

# NURTURING SUSTAINABLE CHANGE



THE DOI TUNG CASE 1988-2017

by Mr. Javier Sagredo Fernandez



มูลนิธิแม่ฟ้าหลวง ในพระบรมราชูปถัมภ์  
Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage

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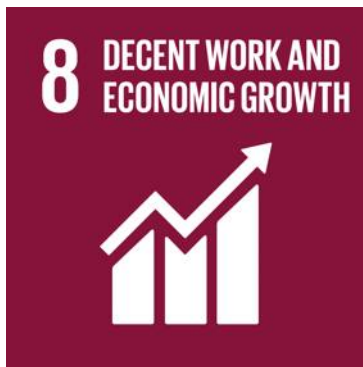
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*“Every person should develop towards the essential truth of his or her being, and not be trapped in the cloak of ignorance. The capacities and gifts that each are born with should be used to the best of each one’s ability.”*

**HRH Princess Srinagarindra**

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*“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**



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# 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.

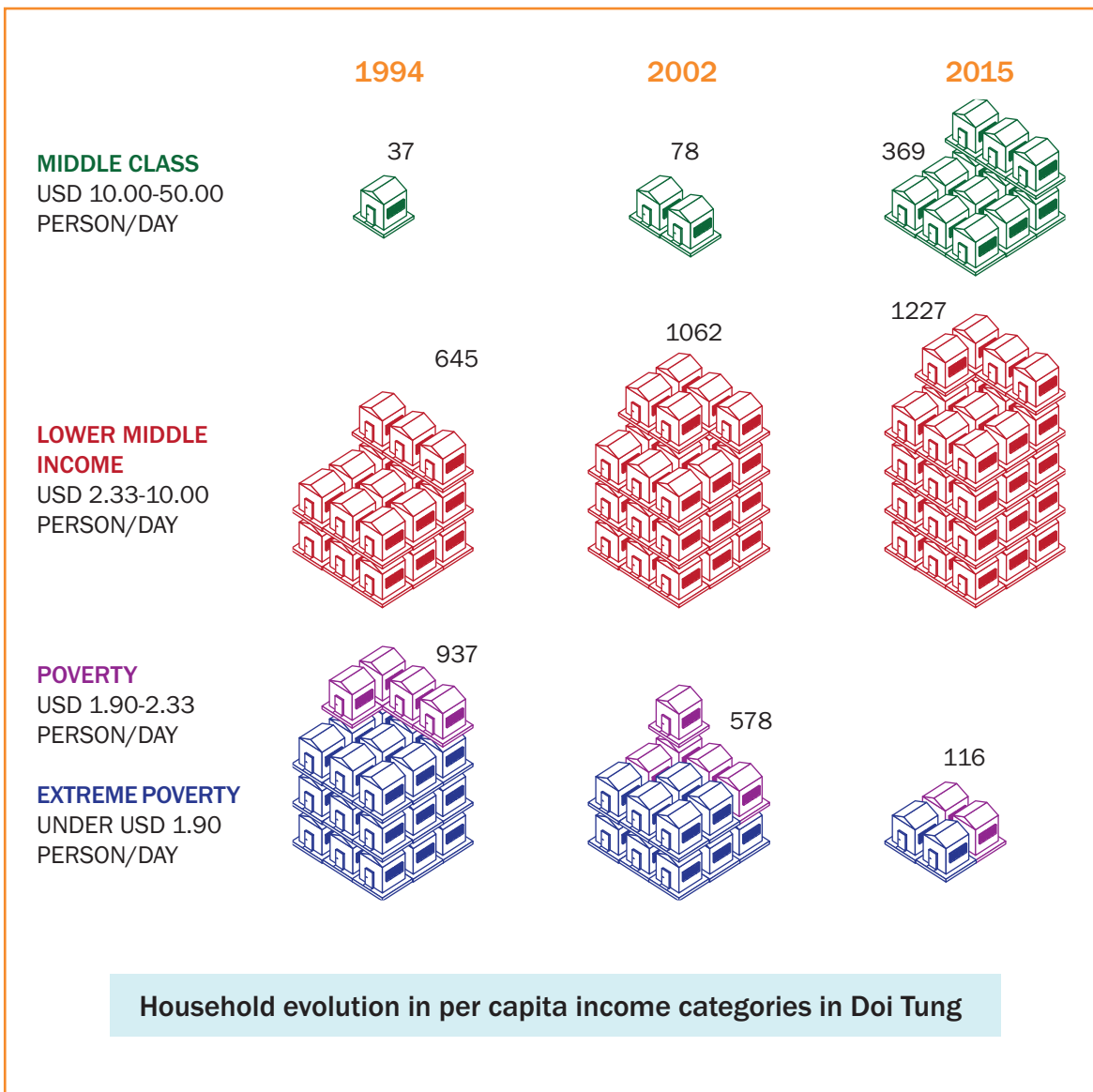
Change has arrived to everyone in Doi Tung, leaving no one behind. Many families have members working



*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.

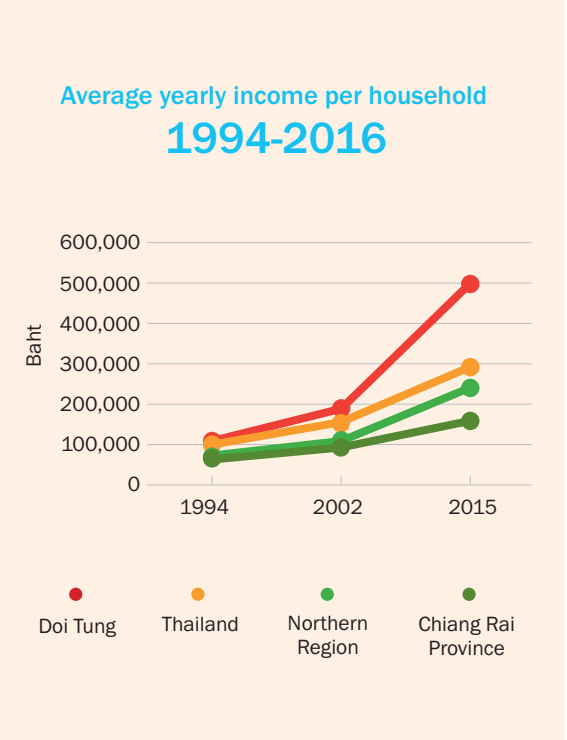
The environmental degradation, isolation, and precariousness of the community, as well as the lack of state presence, were not taken as difficulties but as opportunities to facilitate the needed transformation for Doi Tung. Moreover, the thinking of the Princess Mother was tuned to an exceptional awareness 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.

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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* —

**01**

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**INTRODUCTION**



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## Introduction

The history of Doi Tung is the story of human transformation in a small corner of the Nang Non Mountain in Northern Thailand. It's a vivid account of generations of families resisting and surviving decades of hunger, poverty, isolation, displacement, and conflict.

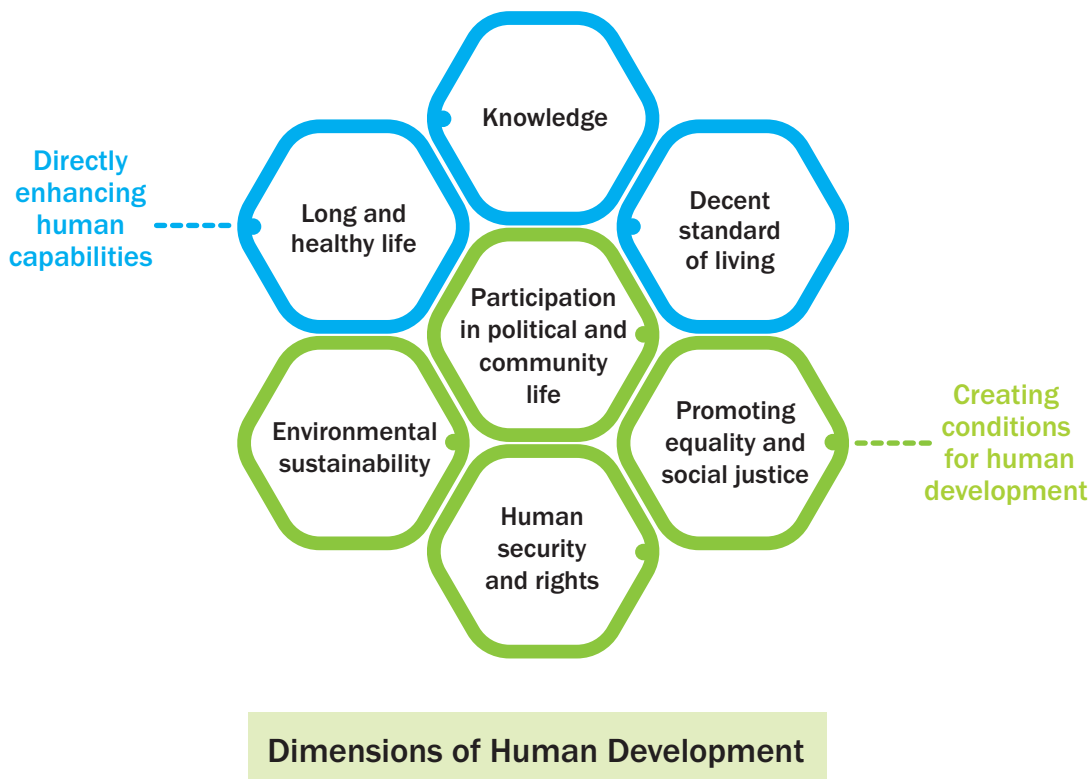
It also offers a blueprint of the components of sustainable development that brought progress and a promising future to the villagers who made their home in the mountains. These components include: strong leadership; a flexible bottom-up approach; a well-sequenced plan that allowed for trial and error; the imperative long-term hand-in-hand effort; stakeholders who were willing to compromise; a sensibility attuned, above all, to the vulnerable people and the environment that surrounded them.

The article tells the story of Doi Tung through the testimony of people who lived through the transformation of the region; it was due to their trust and generosity, as well as determination to abandon an obscure past and embrace a new script for the decades to come, that allowed those hopes to be realized.

The world is committed to achieve an ambitious global sustainable development agenda for 2030. The authors of this document hope the article offers an opportunity for development practitioners and decision makers to decide to approach sustainable development with sincerity and openness over hidden agendas; with the resolve to support the most in need over specific group interests; with a curiosity that overrides stereotyping; with flexibility and creativity to adapt rigid frameworks; and with an earnest will to place the wellbeing of people as the central concern.

## 1.1. Doi Tung: Inspiration for the 2030 Agenda

The concept of human development<sup>1</sup> represents a landmark in the way development is conceived and understood by the international community<sup>2</sup>. 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 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 access to the necessary resources and knowledge to lead decent lives



Extracted from <http://hdr.undp.org/en/humandev> 1

1 Conceptualized by the work of economists Amartya Sen and Mahbub UI Haq.

2 Appropriated by the United Nations Development Program since its first Human Development Report in 1990.

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## Introduction

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 from the Millennium Development Goals. During the September 2015 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 target goals in order to engage in a collective journey to shift the world onto a sustainable and resilient path. From political decision makers to social activists, from corporate boardrooms to town hall offices, new thinking on development issues will be needed to tackle this complex set of 17 SDGs, along with new challenges humanity will face in the next decades.

Empowering people to be at the center of their own development distills the words and works of the Princess Mother, Her Royal Highness Princess Srinagarindra; the late Mother of King Rama IX of Thailand. The Princess Mother founded the Mae Fah Luang Foundation (MFLF) to improve the quality of life of the people in poverty and deprived of opportunities regardless of race, nationality and religion. "Help the people to help themselves" is the core approach to sustainable development of the MFLF. This is the core process of the Foundation's first and foremost holistic and integrated development project, the Doi Tung Development Project (DTDP). The Princess Mother believed that the villagers' connection with illicit activities that deforested the hills were symptoms of poverty and other structural barriers. This understanding, anchored in respect for people without criminalizing, stigmatizing or judging them, allowed the people of Doi Tung to be in charge of protagonists of the development process. As Dr. Sandro Calvani, Senior Advisor to MFLF, explained: "It was not about forgiveness, which means recognizing guilt, but about respect for personal dignity. People became the center of the collective transformation through their participation and empowerment: this was key to Doi Tung's success."<sup>3</sup>

The process as outlined by the Princess Mother considered the mountain dwellers to be the "true participants in their own development process" and relied on the "power of their own human dignity."<sup>4</sup> The approach was about "support, do not punish." This could become an important reference for policy contexts where the punitive impulse, a lack of assistance, and a limitation in the enjoyment of rights limit people's capacity to thrive.

The Doi Tung case, as well as most of the MFLF's work, stands as a *rara avis* of a long-term and meaningful intervention, in the midst of desperate conditions, that have allowed and keep accounting for a significant reduction of poverty, not only considered as the lack of income or assets, but as a multidimensional concept that implies a "*denial of choices and opportunities, a violation of human dignity*"<sup>5</sup>. The Doi Tung approach strategically focused on reducing inequality by targeting the most in need first and by applying the principle of "leaving no one behind", represents one of the most important pillars of the 2030 Agenda<sup>6</sup>.

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3 Interview with Sandro Calvani, Senior Advisor of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage at the Doi Tung Development Project Headquarters, May 31st 2017.

4 "Enhancing Sustainability by Unlocking the People's Self-Help", by Sandro Calvani, on "It takes a village: sustainable livelihoods through a change of people's mindset in Doi Tung", Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, November 2015.

5 The Statement for Action to Eradicate Poverty adopted by the Administrative Committee on Coordination in May 1998, quoted in the Report of the Independent Expert on Human Rights and Extreme Poverty (E/CN.4/1999/48) Indicators of Poverty and Hunger.

6 "Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development", A/RES/70/1, Resolution Adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on September 25, 2015.

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## Introduction

The Global Agenda also outlines the fact that its goals are integrated and indivisible, and balance the three dimensions of sustainable development: the economic, social and environmental. This equilibrium is exquisitely found throughout the three decades of work along the Doi Tung experience, where there has always been a clear conviction that the happiness of its people, its economy and the thriving and cohesion of its communities was intrinsically connected to the health of its soil, its water, its air and its forest (“*I will reforest Doi Tung*”, stated the Princess Mother). As Mom Rajawongse Disnadda Diskul, (Khun Chai)<sup>7</sup> explains in very simple words, the future should be “*mainly about sharing and caring about people and Mother Earth*”<sup>8</sup>.

The integration and indivisibility of the goals and targets of the Global Agenda also require a fundamental element that needs to be present for anyone engaging in development work: the required changes to advance towards global sustainable development will only happen if we “enhance coherence” among its different components, something already outlined in target 17.14 of the 2030 Agenda. Each individual target needs to be viewed in an interactive vision of impacts on and synergies with other goals and targets, making analysis and action more complex, accounting for possible spillovers, requiring precise sequencing of different interventions, resolving specific policy dilemmas and being aware of the concessions around particular trade-offs, while ensuring that “*we do not destroy with our left hand what our right hand is building*”<sup>9</sup>.

In practical terms, it also means that projecting strategies and measuring results and impact has to be done in an interactive and multidimensional way, a vision embedded strongly in Doi Tung’s story.

In this specific aspect, the story of Doi Tung is very rich in the exercising of the subtle art of experimenting, monitoring, adjusting and improving sustainable development processes, balancing and leveraging its many components, to get the most added value and happiness for the community and for the environment, in very difficult conflict and post-conflict conditions (“*Doi Tung was not a part of Thailand...it was a no man’s land*”<sup>10</sup>). The implementation of this comprehensive and long-term sustainable human development intervention in Doi Tung, has shown promising, effective and sustainable results, away from one-sided securitization responses that, unfortunately, are most common in conflict, post-conflict or governance-failure situations.

The focus on people in Doi Tung has allowed addressing both the structural causes and consequences of people’s participation on illicit activities and economies, building effective governance institutions and improving the lives, livelihoods and dignity of the poorest and most marginalized communities. As a result, it should become a primary reference for many political leaders and development practitioners to overcome the traditional way in which policy responses have been designed, implemented, monitored and evaluated in this type of difficult contexts.

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7 Chairman of the Board of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage.

8 Interview with Mom Rajawongse Disnadda Diskul (Khun Chai) Chairman of the Board of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, in the Doi Tung Development Project Headquarters, May 26th 2017.

9 As an example, Thailand’s 12th National Economic and Social Development Plan (2017-2021) incorporates the principle that the economic activities of the country should not have a negative impact on others.

10 Interview with Mom Rajawongse Disnadda Diskul, Chairman of the Board of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, in the Doi Tung Development Project Headquarters, May 26th 2017.

## 1.2 Anchored on the King's Sufficiency Economy Philosophy (SEP)

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“Sufficiency is moderation. If one is moderate in one’s desires, one will have less craving. If one has less craving, one will take less advantage of others. If all nations hold this concept ... without being extreme or insatiable in one’s desires, the world will be a happier place.”

- His Majesty King Bhumibol Adulyadej, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1998

The process developed in Doi Tung and carried through all the work of the MFLF is inspired by King Bhumibol Adulyadej’s “Sufficiency Economy Philosophy” (SEP), which conveyed a new paradigm that has been a fundamental reference for development strategies in Thailand. It was also the subject of one of the United Nations Development Program’s 2007 National Human Development Report and is now becoming a promising South-South cooperation platform to support other countries in the landing and implementation of the 2030 Agenda (*SEP for SDGs Partnership*)<sup>11</sup>.



