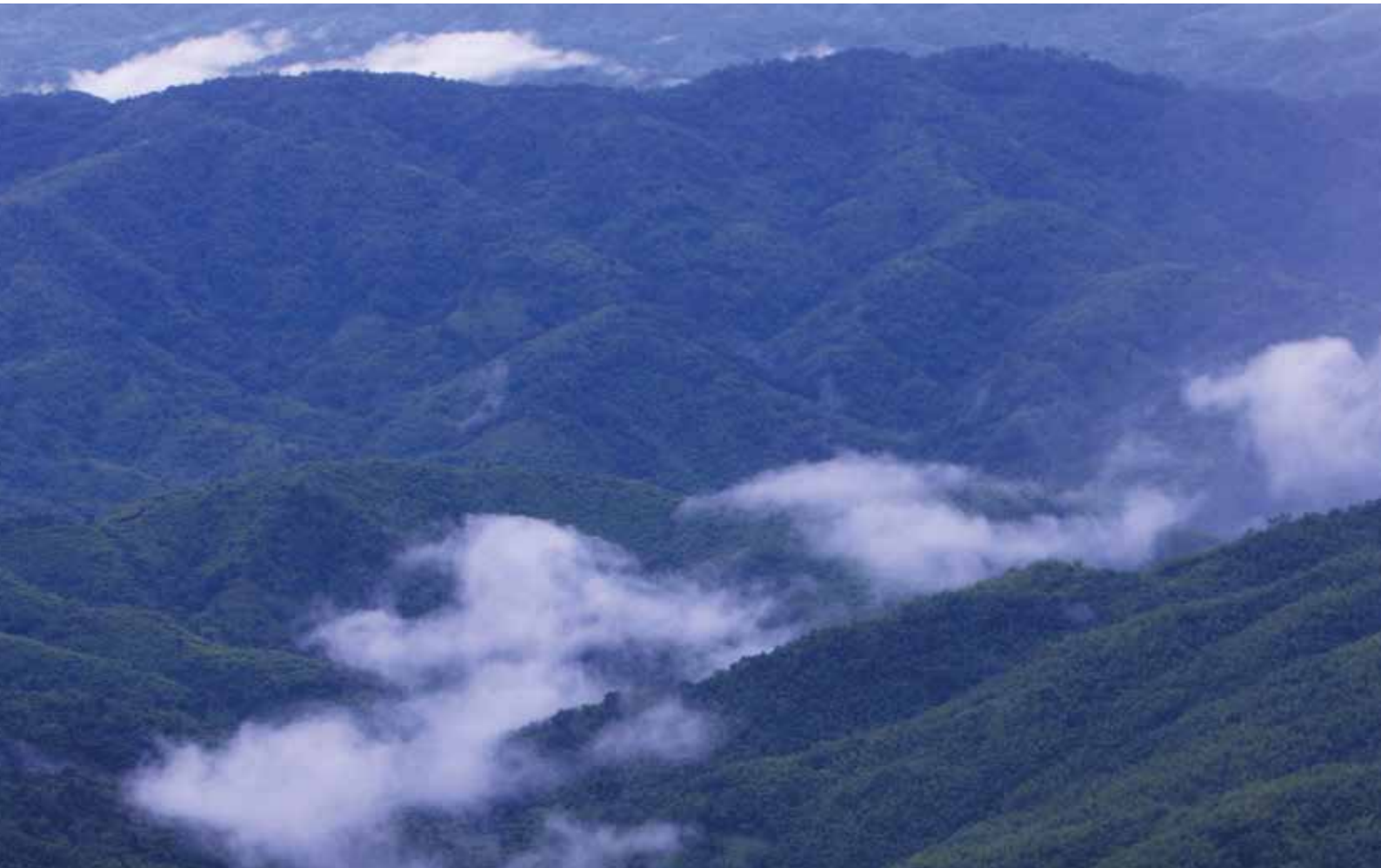
The Doi Tung Development Project is a long-term project that addresses multi-dimensional human development. Its principle and approach can be exported and adapted to the context and geo-socio-economic realities of differing areas, as the Foundation has done in projects in Myanmar, Afghanistan and Indonesia as well as nationwide. Through a strategic, holistic and integrated development plan that approaches problems at the root cause of poverty, empowers people and achieves upward socio-economic mobility through providing viable livelihood opportunities while preserving the environment, Doi Tung has become a living example of a sustainable and thrivable society.

**“Nobody wants to be bad, but they do not  
have the opportunity to do good.”**

— *The Princess Mother* —



มูลนิธิแม่ฟ้าหลวง ในพระบรมราชูปถัมภ์  
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