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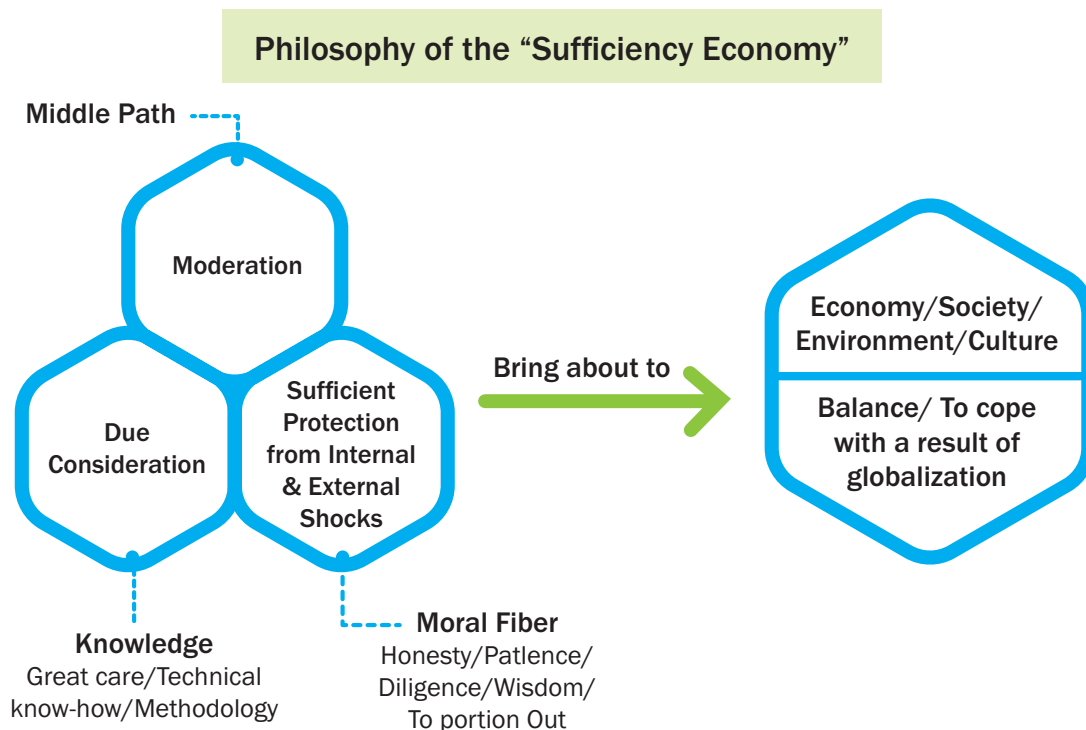
<sup>11</sup> “South South in action - Sustainability in Thailand: Experience for Developing Countries”, jointly published by the Royal Thai Government and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), January, 2017.

## Introduction

While touring the country after his accession to the throne in 1946, King Bhumibol took a particular interest on rural development and the challenges faced by farmers. He engaged in the establishment of development projects and research that resulted in the concept of “Sufficiency Economy.” SEP advocates economic stability over rapid but unbridled growth, and emphasizes benefits of economic prosperity while shunning excessive risk-taking, widening inequality, and the wasteful use of natural resources. This strengthens society’s immunity against the negative side effects of globalization. SEP has placed Thailand on a steady growth path for decades and is today the guiding principle of Thailand’s sustainable development efforts.

“One of the most important applications of the SEP is to help improve human well-being. The SEP emphasizes the self-reliance of an individual and of a community, together with the essentials of education. Poverty reduction can be achieved, by which SEP helps people reduce vulnerability, build their own capability to shape their lives, and have choices. With the SEP mindset, people will be moderate, reasonable and self-immune; therefore, they will not overexploit or abuse the environment or natural resources. They will embrace the environment, conserve it for the future and live in harmony with nature.”<sup>12</sup>

As the UNDP 2007 report states<sup>13</sup>: “Both the Sufficiency Economy and Human Development put people at the centre of development, and aim to expand people’s opportunities to live better lives. The Sufficiency approach adds to human development in two ways: first, by providing a process for analyzing situations, identifying objectives, setting plans, and making decisions; and second, by placing greater emphasis on mental and spiritual development.”



12 Prasopchoke Mongsawad, “The Philosophy of the Sufficiency Economy: A contribution to the Theory of Development”, Asia-Pacific Development Journal - Vol. 17, No. 1, School of Development Economics, National Institute of Development Administration (NIDA), Bangkok, June 2010.

13 “Thailand Human Development Report 2007: Sufficiency Economy and Human Development”, Bangkok, 2007

## His Majesty's Working Principles:

1.

**Conduct a comprehensive study** : The aim is to obtain the right information from all parties in order to find a right and timely solution for the people.

2.

**Explosion from within** : Communities must be strengthened and ready to get started before being exposed to development from outside.

3.

**Act locally to solve immediate problems** : To change successfully, one needs to see the big picture globally, but act locally with small steps or tackling the immediate problems first.

4.

**One step at a time** : It is best to lay down the foundation first. When the community becomes strong, we can move on to higher economic development stages.

5.

**Understand the local context** : The development approach must suit the local context: the people, community, geography, culture and traditions.

6.

**Take a holistic approach** : Think holistically for a comprehensive solution.

7.

**Think out of the box** : One must not rigidly follow unrealistic theories, but be flexible in one's relationship with nature, the environment and community.

8.

**Economical, simple and optimal**: The development technology should be inexpensive, simple, and locally available.

9.

**Simplification** : One must strive to simplify complex development issues so that the majority can understand them and successfully work together.

10.

**One-stop-service** : One should combine all service stations/outlets in the best interests of the beneficiaries.

11.

**Our loss is our gain** : One should give or sacrifice for the benefit and well-being of the people.

12.

**Persevere** : One must be diligent and persistent for the well-being of the people.

13.

**Utilize nature for nature** : One should understand nature, be close to it and use nature to nurture nature.

14.

**Use the devil to defeat the devil** : One should use natural law to correct aberrant nature.

15.

**Grow the forest in people's hearts** : To rehabilitate a deforested community, one must sow the seeds of conservation awareness in people's mindset.

16.

**Serve the public interest** : Giving to the public will protect the public space for all to live together.

17.

**Self-reliant** : When someone has been trained and is employed, his/her self-confidence will be boosted and s/he will then be able to help others.

18.

**Self-sufficient** : One must rise from a state of indebtedness to a state of self-sufficiency. Then one can advance to the next level of sufficiency.

19.

**Sufficiency economy** : One must be moderate in one's life, think thoroughly before taking actions, and immune oneself from vices and risks.

20.

**Work happily** : One should be happy to work for the well-being of others.

21.

**Be participatory** : One should listen attentively to others for their wisdom and valuable experiences in order to achieve the goal together.

22.

**Be honest and frank** : Honesty and determination will bring about achievements in one's work for the public.

23.

**Learn/Love/Unite** : One should learn the real causes of problems and come up with solutions, S/he should love to contemplate those potential solutions before implementing them, then unite together to build a force to tackle the problems successfully.

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From "His Majesty's 23 Principles Towards a Common Goal: the Wellbeing of the People", Royal Initiative Discovery Foundation (RIDF)

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## Introduction

SEP is based on the concepts of moderation, knowledge and reasonableness. These are 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. "It is about stopping the greed of the capitalist model. People before borrowed money to have enough to eat or to study. Now they get into debt to buy new things they do not need. They need to change to having 'enough,' to not being dependent on anyone else. This has to be taught. It has to be embedded in the economic DNA."<sup>14</sup>
- **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. Placing people at the center of the collective transformation through their participation and empowerment was key for its success. Everyone working for the Doi Tung Development Project knew they were only an instrument of the villagers' empowerment.
- 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."<sup>15</sup> This particularly was reinforced during the implementation of the Project by the close articulation of the Social Development, Field Operation, and the Knowledge Management Teams, and by the yearly implementation (up to this date) of a detailed household survey to closely monitor progress at household, village and community level.
- Finally, **morals and ethics** acted as a guide for the Project's application.<sup>16</sup> 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. As Khun Chai said, "People from the ethnic minority groups were finally treated as human beings".

The SEP can also be compared to indigenous conceptions of life that have entered the sustainable development debate in recent years, like "Sumak Kawsay" (Ashuar) and "Shiir Waras" ("Buen vivir") in Ecuador, "Suma Qamaña" (Aymara) and "Sumac Causai" (Kichwa) in Bolivia, "Gross National Happiness" in Bhutan, "Balu Wala" (Kuna Yala) in Panama and the "Ñande Reko" (Guaraní) in Paraguay. These are being set as alternative approaches to sustainable development. All of them share a way of doing things that is community-centric, ecologically balanced, and culturally sensitive, three of the main pillars and keys of the success in the Doi Tung process.

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14 Interview with Mom Rajawongse Disnadda Diskul, Chairman of the Board of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, in the Doi Tung Development Project Headquarters, May 26th 2017.

15 Ibidem.

16 "South South in action - Sustainability in Thailand: Experience for Developing Countries", jointly published by the Royal Thai Government and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), January, 2017.



### **1.3. The Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage: Facilitating transformative processes within communities and territories to help address development challenges in Thailand and abroad**

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The MFLF was established as an initiative of Her Royal Highness the Princess Mother in 1972, in order to help the ethnic minority groups.<sup>17</sup> The name of the Foundation means “Royal Mother from the Sky” and originates from the name given by villagers to the Princess Mother, often seen coming in helicopter to these hills, which was the only way to get to remote areas in Thailand at that time. Its work was expanded in 1985 to assume a more holistic role in areas of social, economic and environmental development, and with a vision to project a balanced sustainable development model for the country.

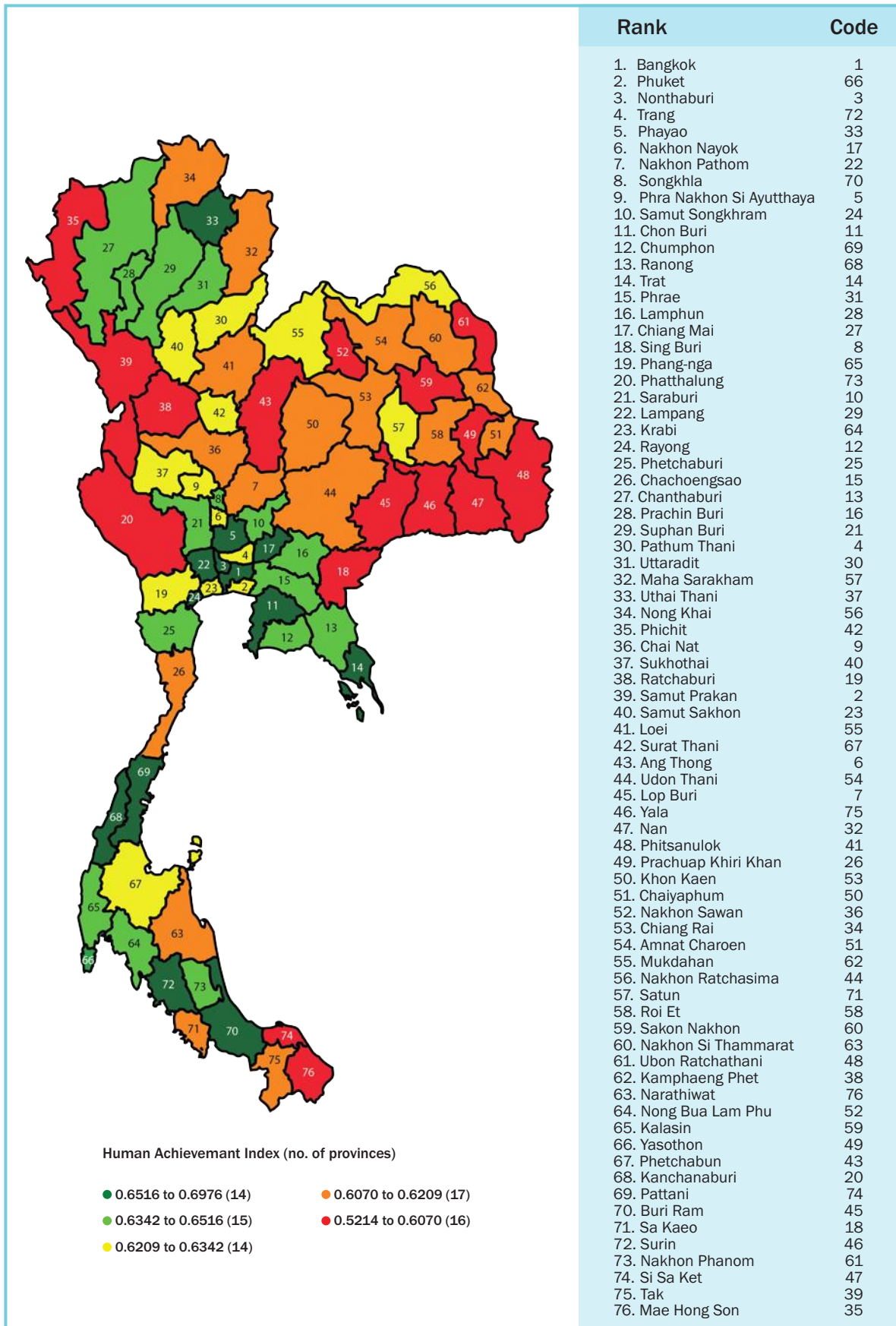
This model of intervention, mainly focusing on rural communities, has gained relevance if we take into account some of the challenges of sustainable development faced by Thailand in the past decades, and the ones that will be crucial for the years to come. Thailand’s path towards sustainable development is at a crucial crossroads. That is why both Thailand’s 20 year National Strategy and its 12<sup>th</sup> National Economic and Social Development Plan, (2017-2021) reaffirm its commitment to sustainability, including an appeal to follow SEP to ensure “moderate and rational development with an eye to the middle path”.<sup>18</sup>

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17 Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage’s Annual Report 2015.

18 “South-South in action - Sustainability in Thailand: Experience for Developing Countries”, jointly published by the Royal Thai Government and the United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC), January, 2017.

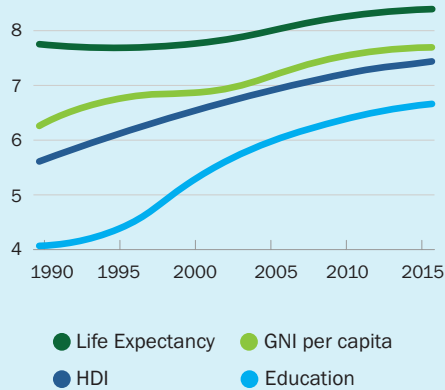
## Introduction



Human Achievement Index (HAI) Provincial Ranking - Thailand Human Development Report 2014.

## Introduction

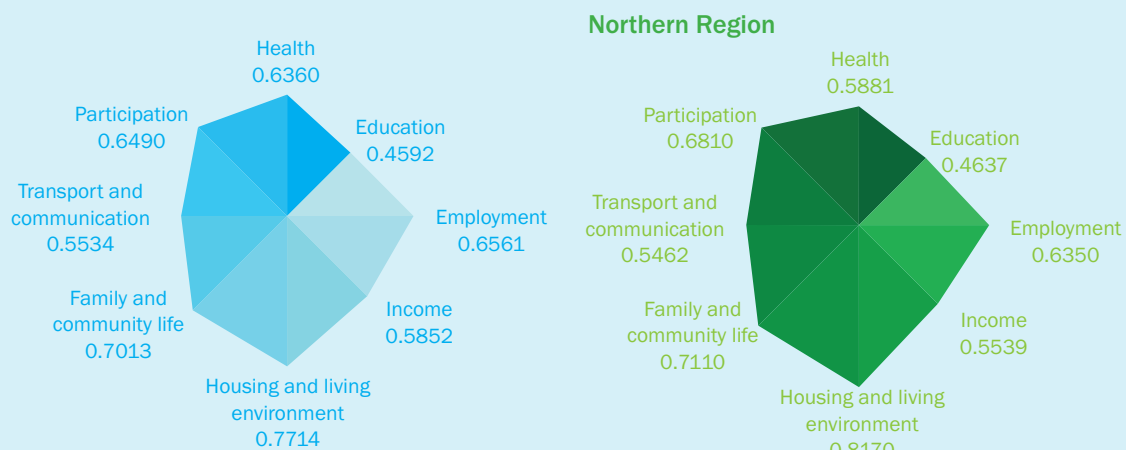
**Figure 1: Trends in Thailand's HDI component indices 1990-2015**



The country ranks highly in the category of “medium human development countries” according to Human Development Index measures. It has made great advances over the last 30 years: access to health care has reached almost universal coverage; Thai women and men live longer; more children have access to education, with more years of education and higher enrollment rates; mean income has dramatically increased; poverty has fallen; mobility and connectivity have considerably augmented; and unemployment remains in very low figures<sup>19</sup>.

Despite this impressive advances, many challenges remain, the most important linked to the inequalities that still exist in Thailand. There is a divide felt between the richer urban areas and the poorer rural ones.

**Figure 2.1 Thailand HAI by component**



Human Achievement Index (HAI) for Thailand and for the Northern Region, from UNDP - Thailand Human Development Report 2014.

Inequality in income and wealth remains very high compared with similar countries in more than 20% the country's Human Development Index.<sup>20</sup> Regardless of the low unemployment, public and private investment levels are still low. The number of indebted households remains the same, but with considerably higher average debt. Also, the country has seen a sharp increase in the number of female and elderly-headed households.

<sup>19</sup> “Thailand Human Development Report 2014: Advancing Human Development Through the ASEAN Community”, UNDP, Bangkok, 2014.

<sup>20</sup> “Briefing note on the 2016 Human Development Report for Thailand”, UNDP, Bangkok, 2016 (found at [http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr\\_theme/country-notes/es/THA.pdf](http://hdr.undp.org/sites/all/themes/hdr_theme/country-notes/es/THA.pdf))

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## Introduction

There are issues related to the quality of education such as drops in performance at school and on IQ tests. There is inequality of access disproportionately affecting specific provinces and populations. These are a future problem for generating local development and attracting potential investments.<sup>21</sup>

The degradations on the environment caused by prosperity are now “compounded by the impacts of climate change.”<sup>22</sup> There is an increased vulnerability to natural disasters. Territorial differences “have remained rather constant,” with no considerable change in the list of provinces at the top or bottom of the Human Achievement Index developed by UNDP since 1999 to measure progress on eight key areas of Human Development.<sup>23</sup>

These challenges to Thailand’s development are at the forefront of the Foundation’s thinking. The MFLF continues to develop most of its work through a people-centered approach to development that gives communities a sense of ownership over interventions. This involves allocating sufficient time to understand the issues and challenges that each context poses, “analyzing and making decisions on solidly researched facts and a fundamental belief in the potential of human beings.”<sup>24</sup>

The Foundation is very aware of the dynamic nature of development and of the need to address and foresee new challenges. Its strategic direction has been realigned to increase the capability of its social enterprises, like the ones developed in Doi Tung, to better respond to external factors, like market changes, or to the need to improve knowledge management and internal capacity.

Following on Doi Tung’s success, and after 30 years of field experience, the Foundation has generated important national and international attention within the field of sustainable development solutions. It is working on numerous development programs in many provinces in Thailand; in international projects, including in Afghanistan, Myanmar or Indonesia; and in sub-regional initiatives in the Mekong area.

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21 “Thailand - Systematic Country Diagnostic: Getting Back on Track - Reviving Growth and Securing Prosperity for All”, World Bank, April 2017 (found at <http://www.worldbank.org/en/country/thailand/publication/thailand-systematic-country-diagnostic-getting-back-on-track-and-reviving-growth>).

22 “Thailand Human Development Report 2014: Advancing Human Development Through the ASEAN Community”, UNDP, Bangkok, 2014.

23 Health, education, employment, income, housing and living environment, family and community, transport and communication, and participation.

24 Ibidem.

# 02

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**SUSTAINABLE AND  
RESILIENT PATHS  
OF AFFIRMATIVE  
TRANSFORMATION:  
THE DOI TUNG  
DEVELOPMENT  
PROJECT CASE**

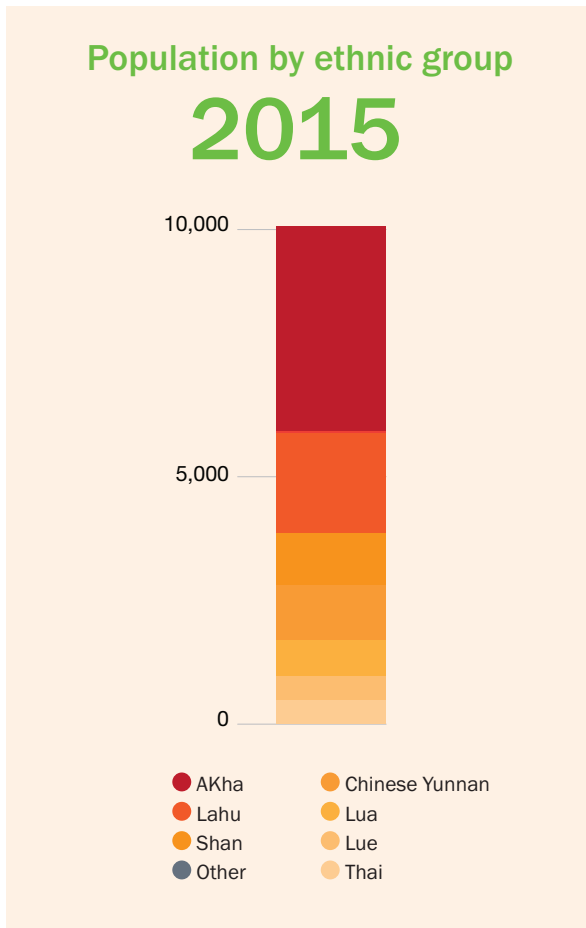


The DTDP has unfolded for 30 years in the northern part of the Chiang Rai province. It covers large portions of the Mae Fah Luang and Mae Sai Districts as well as 24 kilometers along the border between Thailand and Myanmar with a total area of 150 km<sup>2</sup>. Its population of 10,399<sup>25</sup> people is distributed across 29 villages and is composed of six main ethnic groups that, through marriage, has become eight ethnic groups. All its territory is enclosed in a forest reserve area. This particular fact has protected Doi Tung land plots allocated to villagers by the Project from being sold and bought.

In 1988, HRH Princess Srinagarindra initiated the DTDP which is the flagship project of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation.

25 Data from Doi Tung Household Survey, DTDP, 2015.

## 2.1. Life in Doi Tung before the DTDP



### The story of Camnan Aphisuntharakul, farmer (I)

The view of the Nang Non Mountains from Camnan's home, a wooden two-story traditional Akha house that belonged to his grandparents, is breathtaking. He lives in the Akha Pa Kluai village not far from the Doi Tung Development Project Headquarters. These mountains, are only five kilometers away from the border with Myanmar. They regained their lush forested cover in 30 years, much less than a lifetime for many of the elders, who still remember Doi Tung, which means "flag mountain", as a scrubby, desolate place.

Camnan is now 68. Alongside his four siblings, he started working with his father in the fields when he was five years old. "Our house was made of bamboo with a palm roof. We used to grow corn, rice and beans, and we also had pigs and chickens. We planted opium, which, along with the corn and rice, we could sell and use as medicine. I had to get up at four in the morning and walk for an hour and a half, more than five kilometers, to get to the field. It was far from our house, because higher ground is better to grow opium."

The cultivation of opium as a cash crop came to Thailand in the aftermath of Britain's Opium War with China (1839-1942), through minority groups like the Miao (Hmong) and Yao (Mien), originally from the Yunnan and Sichuan areas. They were later joined by Akha, Lahu and Liso peoples. They migrated to Northern Thailand escaping from the volatile political situation in Southern China at the turn of the Twentieth Century, and settled in the mountains at elevations over 1,000 meters above sea level where the opium poppy thrives.<sup>26</sup> After the Chinese Revolution, the pressure to eliminate opium production and use by Mao Zedong's government allowed for an expansion of cultivation in Thailand and Laos, where it suited local conditions and became resistant to local pests.

26 Ronald R. Renard, "Opium reduction in Thailand 1970-2000: A thirty year journey", UNDCP, Bangkok 2001.

When Camnan was a child, and until 1956 when it was officially banned, opium production, sale and use was legal. It helped finance more than a third of the tax revenue of the Thai State. After it was banned, the ethnic minorities kept cultivating opium as they had before. The yield was sold to trafficking organizations that controlled the area with their militia, mainly the drug lord Khun Sa whose headquarters in Myanmar was southeast of Doi Tung, but there were also buyers from Chiang Rai and Bangkok. “We did not have fear from them. They would buy our opium whenever we had some to sell,” says Camnan. “And the militia gave us guns. We felt part of the organization. Khun Sa used to come here quite often. The Police and Army were never present.”

The Wa and Kuomintang (KMT), remnants of the Nationalist Chinese Army, also had a militia presence and influence in the area. Not far from the villages, at the site of a local bazaar in present days where the villagers sell their crafts and agricultural products, sits a magnificent tree whose branches were silent witness to the prolific opium and weapons trade happening under its shade.



Camnan and Ladda, circa 1972

In other villages closer to the lower part of Doi Tung, violence and fear was more present in people’s lives, even if they were armed. They felt threatened, mainly by police, who extorted them because of the lack of a national identification. When they heard that the police raided a village, “they had to run, hide and sleep in the forest for one night and then come back.”<sup>27</sup> Violence was rampant as a result of stealing, drug trafficking (especially while transporting drugs by mule caravans), and illegal logging. “If they (drug lords, militia groups and traffickers) had a conflict, they shot each other and buried the body.”

The only government presence felt in Doi Tung was from the Royal Forest Department, which was engaged in reforestation work during the 1950’s, after FAO aerial survey showed serious degradation of Thai forests. Ethnic minorities engaged in slash-and-burn shifting cultivation up to a point of extreme degradation of the forest, its soil and water sources, and the whole mountain ecosystem. This raised some alarms in the Forestry Department, which saw shifting cultivation as a waste of land and timber resources. Culturally and religiously distinctive, the hill dwelling peoples also worried public officials. They were seen as alien, posing a potential threat to engage in insurgency.

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27 Interview with Jintana Nakwichet, Head of Village. June 3rd, 2017, Huai Nam Khun Village, Doi Tung.



In this environment, life conditions were far from easy. Water had to be fetched from the river. The women in the village walked 40 to 50 minutes downhill and up again with a full load. Cooking was done the traditional way, with the fire inside the bamboo house. “At night, we used wood sticks to illuminate the house”, said Camnan. The resin allowed for a consistent flame, but the smoke was black and toxic.



Camnan, sitting in his balcony, in the Akha Pa Kluai village.

Rice was not available all year long. The single annual crop depended on variable weather conditions. Improving the yield without the help of irrigation and other agricultural inputs, like composts, was impossible. This poverty made families like Camnan’s more dependent on opium and shifting cultivation.

Communication with the outside world was rare and roads almost inexistent. “We had to walk everywhere. There was only one car in the area. We had less freedom to move around. Additionally, we didn’t speak Thai.” The geographic, cultural, religious, and linguistic barriers to connect with the rest of the country kept these communities secluded, and limited their livelihood options.

Even among the different ethnic groups communication was difficult. “Marriage among people from different ethnic groups was very rare...you had to know their parents.” Communities were tightknit: “In this village there are 100 households, and 42 of them are my relatives.” During the 1960s, Akha, Lahu, Shan, Lua and Lue groups fled from Myanmar into Doi Tung, escaping conflict.

Access to education was non-existent. “I never had the chance to go to school,” said Camnan. There was also no contact with the health system. Births happened at home, assisted by relatives. “We were afraid of being arrested or extorted by police if we went to the hospital. We had no IDs. Additionally, we had no money to pay for the costs.” The only available option for villagers was depending on the “herb doctors” who, today, still serve the ethnic communities.



Wooden chicken stakes as proof of delivery of services. They will be burnt when the herb doctor dies.

Amphon Aphisunthonkun, 76, and his wife, Tippawan Aphisunthonkun, live in the same village and both are herb doctors. They grow 70 – 80 different medicinal plants in the garden in front of their house. Amphon started working as herb doctor at 16. He learned from his parents and grandparents. Their knowledge goes back many generations within the family.

“We also had to work in the fields, because being a doctor did not provide enough income,” Amphon said. A line of wooden stakes hangs across their porch as a proof of payment for services delivered to the community. “Whenever my wife offers her services, they pay her with a chicken tied to one of these stakes. Chickens absorb bad energy from people.”

Amphon and Tippawan offer a range of treatments to cure “100 illnesses, including broken bones or rice hulls getting stuck in your throat. For the rice hulls, we use a magic spell to get it out. We also cure pain produced by forest spirits with three kinds of plants we grow in our garden. Not many people come to us for our services anymore, except to deal with broken bones or paralysis. They prefer to go to the nearby health center, which is free of charge.”

“Everyone used opium in the village, including my father and his friends,” Camnan said, overlooking the view of the mountains from his balcony. “I also used opium for more than 21 years, beginning when I was 18. I started taking opium as a medicine for cough and pain and got addicted along the way.” “Opium makes you lazy,” he continued. “It takes away the power to do things. You are also criticized by the community. I used to spend all my money on opium and left nothing for food. It made my wife very unhappy.”

### The story of Aorawan Sophonaumnuaykit, textile factory worker (I)

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Aorawan, a determined 48-year-old woman working in the DTDP’s Cottage Industries Center and Outlet, is from Pha Bu village. She remembers the harsh conditions of life in Doi Tung. Her family cultivated rice and corn with basic hand tools, harvesting the crops for consumption in their house. “We used to eat rice, and soup with papaya. I helped my mother mill the rice with a heavy wooden foot-mortar. Meat had to be bought additionally and was consumed not even once a month because it was not available or affordable.”



Aorawan, working in the quality control department of the textile factory.

“When I was nine my mother told me that I had to start working to support the family. Every five years we had to move to new places to live because we had to replant in new areas. We burned the forest

and replanted with the help of the community. We did not have ownership of the land. This was given out by the village leader. During these times, it was difficult to help each other. Everyone was poor.”

“Our house was made of bamboo and had a grass roof that needed to be changed every year. That took a lot of time. We had to walk twice a day to the river to get water, where we also bathed and washed our clothes. To relieve our bowels, we went into the forest.”

A mother of four, Aorawan presently lives with one of her daughters, a teacher at the Ban Kha Yaeng Phatthana Montessori School. “My daughter wants to stay in Doi Tung because she received help when she was young. She wants to give back to others in the community.”

Aorawan never learned to read or write. “Now my daughter has her own world and I do not want her to spend time teaching me how to read,” she said. “In the past, the only school in the area had no janitor and an absent director, so it did not work. My parents taught me to work in the field, to sew and weave. I knew about plants and mushrooms.”

When Aorawan got married at 19, she was obliged by tradition to move to her in-law’s house, where she cooked for her husband, his parents, sister and younger brother. “Living there demanded lots of patience.” She felt isolated in the house. Her freedom was more restricted. She could not participate in social gatherings; she was not allowed to talk to other men after marriage, to avoid being rejected by her husband. In her community, “women with more than two marriages were considered difficult.”

## The story of Mayura Silawongsakonkun, deputy head of village (I)

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Mayura, a 57 year-old Akha woman, was a teacher and is now the deputy head of her village. She talks about the difficult conditions of life in Doi Tung, especially for women. For survival reasons, many families saw women in Doi Tung as an important commodity and drove them into prostitution.<sup>28</sup> Women and girls working in prostitution were vulnerable to abuse, “especially from police, who often resorted to extortion and confiscated their money.” The stigma of earning an income was also present: “Up to recent times, women with money were suspected of working outside as prostitutes.<sup>29</sup>” The involvement in prostitution outside of Doi Tung also brought an increase in HIV/AIDS cases to the area, where the epidemic spread rapidly: “There was no awareness of safe sex; getting income for the family was the only concern.”



Mayura, working at her house

According to Mayura, “Almost every month people died from AIDS in Doi Tung. There was no care or awareness at all for women’s health. The result was a high rate of mortality among mothers and infants.”

“To this day, many women in Doi Tung over the age of 50 cannot read or write as they never went to school. As a result, they do not participate in community development activities”. Mayura is Akha, but her husband is Lahu and lives in a Lahu village. “Men were the leaders in the household and women had to obey their husbands. They had the final saying on expenses or on land related decisions. Women, who usually married at the age of 16-17, had no power over decisions, especially in Akha households, which are patriarchal. Men are considered more important for the Akha because they perform religious rites and keep the family name with them.” Additionally, in Akha communities, men are allowed by tradition to have several wives. “Deep down, women felt frustrated,” Mayura said.

“Many men stayed home, using opium and doing nothing, while women had to work and feed the family. If they did not have any relatives to help them, they had to take their newborn children to the fields. My mother worked longer hours than my father. They both worked in our corn and rice field, but at home she also had to do all the housework.”

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28 Ikujiro Nonaka, “Doi Tung Development Project in Golden Triangle: for the Sustainable Alternative Livelihood Development”, Graduate School of the International Corporate Strategy, Hitotsubashi University, November 2010.

29 Interview with Arunya Aphisathianphong, in the Laba village, May 25th, 2017.

## 2.2. Three decades of intervention in Doi Tung

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### The arrival of the Mae Fah Luang, “Royal Mother from the Sky”

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The spirit and the philosophy of the Princess Mother are still very present in Doi Tung. Villagers channel their gratitude towards her figure, acknowledging that, without her presence and determination, things could have been very different in Doi Tung.

Her arrival in Doi Tung when she was 87 years old allowed the process to start with the guarantee of some of the elements that proved to be necessary for its success:

- 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 capacity to put **health, education and livelihoods** as the most important priorities and fundamental blocks for the development process in Doi Tung.
- 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.
- The implementation of the fundamental principles of her development philosophy.
- The Royal Family’s **soft power capital** that transformed 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 Princess Mother’s philosophy revolved around three fundamental principles that are at the base of the DTDP: goodness, potential and dignity. “While all people are born equal, good, and with potential, not everyone has the opportunity to develop their innate goodness; thus, the lack of opportunities for humans are also a root cause of most problems.”<sup>30</sup>

This philosophy determined the way that DTDP structured its approach, strategic planning and interventions. Given the Princess Mother’s fondness for democratic ideals, her respect for all who worked with her, her critical thinking and her openness to new knowledge, the project team was with these values when they worked on development: simple, practical, logical, holistic, integrated, time-sensitive<sup>31</sup> and inclusive (regardless of race, religion or nationality) .

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30 Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, “The Social Transformation Model for the 21st Century”, at the “The Mae Fah Luang”, Sasin Journal of Management, Chulalongkorn University, 2010.

31 Ikujiro Nonaka, “Doi Tung Development Project in Golden Triangle: for the Sustainable Alternative Livelihood Development”, Graduate School of the International Corporate Strategy, Hitotsubashi University, November 2010.

## The importance of Focus: Doi Tung's people-centered approach

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*“Do not think that you are working for the Princess...Do it for the people who really need your help.”*

- The Princess Mother addressing the DTDP staff<sup>32</sup>

Doi Tung has been transformed from a “survival world to a self-sufficient world.”<sup>33</sup> The human-centered development approach applied in Doi Tung addresses people’s problems at the most basic level, lifting them up from poverty and improving their environment, opening windows to more viable opportunities and empowering them to realize their full potential.<sup>34</sup> Putting the most vulnerable people as responsible and active protagonists of their own development is at the core of the approach that allowed for a paradigm shift in development in Doi Tung and elsewhere. Its results, in terms of impact on people’s lives and wellbeing, along with stability and peace, contrast with many interventions applied in other territories ridden by poverty, conflict and illicit activities, where security, drug control or other priorities have been over people’s wellbeing.

One of its most immediate consequences is the fact that, in order for communities to become protagonists of their own development, they need to be empowered. They need to participate and get involved from the beginning. This was felt from the very first steps taken in Doi Tung. As Khun Chai, former Private Secretary to the Princess Mother and now Chairman of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation, says: “The key to a good start is to empower the people and gain their trust by being with people– sleeping, eating, and singing the same song and the same tune with them; staying in the area, walking the ground and asking people about their problems. You need to walk the talk. If you work with top-down action, you will walk alone.”

The holistic approach, also shared by the UN Global 2030 Agenda, is part of this vision that places people at the center stage. This is because development practitioners cannot separate the different dimensions that build wellbeing in humans. “Sick people who can’t work will remain poor. Poor people with no money to see a doctor will become sicker. Those who cannot send their children to school will remain ignorant; with a lack of education comes greater poverty. They are all linked. Solving people’s problems requires an integrated approach.”<sup>35</sup>

This human-centered approach also considers the diverse needs of the different generations living in Doi Tung, as well as the needs of the future ones, adding two fundamental dimensions:

- **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 was 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.

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32 Ibidem.

33 Ibidem.

34 Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, “The Social Transformation Model for the 21st Century”, at the “The Mae Fah Luang”, Sasin Journal of Management, Chulalongkorn University, 2010.

35 Interview with M.R. Disnadda Diskul, “Hello Magazine”, October 2015.

- 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. 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 (from pregnancy to education, health and daycare), adults (income generation, rights, and access to jobs) and elders (care and health, income protection). The special focus on children is vital because of the importance that the first five years have in the capacity of people to progress in all development aspects along their life cycle, in order to break with the inter-generational transmission of poverty.

### The importance of the proper sequencing of interventions: Survival – Sufficiency - Sustainability

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The structural issues and root causes that affected people's lives led to symptoms of poverty, hunger, debt, deforestation, involvement in illicit activities, addiction, participation in prostitution, vulnerability to abuse and extensive suffering. Accordingly, the MFLF sequenced interventions to maximize benefits for people. This sequencing is among the most important element that allowed for a meaningful transformation in Doi Tung.

However, the initial stage of the intervention were not exempt from difficulties. There was an immediate need to build trust in a transitional period of uncertainty. The danger of collapsing before even starting was always imminent, mainly because for many families in conflict-ridden environments, distrust had always been an important survival strategy. For the villagers, "when the project arrived, our first reaction was to go somewhere else to keep growing poppies. We were afraid that the land would be taken away from us and we might be arrested due to our lack of citizenship", said Camnan<sup>36</sup>. Nevertheless, the isolation, the lack of options and the impossibility of leaving the area, both for fear of arrest and because of not speaking Thai, worked in favor of the project. Most people stayed, deciding to wait and see.

"We started to trust when the Project gave away clothes, rice bags and salt. Particularly, one year later, when the DTDP started hiring. We were offered 40 baht/day to work on reforestation tasks. But still not everyone believed, and some left the village to more remote mountain areas. Some of them are still there."<sup>37</sup>

The plan laid out to start the implementation of the project was based on the philosophy that the Princess Mother had instilled in the team that was logical, simple and practical. 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.

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36 Interview with Camnan Aphisuntharakul, farmer, May 34th, 2017, Akha Pakluay Village, Doi Tung.

37 Ibidem.

## 1. Phase I (short-term survival): Security and Foundation (1988-1993)

The project 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. The villa was made possible through official permission from the Royal Forestry Department and the Army, which allowed for the continuous work of the MFLF in the area.

The population was quite scattered. Government data was not very accurate about the number of inhabitants and villages. Most initial efforts were concentrated on health and ensuring food security so there was no further need to get into debt. With these priorities in mind, the following areas of work were initiated:

- Establishing solid relationships between staff and local people through **respect, trust and understanding**. The Social Development Department was created. It hired villagers and matched them with the MFLF team to facilitate communication, trust and transparency.
- Development volunteers from every village recruited from the beginning of the project served as a connection between the project and the people, to learn about the project and analyze the needs of the communities.
- Development of **basic infrastructure** and public utilities: for the first time, **roads** connected all villages to the outside world, new supply systems assured drinking **water** at every village all year long, and **electricity** allowed for lighting and use of appliances, including TV and radios that brought additional knowledge and exposure to the Thai language.
- 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 and the 24 km border with the neighbouring country.
- **Reforestation** and rehabilitating the forest: Local people were hired for three years to help with field reforestation tasks, generating income for their families greater than their income from growing opium. The reduction of agricultural land due to the reforestation effort was compensated with the establishment of high potential economic forest plantations and areas of sustenance forest where people were allowed to collect food and other non-timber products as well as various livelihood opportunities including horticulture and handicraft.
- A **sustainable land distribution** plan was implemented among areas allocated for new watershed forests, economic forests, sustenance forests, cultivation area and residential and infrastructure use allowed for a good balance between environmental protection of the forest and water sources and the feasibility of economic sustainability of income generating activities.
- **Job skills training**, on the assumption that the reforestation process would be completed in three years and people would require other sources of income. This included training on how to grow new crops; 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, and horticulture activities allowed families to improve their survival and **nutrition**.

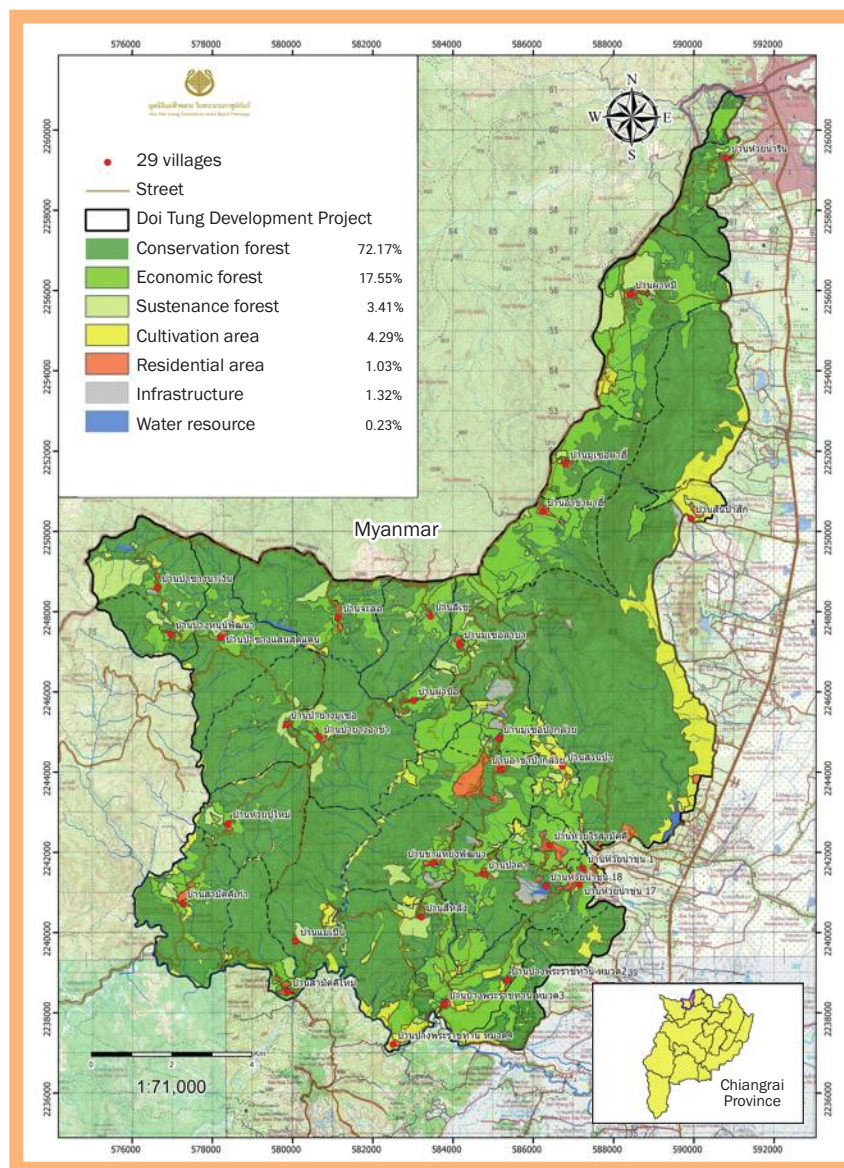
### On survival

Fulfilling basic needs is an essential part of expanding capabilities but is insufficient to enable people to reach their full potential. This is especially so in a world characterized by new and often more precarious forms of work, escalating violence and mounting environmental crises. Many people are deprived of a sense of security that they will be able to retain tomorrow the gains they have made today. Many are deprived of voice and opportunities to participate in the collective valuation of policies and priorities. Others lack access to good-quality services and to information and communication technology.

Sustainable and resilient paths of affirmative transformation: the Doi Tung Development Project case

- The Foundation provided access to **health care**, including a 1000-day treatment for drug addiction that initially worked with 500 people. There was a one-month detox program followed by skills training that extended almost three years and preparing villages to welcome former addicts home as heroes in order to support their reintegration into the community with dignity. This prevented relapse cases. Seven health centers for maternal care resulted in a reduction of mortality rates of women and children.
- **Census, registration and IDs:** The lack of legal status in Thailand among most ethnic minorities prevented them from travelling for fear of being arrested, or to have access to basic services like education and health. The Project developed a census and registered every person in all households. They delivered non-legally binding project ID cards that were accepted by the military, police and government officials. since they, too, participated in the survey process. This was a very important element that provided trust, security and a sense of belonging to the people.

Map of land use management in Doi Tung Development Project 16,889.6 ha



Sustainable Land Use Management at Doi Tung allowing People and Nature to live in harmony















# THE 3 PHASES IN DOI TUNG






## 1. Security and foundation

### Main interventions

★ = QUICK HITS

- ★  Basic infrastructure: road building for access to markets, information and easier movement.
- ★  Public utilities: water supply for drinking and household use.
-  Electricity: energy needs, appliances. Access to information; TV & radio, knowledge of Thai language.
- ★  Provision of jobs and immediate income: Laborers for the reforestation program.
-  Skills training: growing crops, making and marketing handicrafts, new textile designs.
-  Promote education: construction of elementary schools & day care centers.
-  Reforestation and environmental restoration.
- ★  Access to medical treatment and construction of maternal health care centres.
- ★  Drug rehabilitation program and support for reintegration.
-  Planting of economic forest alternatives : macadamia and coffee, to reduce agricultural land.
-  Preservation of local cultures.
-  Sustenance forest available for food, firewood, bamboo.
- ★  Census, registration of all households and project IDs for all: avoid arrests, facilitate movement.

### Keys of success

-  Continuous presence of Princess Mother and the Project staffs in the area which facilitated institutional presence, coordination and basic security. Construction of the Royal Villa.
-  Consultations with the community from the start. Close relationship and continuous process of learning from the community.
-  Establishment of an efficient Social Development Team, which also incorporated peer villagers for access to local knowledge and coordination.
-  Creation of a population registration process, necessary to recover rights and freedom of movement.
-  A balanced and sustainable land distribution among watershed forest, economic forest, sustenance forest, agricultural land and villages/infrastructure.
-  Experimenting with potential tree crops and selection of the most suitable to the area, profitable and demanded.

### Lessons learned

-  Reforestation alone and laborer jobs not sustainable. Need for long-term sources of income.
-  Need to address health and livelihoods first to allow families to send children to school.

## The Navuti Company



Different tree crops were explored as alternatives for the economic forest. Tea was initially rejected because at that time, people had to cut down trees in the forest to make firewood to roast the tea. The most promising crops were Arabica coffee because it can grow under the shade of trees, and macadamia nuts due to strong demand, high value, and good growing conditions in the same regions where opium was cultivated. In the case that both crops became non-productive, the plan B was that their planting would be for the recovery of the forest.

Even so, the risk was high due to the long waiting time. It would be three years before the first coffee harvest came in, seven for macadamia. Macadamia actually took 12 years for the commercially viable harvests to arrive.

In 1989, the year the Princess Mother turned 90, the Navuti Company was created. Navuti is the Thai word for 90. Its aim was to start the economic forestry in Doi Tung. 900 local villagers were trained and hired to work in the economic forest. Their income was boosted almost 4-fold.

Due to high investment in Economic Forestry, the Project sought cooperation with private sectors. Negotiations by Khun Chai, then MFLF Secretary General, with Thai and Japanese companies allowed for access to low-cost funding from JICA in 1992. They obtained a 28 million baht 20-year loan with a 5-year grace period, with an annual interest rate of 1.3%, including carrying costs, compared to the 12-15% rates at the time in Thailand. The Thai and Japanese companies contributed initial investment capital of 30 million baht as well as corporate expertise and access to markets.

As is usually the case, the beginning was not easy. Despite the efforts of the Thai Department of Agriculture, which provided knowledge and support, productivity per tree was below standards and expectations. A ground survey showed that half of the coffee and macadamia trees had been lost despite the training of the farmers. The problem was mainly a lack of proper monitoring of the trees, which were not properly pruned or given enough fertilizer by laborers. This setback obliged the company to increase its capital by another 30 million baht.

Khun Chai asked the partners to give Navuti a second opportunity. He believed the problem was mainly motivation rather than lack of skill, and suspected that local laborers did not care enough about their own business. The company instituted a new model: divide the plantation in plots, allowing the workers (initially the hardest-working ones) to rent the coffee trees from the company at a symbolic price of one baht/tree/year. The idea was that this would create a sense of ownership. The company guaranteed they would buy good quality coffee cherries at a fixed price. This was adjusted, later, so that the price fluctuated every two weeks in accordance with world market prices, to prepare the community to integrate into international markets.

The solution worked. The potential gain sparked market incentives for farmers, who started taking better care of their trees and working longer hours to harvest the best quality cherries. It also generated a model for other farmers who were later included in this model. Within one year, the yield per tree tripled. The quality of the cherries also met international standards.

At the same time the MFLF brought in the Nestle Company and top expertise on macadamia growing from the US and Australia. Doi Tung managers and supervisors were sent out for field training from the corporate experts. International advisors were also brought in to guide the Navuti company.

In 1994 Doi Tung added a new roasting facility on the site and created the Doi Tung Coffee brand. The MFLF also expanded a network of Doi Tung cafes and lifestyle shops. This added value allowed all loans to be repayed. The last installment was made in 2011. JICA officials stated at the time that “it was the first project of this kind that had returned the loans completely.” Now farmers can decide to sell to outside buyers or to local companies, like the one started by Thongchai, the master roaster at the Doi Tung roasting facility at his village, with their own village brand, Akha Pa Kluai.

Even though Navuti is a company, the private companies who invested agreed to not taking back the initial investment and that all the profit must be donated to the MFLF for social causes; therefore, it is one of the first Social Enterprises in Thailand.

The company has played a fundamental role of absorbing the risk of failure instead of putting that burden on the local people who are without money, knowledge or produce. It enabled the transformation of unskilled workers to dependent skilled wage farmers, and later to independent skilled owners who preserve the forest and depend on its reforestation for the health of their shade-dwelling economic crops.

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#### **Sources:**

- Ikujiro Nonaka, “Doi Tung Development Project in Golden Triangle: for the Sustainable Alternative Livelihood Development”, Graduate School of the International Corporate Strategy, Hitotsubashi University, November 2010.
- “The Social Transformation model for the 21st Century”, Sasin Journal of Management, Sasin Graduate Institute of Business Administration, Chulalongkorn University, 2010.
- Interview with Narong Apichai, Mae Fah Luang Foundation’s Director of Field Operations, June 7th 2017, MFLF’ Headquarters, Bangkok.

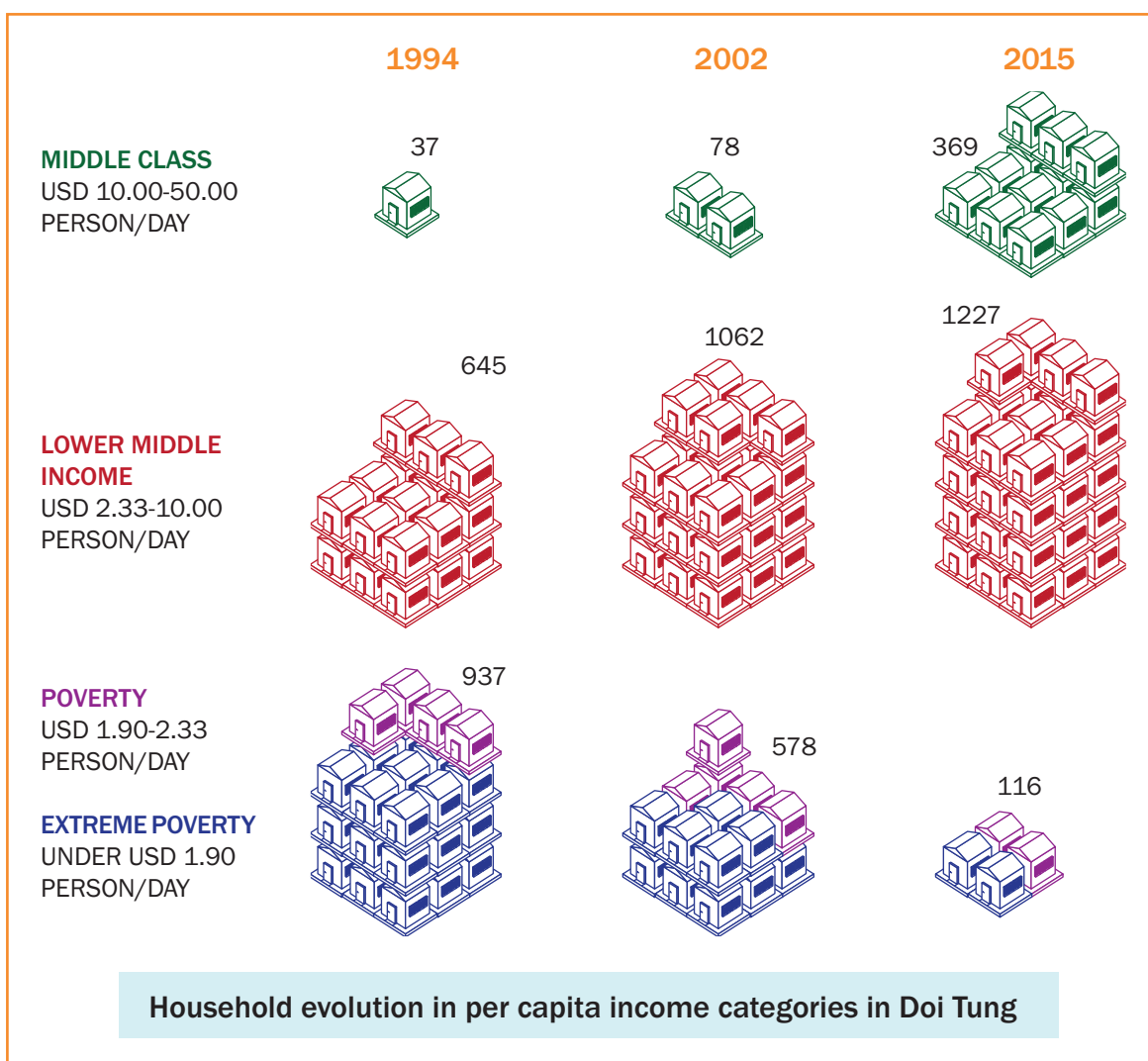


## 2. Phase II (mid-term sufficiency): Financial Sustainability (1994-2002)

This phase was marked by the passing of the Princess Mother on July 18th, 1995. HM the King Bhumibol Adulyadej took the Foundation under his royal patronage. He appointed his daughter, HRH Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, to oversee the continuation of the project.

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

People's wellbeing and dignity remained central to the development process. There was continuous improvement of infrastructure, health and education. Phone lines arrived in 1995. Phone booths were installed in all villages, with some landlines going into households. Wireless phones arrived in 2000.



**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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## Sustainable and resilient paths of affirmative transformation: the Doi Tung Development Project case

On health, work was concentrated on prevention and promotion, as well as dealing with the increase in the number of HIV/AIDS cases, which up to that point had not been recorded. From 1993 onwards there was a spike in fatalities from HIV/AIDS in the Shan communities, fueled by a high demand for Shan women in the sex industry in Bangkok. Later on, awareness of the disease 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 government, the Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO), have support programs for those affected. They also ran STD prevention and protection initiatives. The strong incidence of HIV in those years also made people very scared of prostitution, which is now rare in the area.<sup>38</sup>

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.

The project needed to gain financial self-sustainability to avoid dependence from the government or any other donors. An initial estimate of the investment made in the project for the period 1988-2000 was approximately USD 25 million.<sup>39</sup>

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

1. **Food (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 coffee shops, 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. **Handicraft** – pottery, hand-woven textiles, tufted carpets, mulberry paper. New designers joined the project to work with weavers to create prêt-a-porter clothes and home textiles.
3. **Horticulture**, to provide flowers and plants for the Mae Fah Lung Garden and to sell to other customers. A plant tissue culture lab was created to particularly research orchids, included the rare Lady Slippers.
4. **Tourism** became viable up in the mountains, where tourists came to enjoy the relatively cool weather and change in natural landscape. Tourists visited the Royal Villa, dined at the restaurant, and took in new attractions that included the Doi Tung Garden. Doi Tung Lodge and other related services were added and bundled into packages.

All four social businesses benefited from the inclusion of technology adapted to people’s skill level, and strict quality control as well as quality raw materials, 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. Nowadays, brand Doi Tung consisting of four businesses, generates approximately USD 15 million a year, allowing DTDP to be self-reliant since 2000.

The MFLF’s Social Development Department (SDD) made up of representatives from the community was consolidated as a close communication channel with villagers. It worked to promote and conserve local culture and traditions, economic development, and environmental management. The SDD worked in close coordination with the local government, the Sub-District Administration Organization (SAO), and other public agencies to support development in the Doi Tung area.

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38 Interview with Pongsak Apisawatson, Social Development manager, DTDP, June 6th, 2017, DTDP Headquarters.

39 Ronald R. Renard, “Opium reduction in Thailand 1970-2000: A thirty year journey”, UNDCP, Bangkok 2001.

## Thongchai Wiboonjitjareon

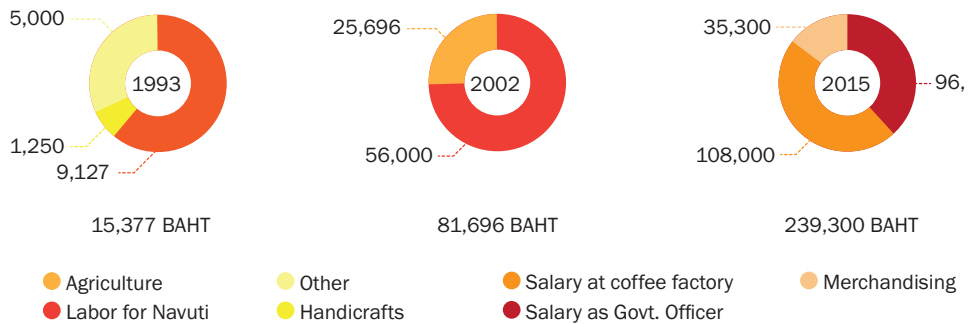
- 45 years old
- Married, 5 children.
- Coffee roaster



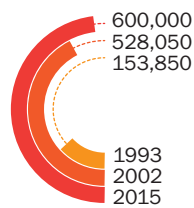
“When we got the IDs we knew we can work anywhere”.

“When we talk about the past, it’s all about suffering. But we rarely do. No one wants to talk about the hardships of the past”.

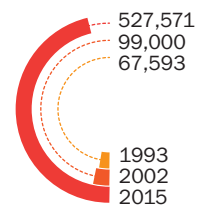
### Thongchai's household income



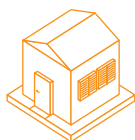
### Thongchai's household assets Value/Bahts



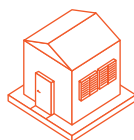
### Thongchai's household expenses Value/Bahts



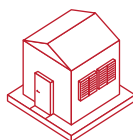
### Thongchai's house improvements



1993  
GRASS ROOF

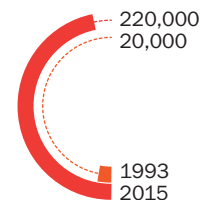


2002  
ZINC ROOF

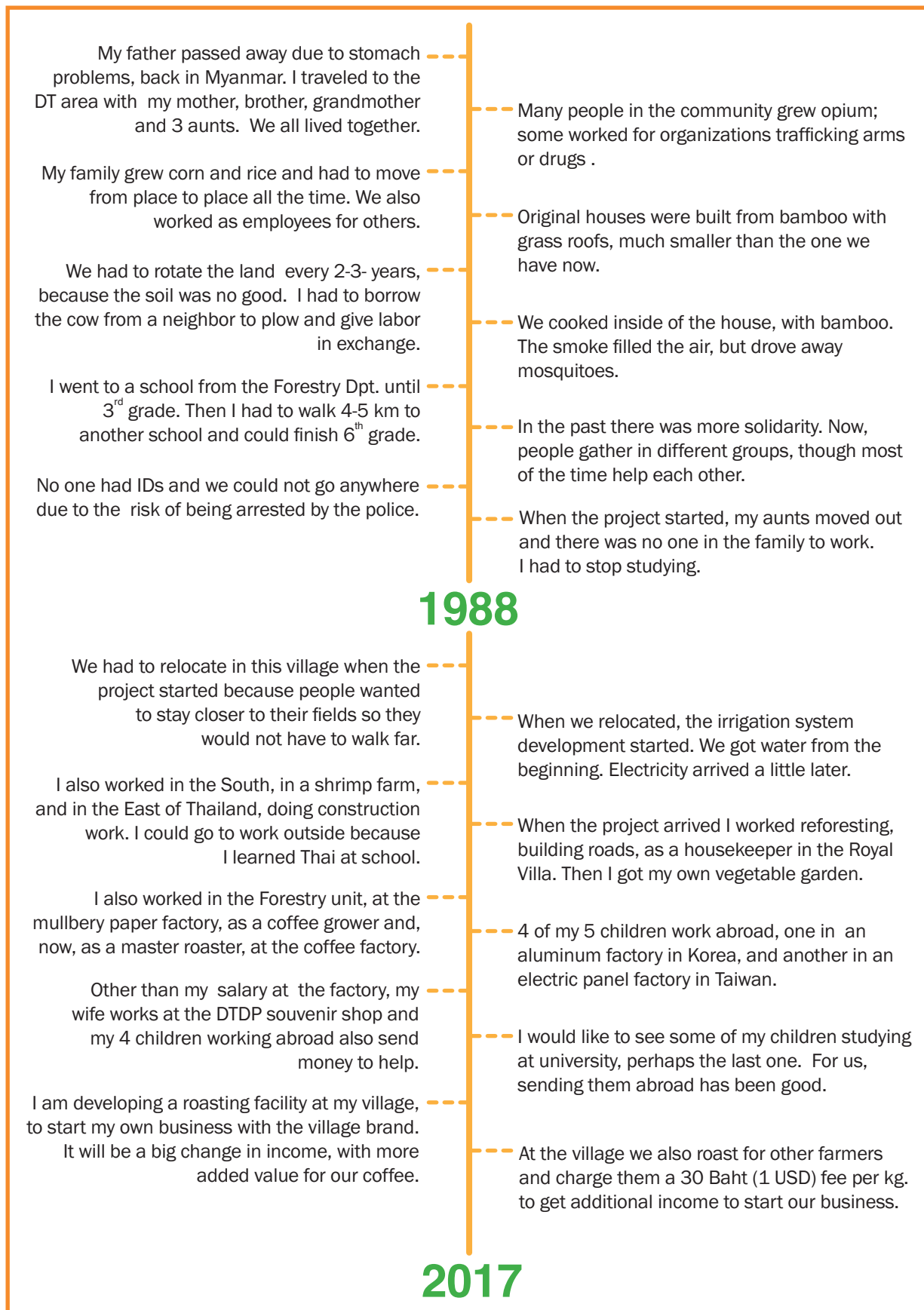


2015  
TILE ROOF

### Thongchai's household savings Value/Bahts



Sustainable and resilient paths of affirmative transformation: the Doi Tung Development Project case





## THE 3 PHASES IN DOI TUNG

### 2. Financial Sustainability

#### ● Main interventions



Development of 4 business units, market driven approach and add value to local products. Introduction of new technology.



Coffee roasting facility and shops, along with quality controls for coffee beans.



Horticulture: provision of plants for garden, plant tissue lab.



Health promotion and prevention. Addressing the increase of HIV/AIDS cases.



Tourism: restaurant, local attractions, lodge and bundled touristic packages developed.



Agroforestry training and knowledge support for productive crops.



Macadamia processing plant developed to process, package and commercialize nuts.



Cottage industry created: pottery, textile, mulberry paper. Added value through industrial process and new designs inspired by local environment and culture.



School curriculum adapted to a more practical, problem solving approach to education. Increase in access to high school.

#### ● Keys of success



Guaranteed continuation of the Princess Mother's heritage through the King's Royal Patronage and the same management team.



Transfer of "ownership" of economic forest and horticulture units to farmers: sharp increase in quality and yield.



Increase in income through a mix of more diverse, profitable and sustainable occupations.



Inclusion of appropriate technology adapted to people's skills allowed for the creation of multiple jobs, better efficiency and local management.



Social Development Team allowed for efficient coordination with villages and public administration.



Coordination with the newly created Sub-district administration to support their work.

#### ● Lessons learned



Without the right incentives of ownership and potential gains for laborers, yield and quality were stagnated. Independent farmers tending of the plots improved profits dramatically



Coffee did not grow well under macadamia trees, their lush branches blocking the sunlight. They had to be located in separate plots to be profitable.

## A Knowledge-based Social Business Model

A human-centered, sustainable and holistic approach has always been at the heart of interventions at Doi Tung. This is evident in the business model developed by the Mae Fah Luang Foundation to create social and economic inclusion for Doi Tung residents, transforming them from survival farmers at the fringes of society into self-reliant actors within a formal society full of hope and a sense of belonging. People in Doi Tung have gained self-confidence, freedom of choice, dignified life, practical knowledge and agency for their future development.

To realize this vision, the Mae Fah Luang Foundation had to strengthen its business model, as well as its capacity and resources to respond to a complex, interconnected and dynamic environment in which the different business initiatives need to thrive to realize the goal of a self-sufficient and dignified life for people and nature.



Some of its fundamental elements are the following:

- The conception of the inhabitants of Doi Tung not as beneficiaries, but as real partners actively participating in a long-term life and business journey. People are not aid recipients; they stand on their feet and realize their true potential. There is participation of local people at all levels within the organization, which counts approximately 1,200 Doi Tung people on its payroll, not including coffee farmers and nurseries entrepreneurs who own their own business now. Many Doi Tung residents are employed within the top management team. There's support to develop local SMEs. Economic benefits are reinvested in social and environmental programs; for example, education, with the objective to improve the wellbeing of people.
- Trust and mutual respect among partners are the raw material behind meaningful relationships. This is built through transparency, accountability, mutual participation, shared responsibility and common benefit. Additionally, the initial delivery of rapid and transformative results, or “quick hits”, are also characteristic of this trust-building approach.
- A continuous search for knowledge is a key aspect of the model that allows for awareness of the context, the different stakeholders and its dynamics and relationships. The relevance given to the hands-on process of learning from people about their lives, needs, beliefs and social representations has become one of the elements to develop an accurate appraisal of needs in specific situations, but also as a vehicle for the construction of trust and two-way communication process of building relationships.
- Additionally, the search for efficiency and excellence in the development and implementation of processes has pushed for a thorough monitoring and evaluation of the interventions. There is learning from errors in order to adjust and improve. The research and construction of more effective economic/social/environmental value-adding processes and technology, while responding to market demand, allows MFLF to explore promising sectors and added-value chains for new endeavours. Knowledge, innovation and risk management are always honed through the objective of getting better results for people's well-being.

- Added-value propositions have been created in many cases through insights gained while working in the field. They communicate with local people: “digging into unspoken truth.” For example, choosing coffee over tea for the economic forest was determined by the information of the added benefits that coffee growing would have for the forest.
- A meticulous and strategically oriented building of a strong network of external partners, donors, customers and collaborators has allowed the MFLF to strengthen the effectiveness of the model; improve technical expertise, market access and internal organization; train staff; facilitate sound research; as well as obtain sufficient capital and other resources for the operation of the model. Among them, we can highlight the Thai Royal Family, public institutions at the central and local government (initially 35 Departments from six ministries), international cooperation and multilateral agencies, national and international private sector (both from the productive & financial system), academic institutions, and even specific individuals.
- An operational model, based on:
  - Four distinct profitable social business units, that have helped local people to stand on their own, through the creation of jobs and the training of the necessary skills to perform them.
  - The Social Development Department, in charge of addressing the livelihood of the people in Doi Tung through the implementation of interventions in coordination with different communities and local and national authorities.
  - The Knowledge and Learning Center also supports the systematization of knowledge from the development process, as well as the creation of new research, both for the improvement of the model and for sharing it with other interested communities home and abroad through the “Living University” to the development sector, other stakeholders and the general public.
  - A Marketing Unit, in charge of matching Doi Tung’s products with local and international markets’ demand, striving for top quality and uniqueness.
  - A balanced financing model that has generated economic benefits and sustainability and also social and environmental returns. Although it received initial subsidies from the Thai government, since 2000 the DTDP has been able to sustain itself from profits generated by the business units. On the one hand, the different government agencies have invested in infrastructures and services within their responsibilities and budget, according to a 30-year plan. Rather than depending on public or private donations to reforest Doi Tung, the MFLF asked for financial contributions and market access from private firms so they could set up the Navuti company to run the economic forest without expecting any economic interest in return, in order to absorb any risks associated with starting an investment with long-term crop.
  - Finally, practical leadership that has assisted dialogue and practice in order to create new knowledge and leading by example to help people realize common good with passion, courage and commitment.

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**Sources:**

Ikujiro Nonaka, “Doi Tung Development Project in Golden Triangle: for the Sustainable Alternative Livelihood Development”, Graduate School of the International Corporate Strategy, Hitotsubashi University, November 2010.

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

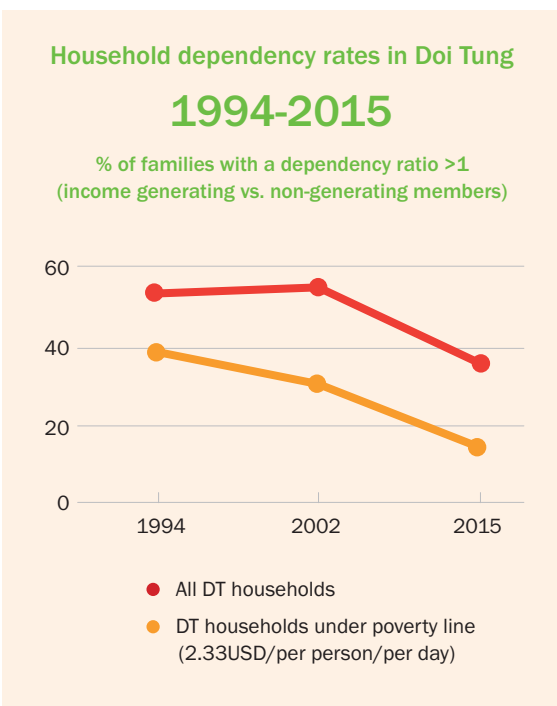
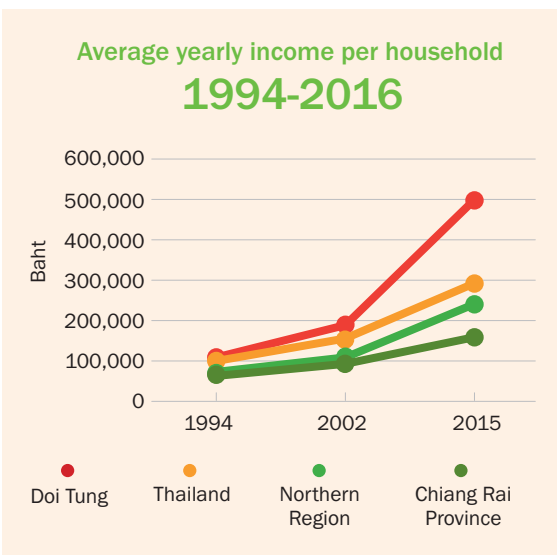
*“At the end, you have to phase out and hand over the Project to the local people, with the confidence that they will be capable of taking care of themselves. This is sustainability. We must be able to leave the project with grace and pride.”*

- Mom Rajawongse Disnadda Diskul (Khun Chai), Chairman of the Board of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage.<sup>40</sup>

The last phase of the DTDP is focused on the sustainability of the development process. It puts development into the hands of local communities in Doi Tung. In practical terms, it means the transformation of the community into the owners of their own future, responsible for the improvement of their options to “do” and to “be.”

Change has arrived to everyone in Doi Tung, leaving no one behind. “In the area, no one is really poor if work and effort are put forward. One indicator is that if you want to hire someone with the daily minimum wage of 300 Baht, no one will come to work. Many families have members working outside Doi Tung—a total of 3,388 people in 2015 – and get regular income. The population has slowly grown and household size has not significantly changed, but dependency rates have lowered for most households due to easier access to income-generating activities. For single women, the disabled or sick, income is not usually a problem in Doi Tung. Seniors and elders, as well as children, usually get money from the family or relatives working at home or abroad.<sup>41</sup>

The younger generation of Doi Tung nowadays has access to all rights that Thai citizenship offers, but some members of the older generation had some difficulties in getting recognition. Their access to government services, including health, has been possible through a special resident “pink card”, but they had limitations to buy land or to vote. Now, a new procedure has opened up a path for citizenship for holders of a pink card for over 10 years, providing access to full citizenship rights. Many older residents of Doi Tung have already applied.



40 “The Social Transformation model for the 21st Century”, Sasin Journal of Management, Sasin Graduate Institute of Business Administration, Chulalongkorn University, 2010.

41 From the interview with Weerachit Waranchitkun, President of the Sub-District Administration, May 30th, 2017, at his residence in the Huai Rai Samakkhi village.

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## Sustainable and resilient paths of affirmative transformation: the Doi Tung Development Project case

Most of the initiatives have matured to a point of profitability. 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 recycle waste material like macadamia shells. 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. The DTDP welcomed an international panel of coffee experts to share their knowledge on the value-added chain of coffee. Locals learned management of coffee shops and barista training, propelling Doi Tung into the "Third Wave Coffee" movement that aspires to the highest form of culinary appreciation of coffee.

New crops are being identified for the economic forest, including the pine trees initially used for reforestation, while addressing 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, like growing Assam tea. The plantations grow easily under the shade of the forest with no need for any chemicals, and is harvested twice a month, nine months a year, providing a weekly income. Sacha inchi (Inca peanut) and bamboo are also being explored by the villagers. Additionally, families in Doi Tung are buying land outside of the project area, in some cases to grow rice for their own consumption and as a coping strategy in case coffee prices or their other income sources go down.

Access to credit is available through government 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 attracted more tourists to the area. Along with it, many villages and the SAO are developing community-based tourism initiatives, including those related to the forest such as trekking. Waste management and forest fire prevention will be vital if visitor numbers increase. There is training and support for renovating houses to prepare them for home stays. The fact that Doi Tung is a forest reserve and does not allow for hotels to be built is a good opportunity to develop a more environmentally sustainable tourism model, where visitors can learn directly about local culture and their balance with the forest. Now that many households have access to the internet through smart phones might facilitate additional community initiatives.

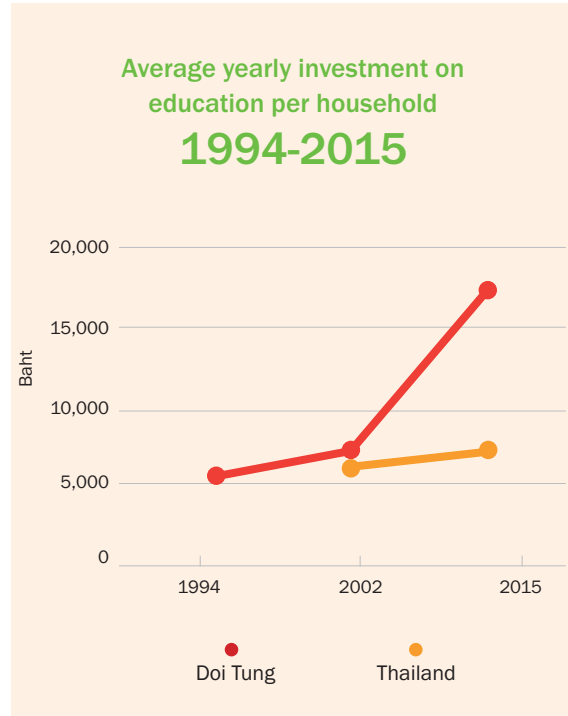
During this last phase, the DTDP has focused also on improving education in partnership with the Ministry of Education. Child-centered learning, life skills development and the Princess Mother's values and art are at the core of this process. Ethnic languages and Thai are spoken by the children in all schools, and new initiatives, like the expansion of Montessori learning approach to all the schools in the area or an Open Approach to education based on problem solving, are being tested both with teachers and students with promising preliminary results. Additionally, vocational training has been included in high school curriculum in the project area.

Environmental education is also a crucial part of the curriculum for new generations to appreciate the importance of environmental sustainability. The students participate in the DTDP "Fai Dee" youth camps which teach local students the history of Doi Tung, raises awareness on development issues, and instills values and responsibility for their future.

Sustainable and resilient paths of affirmative transformation: the Doi Tung Development Project case

The DTDP offers a scholarship program to allow families to send their children to universities, not only within Chiang Rai but also to other parts of the country. The Project gives around 10 scholarships a year, thus far 255 scholarships in total. This has allowed young people in Doi Tung to be the most highly educated members of their families for generations.

Many responsibilities previously managed by the DTDP have been transferred to local inhabitants. This includes water, landslide and forest fire prevention; social development activities; and participatory planning and budgeting between elected village heads in concert with the SAO. Irrigation systems are maintained by villages through irrigation funds, paid by beneficiaries. Quite a few of the development volunteers of the DTDP who have worked with the Project 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 sustainable development of the area.



# Learning from errors, improving processes and delivering results

## PHASE I

### Empty schools

The DTDP built small schools made of bamboo, but children did not come because most children were still working with their parents in the fields. That allowed for understanding that health and livelihood issues had to be solved before children could get to the schools.

From Ikujiro Nonaka, “Doi Tung Development Project in Golden Triangle: for the Sustainable Alternative Livelihood Development”, Graduate School of the International Corporate Strategy, Hitotsubashi University, November 2010.



## PHASE II

### Coffee and macadamia together

“In 1997, coinciding with the economic crisis in Thailand, we suffered a big reduction in yield that did not cover the expectations we had for that year. On the one side, coffee and macadamia were planted together. As macadamia trees are wide and big, they did not allow enough sunlight for the coffee trees to grow properly. That forced us to divide the 6 joint plots into 3 for macadamia and 3 for coffee.”

### Ownership of the coffee plots

“Villagers started to work as laborers in the coffee fields. The Doi Tung team trained them on how to cultivate coffee, but the yield and quality did not improve because of the lack of incentives for the laborers to go the extra mile. No matter what they did, they would get the same pay. That’s when we decided to allocate the plots to laborers to convert them into independent farmers. After that we also started a survey of the whole area planted with coffee, dividing it into zones of 3,000 coffee trees per zone. We counted the coffee trees, quality graded them from A to D, and drew the limits of the different plots. This process allowed for the allocation of plots to villagers through a lottery system. Trees were leased at a symbolic price of 20 cents (US) per tree per year, transferring the responsibility to villagers for production. After we started that system, farmers were in the plantation all the time taking care of their coffee plants. They brought their families to help in the plantation. This had a strong impact, increasing productivity and quality. Throughout the whole process, support staff from the coffee unit were allocated into zones to help farmers get higher quality and productivity”.

Extracts from Group interview with DTDP Officers, Heads of the Agricultural and Social Development Units, May 31st 2017 at DTDP Headquarters



## PHASE III

### Use of chemicals

“For the production of macadamia nuts, during the initial years, pesticides and herbicides were used. They destroyed the soil and polluted the watershed area. The production was changed to chemical-free in 2007. The first two years productivity fell because of worms and other pests. We started a research process on biological pest control techniques with ants. Now production is much higher than before.

### Forest recovery

“The review on the impacts of reforestation found that the recovery of the forest had been limited, with little return of local wildlife due to the predominant monoculture plantations that did not provide enough bio-diversity. Reforestation efforts had been done with teak trees in altitudes under 600 meters, and pine trees in higher terrain. Pine trees happen not to be resistant to windy conditions like the ones found in the hill tops in Doi Tung. They also burn easily, and when the top of the tree burns, the tree dies.

An improvement plan was laid out. It’s being implemented today to improve conditions for biodiversity. This includes introducing indigenous trees in the area and doing selective seedling and sapling. It is a joint effort with the Royal Forestry Department in order to recover as much diversity as we can. We’re studying different options. Because the area is a forest reserve, we cannot take the pine trees out.

Now the fauna is gradually coming back. In the past, when Doi Tung was denuded, all the animals fled to Myanmar; now in the forest areas closed to people there are monkeys, bears, mountain goats, wild boars, squirrels, jungle fowls and wild oxes. We also have deer from Myanmar seasonally.”

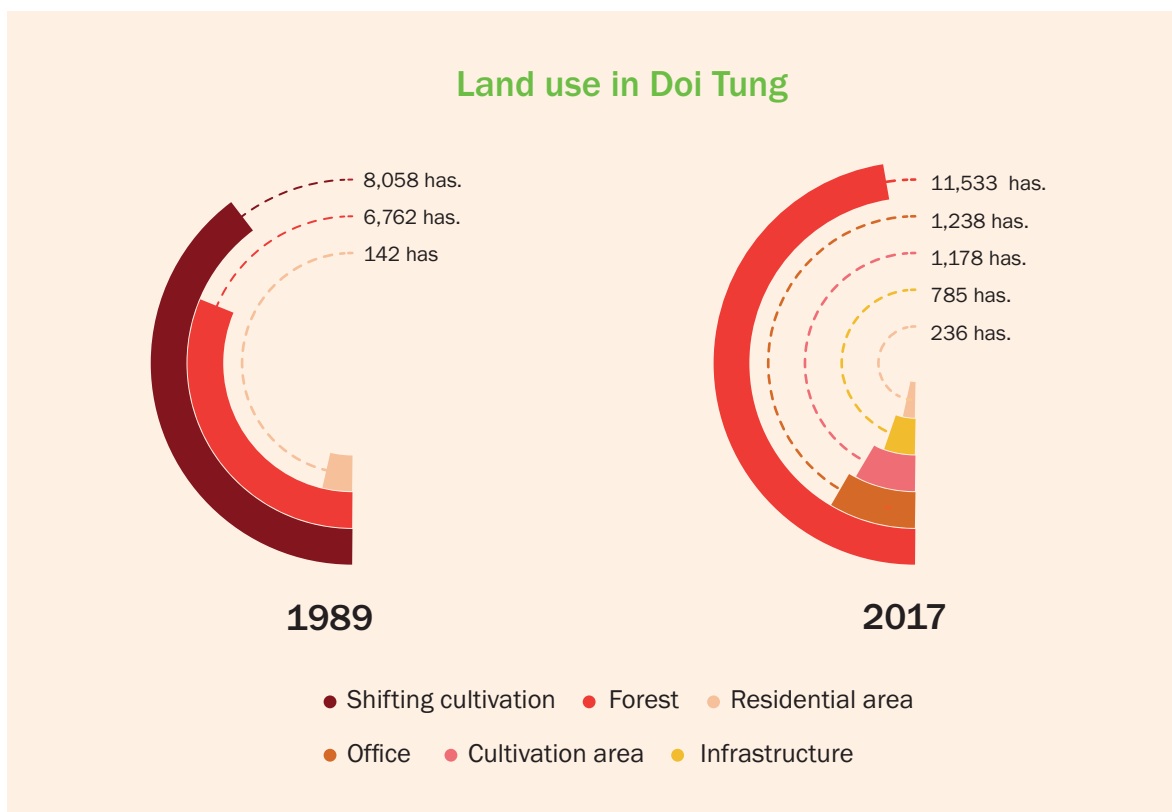
Extracts from Group interview to DTDP Officers, Heads of the Agricultural and Social Development Units, May 31st 2017 at DTDP Headquarters



## Cultivating land for environmental sustainability

Taking care of Doi Tung's environment has led to reforestation efforts since the beginning of the DTDP, under the Princess Mother's leadership. Participation in reforestation tasks allowed wages to be paid, leading to an increase in the income of villagers, but it laid out the foundation of Doi Tung's people's livelihood, profoundly intertwined with the health of the forest.

Some of the limitations of the initial reforestation process linked to the extensive use of teak and pine trees, as well as the presence of monoculture plantations of coffee and macadamia for the economic forest, are being addressed in order to have a greater diversity of botanic and animal species, aiming for the full recovery of the forest. Gradually decaying pine trees are being replaced by native species, and a DTDP team is recovering seeds from the forest. They have established a tree nursery with around 50 varieties, as well as a small plots to study biodiversity issues and the possibility of growing other types of plants in the forest. New species have even been found in Doi Tung. A Dutch botanist has been associated with this effort. Some animals, like pheasants, are being released back into the forest and many birds are coming back to Doi Tung. Fruit trees are intentionally being planted for birds to return.



Trees are carbon sponges. Land use, when the natural environment is converted into areas for human use as agriculture or for settlements, is a substantial source of carbon dioxide emissions globally. Deforestation is responsible for some of these emissions by releasing large quantities of greenhouse gases.

According to recent calculations of a UN REDD+ project within the Thailand Voluntary Emission Reduction program, reforestation efforts in Doi Tung will be able to capture 115,207 tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e annually, for a total of 2,304,145 Tons in the next 20 years, reducing emissions of greenhouse gases. Its annual value in carbon credits is 23 million baht (at an expected price of 200 baht/ton). It will help Thailand reach the emissions reduction targets of 20%-25% reduction by 2030 set by the Intended National Determined Contribution (INDC) under the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change.

Additionally, the DTDP took care of environmental issues related to the new development dynamics in the area. In 2010, an environmental engineer was hired to address all the environmental challenges posed by the increase of agro-industrial waste and the solid waste of communities in Doi Tung.

The DTDP developed an extensive water system with weirs that provide water for drinking and agricultural purposes for all the villages as well as for the factory and project and touristic sites. Waster water treatment systems have also been developed. Schools have their own small treatment units, with filters and UV lamps for purification. Industrial wastewater is treated through an activated sludge process. Villages use individual septic tanks in every house.

Solid waste is sorted at the villages by recycled, biodegradable and the remaining. 80% of the trash generated by the DTDP is reused/recycled; the other 20% goes to landfills. The DTDP is trying to develop, along with the Municipal and SAO, a good waste management model that can be used in other communities. Villages recycle quite a lot of garbage after awareness campaigns and programs in schools were developed. In some villages, students have organized themselves to buy recycled materials that they sell to private recyclers that come to the villages; with the money they finance other programs at school. Only eight villages have a removal system (garbage truck) and access to a dumping site. The rest of the villages have their own smaller dumping sites where garbage is dumped in the open, burnt or covered with soil. The industrial and office sites also sort hazardous waste.

Regarding cottage industry waste, the DTDP has been able to use the hull and shell of 400-800 tons of macadamia nuts coming from the 23,000 trees that exist in Doi Tung Each tree bears about 20 kgs of macadamia fruits, from which 4 kgs of edible kernels is produced. The hull and shell becoming waste once the shell is extracted. The hull is used as fertilizer and returns to the fields. Energy is needed in the industrial process to dry the macadamia shells along with the nuts to reduce moisture and ensure edible quality. A hot water tank provides heat for this process. 70% of the energy used comes from the shells of previously cracked nuts. The additional 30% comes from the use of propane for additional temperature and quality control. In addition, a hot water system is also used in the ceramic plant where 90% of its energy needs comes from biomass, Alternative energy is also used in the mulberry paper factory to dry the paper and in the textile factory for dyeing and boiling cotton. The use of these biomass systems saves 400,000 baht/year, which is reinvested in salaries and other expenses.

Nowadays everyone in Doi Tung knows of the importance of the forest for their livelihood. The efforts to protect it from forest fires are one of the best examples of community work in the area. Villagers rotate guard shifts, day and night, 24/7 in summer season. New infrastructure like fire trucks, water deposits and pumps, fire barricades, and village equipment (always checked before dry season), as well as drills and strict protocols, allow them to be faster and more effective in the case of fire.

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#### Sources:

- Group interview of DTDP Officers, specifically the Heads of the Agricultural and Social Development Units, May 31st 2017 at DTDP Headquarters.
- Interview with Thanapong Duangmanee, environmental engineer, MFLF's Headquarters, Bangkok, June 8th, 2017.

## THE 3 PHASES IN DOI TUNG

### 3. Sustainability

#### ● Main interventions



Building capacity of local people to prepare them to take over management and development processes for a sustainable future



Reevaluation of market potential and improvement of products.



Doi Tung as a Living University on sustainable development, Social Enterprise and reforestation.



Sustained profitability of the 4 business units, dramatically increasing average household income in Doi Tung.



Research on new materials and innovation processes to increase quality & competitiveness.



Better quality of education: child centered, problem oriented, innovation with Montessori and Open Approach to Education.



Improvement of the added value processes towards highest quality (branding, origin denomination), price and sustainability.



Recycling of agro-industrial waste materials for reducing waste, emissions and costs.



Diversified tourism offer, including community based tourism and home stays.

#### ● Keys of success



Guaranteed implementation of the Princess Mother's values: "cultivate land, cultivate people".



Inclusion of technology and innovation for improvement of industrial processes for better quality, added value and environmental sustainability.



Transformation of a limited time process to an area based sustainable development in the hands of the communities and local and national development actors.



Taking over of public works and services by Subdistrict administration, in many cases with acting representatives being former DTDP local staff.



Increase in income through a mix of more diverse, profitable and sustainable occupations.



Greater household savings have been generating numerous local business initiatives by villagers that have helped increase their income.

#### ● Lessons learned



The use of chemicals destroyed the soil and polluted the watershed. Moving to a chemicalfree production not only improved the environment but also the yield after two years.



Predominant monoculture plantations and reforestation with two main species (pine and teak trees) did not allowed for a total recovery of the forest wildlife. A new reforestation process is introducing additional diversity.

## 2.3. Unleashing the inner power of the most vulnerable to transform their lives, heal the planet and enlarge their dreams.

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### On transformation, resilience and thriving

The reality of the communities in Doi Tung, before the start of the project, was persistently defined by a physical, social, political, legal, environmental, and economic context superposing different layers of vulnerabilities that translated into real pain, suffering, distress and lack of expectations for the future. Overcoming this extreme mix of conditions was unthinkable. Most families concentrated on basic strategies for their survival, for defending their lives. It was an everyday exercise; it was hard to raise a family in a shrinking and ailing forest that did not produce enough to eat, that was far from everywhere, forgotten by everyone.

They did have survival strategies: having more children meant more hands for labor; direct participation in illicit economies generated basic income; joining the militia gave people added security; limiting their forays out of the area reduced their risk of being arrested or subject of extortion or abuse by the police; slash and burn agriculture allowed people access to fertile land for a short period; keeping communities closed along with language, religious and cultural practices gave security. But all these survival strategies were a short-term response to a very fragile world filled with many uncertainties, risks and scarcity.

The DTDP changed this equation. As Dr. Sandro Calvani, Senior Advisor to the MFLF, said: “When you change from scarcity and conflict to cooperation and sustainable development, and when basic needs are addressed, people change from acting on survival instinct to develop real thinking on decision-making, taking into account their options in life. The present situation in Doi Tung adds new challenges, new debates, but it does not imply a real paradigm shift. It was done years ago and it is sustainable.”

Nowadays people keep working hard, but hard work is no longer required to survive. “The best achievement of sustainability is thriving: the capacity of making the community sustainable, happy and flourishing. You do not have to work hard every day to maintain the status quo, which is consolidated enough. Before, people looked for the basic elements in life: house, food, clothes, land, health, education, peace, justice and freedom. Now people can concentrate on living better, getting a business, getting better education. Now parents think about how to get their children to the best school, or having a more diverse diet.”

There are also big challenges for the future connected to aspects of development in Doi Tung, but conditions are better, capacities have grown, tools to thrive are more accessible, and many risks have been managed. “The project built a team between the forest and the people. Real resilience does not come from individual farmers, growing just one crop like coffee, but from the whole community engaged in a variety of different activities like growing other crops, weaving, working in the factory, engaging in tourism. It’s important people have made peace with and take care of the forest. If you take out one component, like

coffee, the community is still resilient.” Sandro also added: “Other things will become more important for resilience than just an increased level of income, like maintaining the traditional family solidarity system in Thailand”.

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**Source:**

- Source: Interview with Sandro Calvani, Senior Advisor of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, in the Doi Tung Development Project Headquarters, May 31st 2017.

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### The story of Rungpailin Charoendee, merchant

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Her delicate figure and shy and calm appearance could deceive you into thinking she is a fragile and weak woman. The story of her life tells otherwise. Rungpailin Charoendee is 39, married, with two children (12 and 18). Hers is a story of true transformation.

Of Shan ethnic origin, she is the second of a family of 12 children and grew up in Kengtung, Myanmar. Her father worked in construction and her mother sold snacks on the street. Their living conditions were difficult. Lack of nutrition and health care caused the death of six of her siblings. She remembers moments where her parents “did not eat so the children could have some food,” or the time when “two eggs had to be divided for dinner between 10.” They were in debt with many people. This situation was aggravated by the fact that her father had alcohol problems and liked to gamble. “I moved to my uncle’s house because my father used to beat my mother and us.”

“I had to work at my uncle’s house since I was eight years old, doing all types of household work and taking care of his children and grandchildren, in exchange for food and some education. I used to get up at 4:00 a.m., do some cleaning in the house, cut wood, go to the market and cook rice before feeding breakfast to the children and taking them to school. I used to do some reading while the rice was cooking. Then I had to run to school and study from 8:00 a.m. until 3:30 p.m. In the afternoon, after school, I had to fetch water, prepare dinner, help my aunt prepare her goods to sell (she owned a store), feed the children and get them to bed, and, finally, do some homework for school. I felt loved, but I had to work a lot; I never had time to play with other children. It was a happy period because I had enough to eat. Sometimes I took some rice and brought it to my family for them to eat.”

At 13, two years after her older sister migrated to work in a restaurant in Mae Sai, Thailand, her parents pressured her to do the same so she could send money home. “I had many fears: fear of leaving the family, fear of not speaking Thai, fear that I would be obliged to work as a prostitute. I wanted to continue studying.” With the help of an aunt she managed to cross the border, dressed as a day laborer on the back of a bicycle.



She got a job at the restaurant where her sister worked, but, being a minor, she had to stay hidden in the back, washing dishes, cleaning the house, going to the market. “Not knowing the language was really hard, because I would get instructions wrong.” She did not have a salary, but got room, food and the tip box. She would make around 400 baht/month, money she sent to her parents in Myanmar. “With that money, they could fix the house with a metal roof and get treatment for my father’s alcoholism. It also served to send my siblings to school, some of them up to high school. Some of them now live in Mae Sai, have a job and a better life.”

“Back in Myanmar, if we were sick, all we had was a herb doctor. In Mae Sai, because I had no ID, I had to pay the doctor’s fee if I got sick.”

In 1991 Rungpailin arrived in Doi Tung. She heard about the recruitment of cleaning staffs and asked for a ride to Doi Tung, where she was hired. Her job brought a salary of 60 baht/day, food, accommodation, and fewer hours of work. She worked for 16 years as a cleaner in the offices and in the Royal Villa. Then she worked in the restaurant, in the factory and in the souvenir shop, and her pay increased every year. “I could afford to rent a room.”

A local Shan family lodged her when she first arrived in Doi Tung so she could have the possibility to get an ID. They treated her “like a daughter.” Their son worked as a gardener in the DTDP (he now owns one of the nurseries that provide plants to the MFL Garden), and years later, became her husband. She recently moved to live with her family and her mother-in-law. “Now, with the ID, the whole family has access to health care.”

In 2004 Rungpailin opened a shop and started her own business. Two years later, the DTDP installed a bazaar so villagers could sell their crafts and food products to tourists right by the tree that had been the market point for opium and weapons 20 years before.

With her own business, her life has changed. Her income has increased. The DTDP has helped the merchants by taking them to Bangkok to explore other opportunities and see products from other places. “I want to open another shop in Doi Tung or downhill and start making my own brand of clothes with local designs. All the vendors of the bazaar get together every two months to set cleaning schedules or plan study visits, organized by the DTDP or by the SAO.” Her two children help her at the shop during the weekends when she goes to work on their farm.

“My children are both at school. The older one has a plan to go to the university in Chiang Mai to study engineering, architecture, management or medicine. He can apply for a scholarship from the DTDP, but I also have some savings from the shop. I enrolled in a night school program and completed 9<sup>th</sup> grade. I always tell my children how tough life has been in the past, when I was young, with no opportunities for learning. Now, it is different, and my children can study and benefit from it.”

“When my father died my mother moved to Mae Sai along with my other siblings. I go there every month to see them. Now is the happiest moment in my life. I do not want to go back to the past and correct things. I only think of the future. I feel I have the power to do anything. Even if financial problem happens to me, and it can be any time, I can continue doing what I am doing.”

## The transformation in Doi Tung

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

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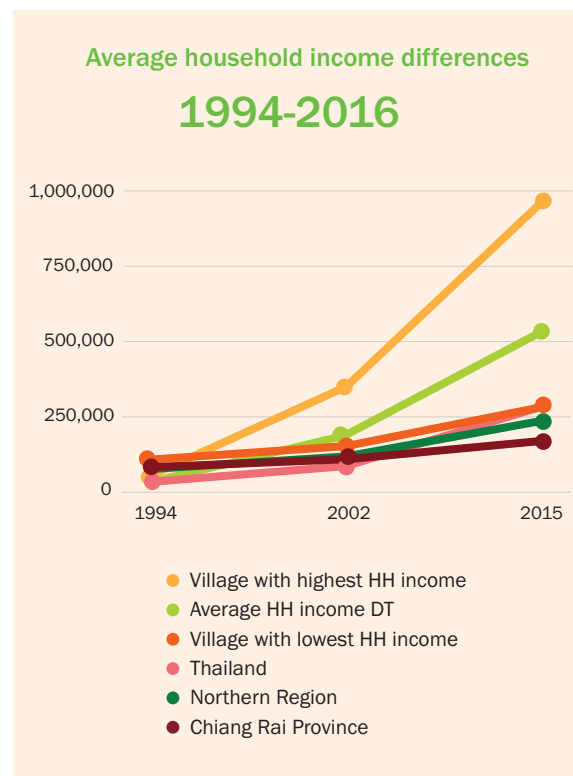
## Sustainable and resilient paths of affirmative transformation: the Doi Tung Development Project case

The inspiring story of Doi Tung has been able to generate the expected transformation while avoiding some of the most common mistakes that still determine the fate of many development interventions<sup>42</sup>. The first of them has to do with overlooking issues related with power and inequalities, which were overturned since the project started; the “soft power” of the Princess Mother’s presence allowed for the changing of the *status quo* and the displacement of powerful armed actors, and the coordinated entrance of the state institutions with an affirmative disposition to work for the wellbeing of the people in Doi Tung. Many development initiatives usually fail because they concentrate on the change of one single factor or a limited number of factors, without the multidisciplinary conceptualization and multidimensional articulation that is necessary.

The environmental degradation, the isolation and precariousness of many communities, the lack of state presence, along with strong resilience mechanisms already embedded within the communities, were all taken not as difficulties, but as opportunity to facilitate the needed transformation for Doi Tung to thrive in a balanced, holistic, inclusive and sustainable way. Moreover, the initial approach in Doi Tung from the philosophy of the Princess Mother was based on the fact that the environmental conditions of the forest were the key to meaningful and sustainable development for their people. Being able to reforest and recover the forest made change possible for the communities.

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. A lot of emphasis was given to discussion, debate, common learning and transparent communication in search for mutual understanding, individual and common empowerment, and the building of meaningful personal relationships, both within the communities and in the offices of the government or the private sector.

The diversity within the Doi Tung area, not only ethnic, cultural or linguistic, but also the specific context of each village and the specific characteristics of each population, has also played a dynamic role in the transformation of the area, allowing for the identification of positive deviances as an element of getting deeper knowledge on what works and what does not. It has also facilitated the proper initiation of new approaches (like the symbolic renting of the coffee trees initially to the most productive workers) that have later been mainstreamed into the regular operation of the DTDP. Diversity has also played in the coexistence of different realities within the Doi Tung area, that also explain differences in average household income among villages: 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 relaxed lifestyle but all families are happy to cover their basic needs, with the option of 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 ratio in 2016.



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42 Roman Krznaric, 'How Change Happens: Interdisciplinary perspectives for human development', Oxfam Research Report, Oxford, 2007.



As we have seen, Doi Tung's story of change and transformation has to do with choosing cooperation (nurturing relationships and trust) over conflict; empowering people to become active protagonists of change, over directed paternalistic interventions; and also convincing a rich network of decision makers, public agencies and private stakeholders to join in over working alone. The work developed in Doi Tung for 30 years, as well as the ensemble of MFLF's action, have not only made the current system work better for everyone, but also built an alternative to our "modernity", a profound change in the economic and social system towards a model of "sharing and caring" for people and nature that also helps mutate the deeper structures of power.

There are many ways in which transformational social change could happen; but no substantive transformation is real if there is no redistribution of power among different actors, without the expansion of the power and the freedom "to be" and "to do"<sup>43</sup>. Making infrastructures, public goods and services available and accessible; recovering the possibility to legally and practically claim and enjoy rights, within a fair and inclusive participatory governance structure under the rule of law; generating economic opportunities that offer decent income for families; all of them are strong factors that have allowed some of the most vulnerable ethnic communities in Thailand to have more options, through a profound process of individual and common empowerment.

The combination of the possibility to solve survival problems along with the increased connection with the outside world that provides opportunities to explore additional options and exchange ideas has allowed for more profound cultural transformations at cellular level (individual, family, community), mutating people's understanding of rights and freedoms, of relationships, gender and age roles, of identity and autonomy, of social and religious practices, of governance and justice, of the economy and the state, of time and distance, and of life and the future itself. It has also created, like in many other places where rural populations have rapidly gained connectivity with the outer world, generational cultural gaps with distinctive imaginaries and perceptions shaped by different life experiences and cultural influences.

In this process, three types of empowerment that drive transformations at the community level have been involved:<sup>44</sup>

- Power within: personal self-confidence, dignity and a sense of rights and entitlement.
- Power with: collective power, through organization, solidarity and joint action.
- Power to: effective choice, the capability to decide actions and carry them out.

## 1. Power within

"I feel I have the power to do anything." As Rungpailin expressed in her quote, power within is a direct personal reflection on the construction of individual agency that has been installed in the minds and hearts of people in Doi Tung. This is the first step towards social transformation: "Unless people first develop a sense of self-confidence and a belief in their own rights (power within), efforts to help them organize (power with) and demand a say (power to) may not bear fruit."<sup>45</sup> This process came as a result of the mix of interventions that allowed families to work their way out of poverty, generate additional income, eat better and stay healthier, have access to basic services like water and electricity, get skill-training and education and productively apply it to their lives. It also helped to reduce their debts vs. savings ratio, have some kind of ownership on the land and additional income opportunities and access to markets both in and outside Doi Tung. The future now looks much brighter.

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43 Amartya Sen, "Development as Freedom", Oxford University Press, 1999.

44 Jo Rowlands, "Questioning Empowerment: Working with Women in Honduras", Oxford, Oxfam UK and Ireland, 1997.

45 Duncan Green, "How Change Happens", Oxford University Press, 2016.

## The story of Camnan Aphisuntharakul, farmer (II)

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Nowadays Camnan lives with his wife and 24 year-old son. Their house has electricity, water access, and they cook with a gas stove.

The project opened up travel for everyone to the outside world. Roads were built, making transportation easier and faster. The Project IDs they received at the beginning of the project allowed them, among other things, “to move without fear of being arrested. Now I have a motorcycle and can go anywhere I wish.”

Getting identification allowed their family access to the healthcare clinic and to the hospital. He received treatment at the drug rehabilitation center established by the Project, where he went voluntarily. “It was hard to bear the withdrawal pain and I had some Chinese medicine to help me cope. I stayed there for three months and came back to the community without any desire to use drugs. Now I get pain medication from the doctor. I haven’t used opium since then.”

Initially, the family received wages from working in the reforestation efforts and in the coffee plantations. “Our income is now more diversified: we have coffee, lychee, plum and tea plantations. I also sell knives that I make. My son now works in the plantations. When he finished high school, he left for South Korea to work at a car manufacturing plant and sent money home every month. He came back after three years, when his contract finished.”



## Camnan Aphisuntharakul

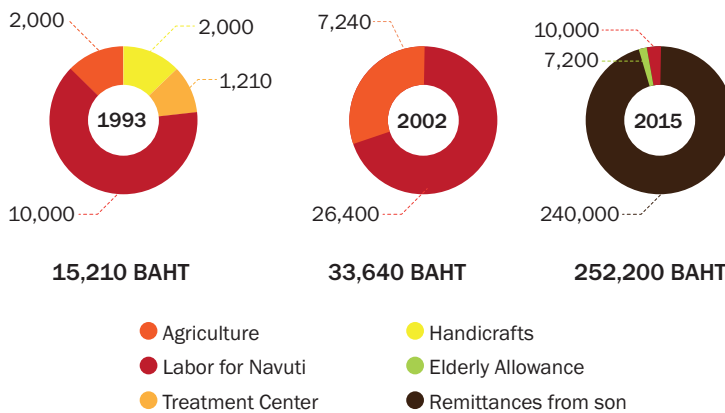
- 68 years old
- Married, one son.
- Retired farmer and Deputy Head of the Akha ethnic group at Doi Tung
- Akha Pa kluay Village



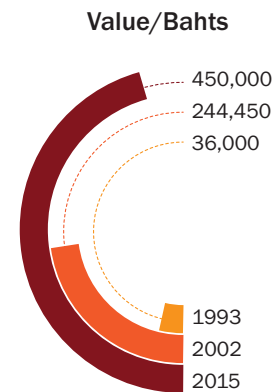
“I never look to the past, there is nothing to miss; it was hard to live in the past”.

“We do not need anything else, we have enough to eat, enough for living; I feel happy”.

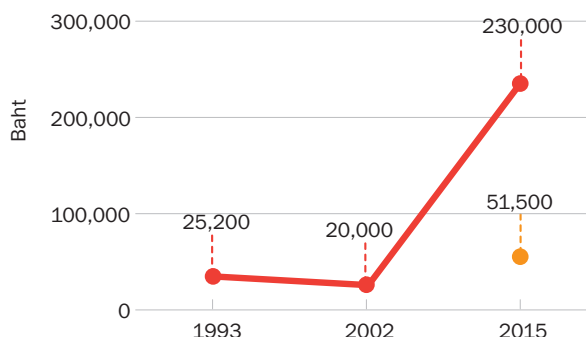
### Camnan's household income



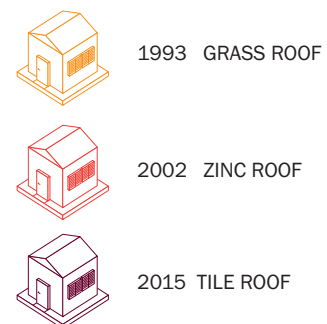
### Camnan household's assets

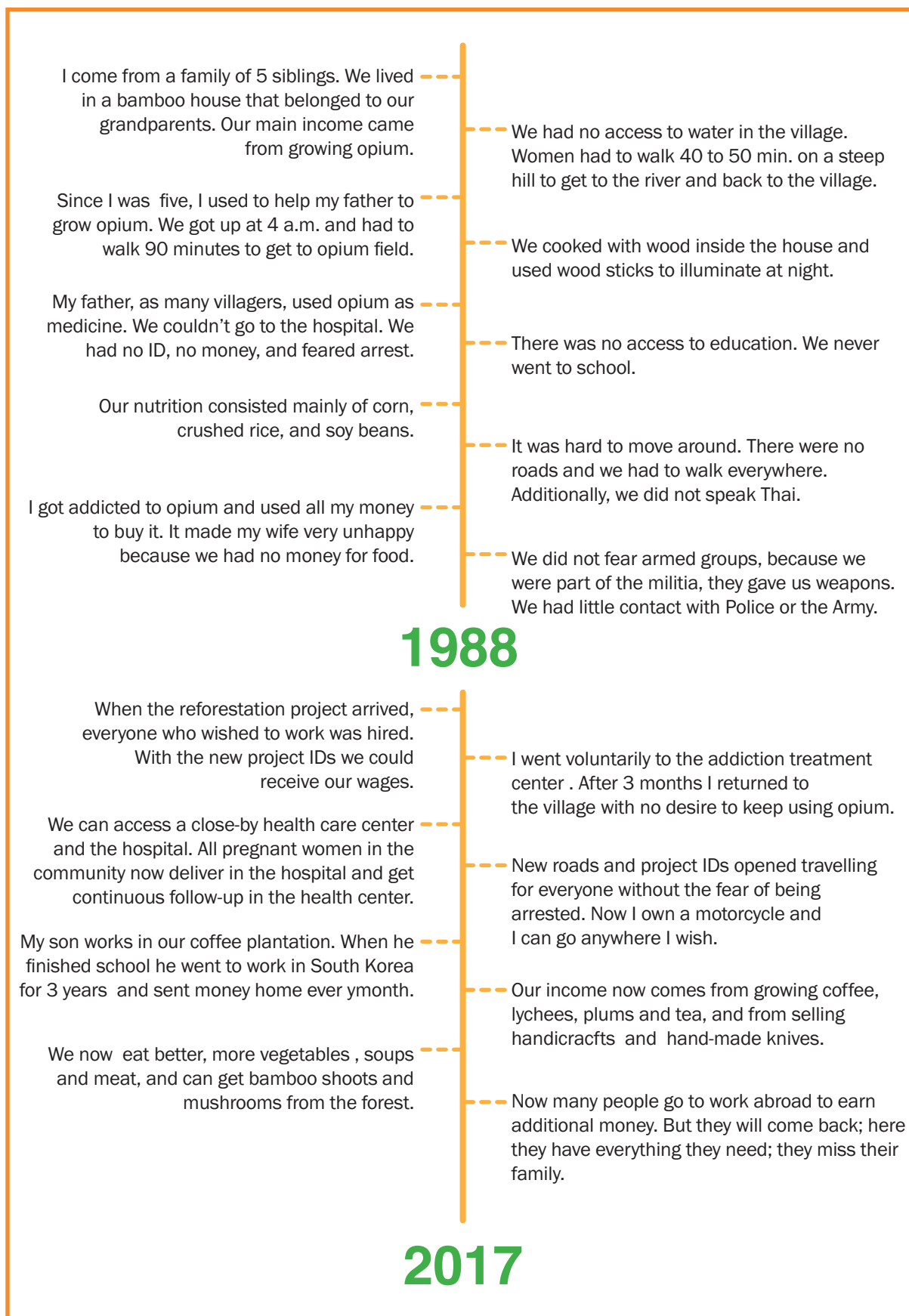


### Camnan's household savings & debt



### Camnan's house improvements





## The story of Aorawan Sophonaumnuaykit, textile factory worker (II)

Aorawan and her husband were allocated some land when the Project started. They got pomelo and tangerine seeds for the plantation, which allowed for better nutrition in the family. Because they felt that the income from coffee was less regular, Aorawan looked for another job and started to work in the textile cottage factory in the quality control department. “The day I started working in the factory I wanted to cry: I cannot read nor write and I did not understand the instructions from my supervisor. But I needed the job to send my children to school. I finally managed to learn about the quality control process.”

Her husband still takes care of the land. To get additional income, she does some weaving at home with her children and sells the pieces to the factory.

Her work schedule now “allows me to participate in community festivals or in relatives’ weddings. I also have a 10-day vacation from work every year. It is much less tough than when I lived with my in-laws.”

“Our health clinic is closer, for primary health care.” For additional hospital level attention, she has to travel 15 km by bus. “Our social insurance costs 600 baht/year and includes dental care.” She feels that the government has an increased presence in the area, and additional services are being created.

### Aorawan Sophonaumnuaykit

- 48 years old
- Married, 4 children.
- Quality control worker at the Doi Tung textile factory
- Pha Bue Village

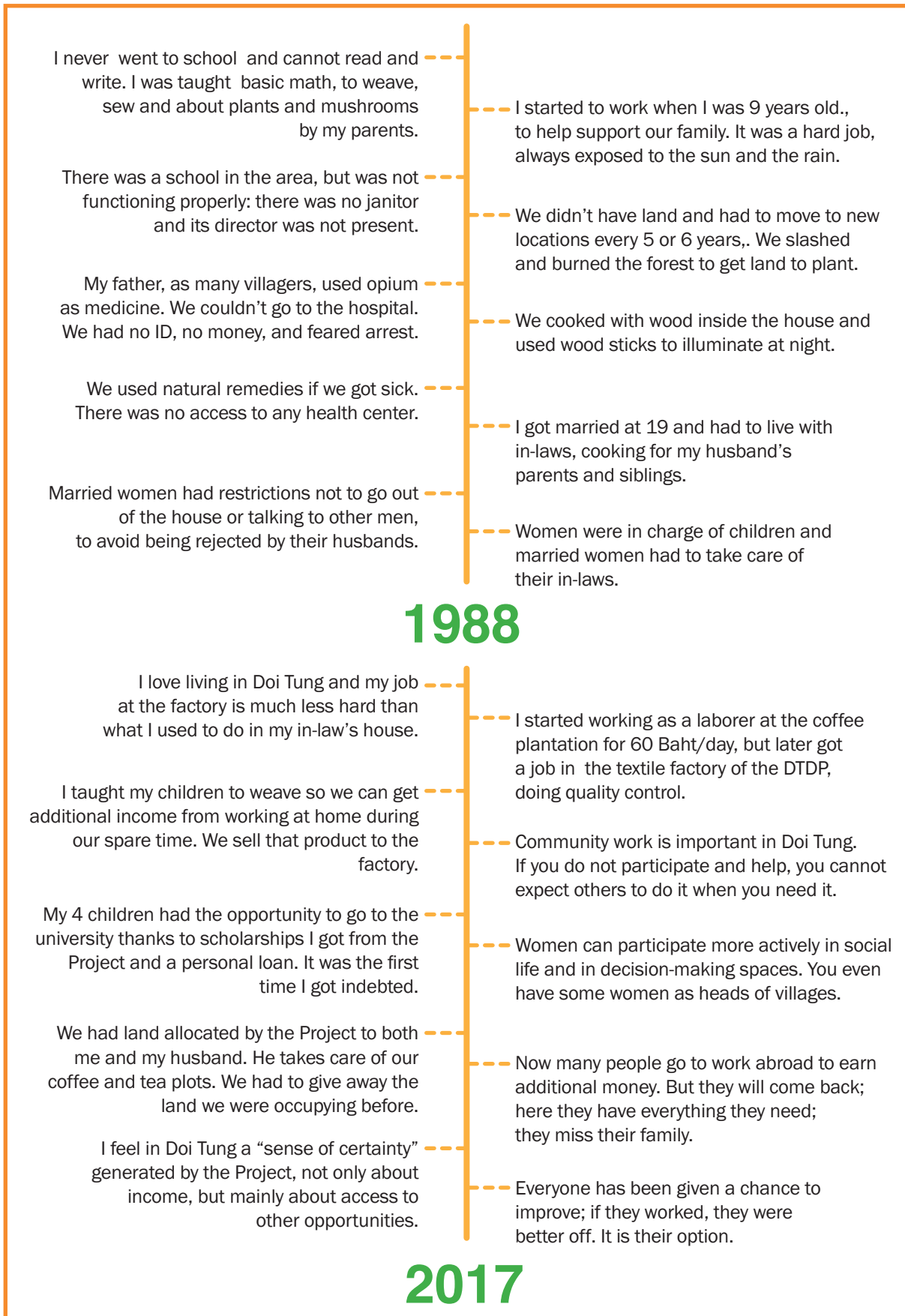


“The day I started working in the factory I wanted to cry: I do not read or write and did not understand the instructions from my supervisor; but I needed the job to send my children to school. I could finally manage it and learn about the quality control process.”

“I feel most proud about my children having education”.

“Money has no real owner. It goes from hand to hand. It is important to be happy with what you have.”

Sustainable and resilient paths of affirmative transformation: the Doi Tung Development Project case



“I feel that women now have more possibilities. We can participate more actively in social life and in decision-making bodies. In Doi Tung, you can find some female heads of villages.” She believes that, “women pay more attention to detail than men, they put their hearts in the job. Still, men can advance more easily while women are burdened with children.” In her case, the factory offers childcare for children who are between three months and three years old.






But for Aorawan, one of the most important elements that the DTDP brought to her and her children’s life is education. She tries to send children on field trips to get new experiences. “I feel most proud about my children having an education. I do not care about money. Money has no real owner, it goes from hand to hand. It is important to be happy with what you have. My happiest moment was when I learned that the school at the village would expand from grade 9 to 12, so my children could attend. In my life, I did not have the opportunity to go to school. My leisure time is spent weaving to generate additional income for my family. My children have access to education and the opportunity to learn many things. I have also been going to all the school meetings; I like to be involved in my children’s lives.”

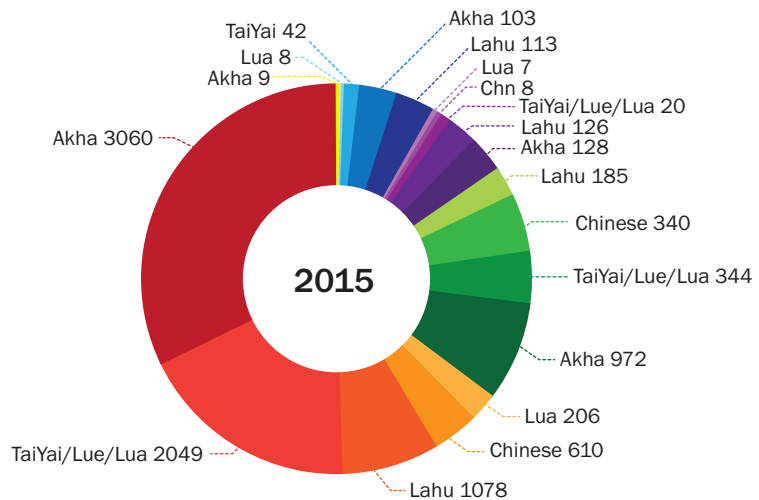
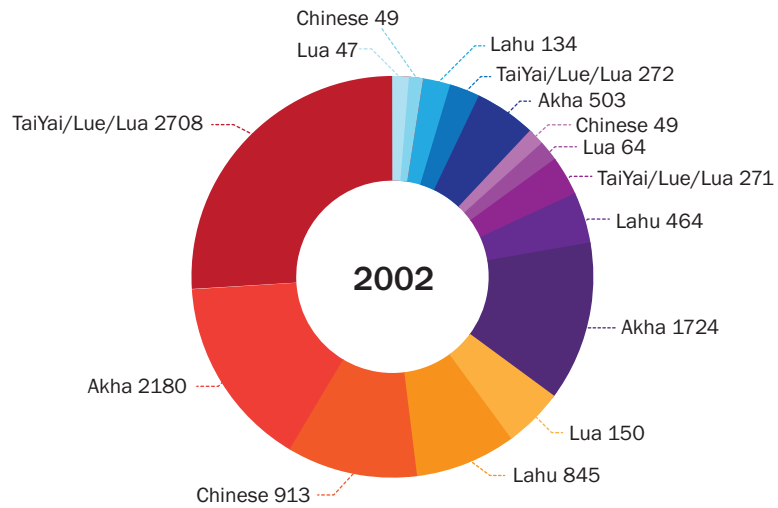
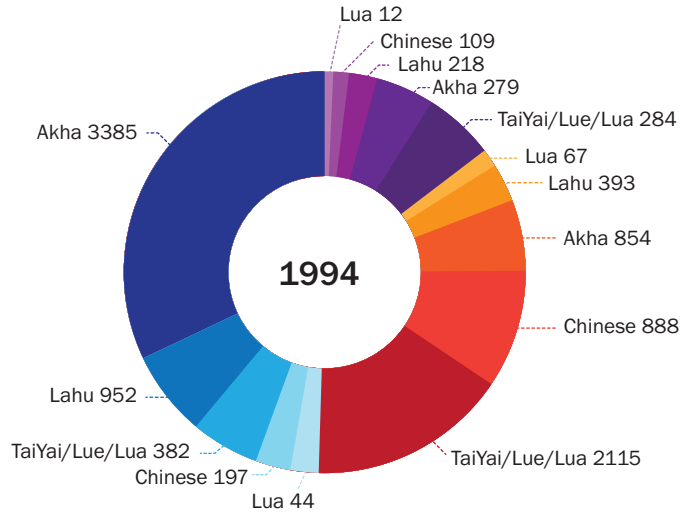
The DTDP provided scholarships to send her children to school and university. “My children are diligent. If they didn’t work hard and failed university exams, their scholarships would be gone.” She took out a loan and got into debt for the first time in her life to make this dream a reality. “Being in debt for sending my children to school is better than having no knowledge.”

Her oldest daughter studied to be a teacher and is now working in the Montessori School in Doi Tung. One of her sons studied in the Agriculture College in Nan and has been part of the MFLF field team in the MFLF’s development project in Myanmar. He is currently attending university in Chiang Rai and has started his own business selling ice. Her younger daughter studied management, was an intern at the DTDP, and now works for a logistics import-export firm in Bangkok. She wants to return to Doi Tung after getting some work experience. Her youngest son is still studying Health Care at Phayao University.

“I feel in Doi Tung a sense of certainty generated by the project, not only about income, but mainly about access to other opportunities. Everyone has been given a chance to improve; if they work, they are better off. It is their option.”

Poverty and vulnerability by income distribution in Doi Tung

-  EXTREME POVERTY  
UNDER USD 1.90 PERSON/DAY
-  POVERTY  
USD 1.90-2.33 PERSON/DAY
-  LOWER MIDDLE INCOME  
USD 2.33-10.00 PERSON/DAY
-  MIDDLE CLASS  
USD 10.00-50.00 PERSON/DAY
-  OTHER  
OVER USD 50.00 PERSON/DAY



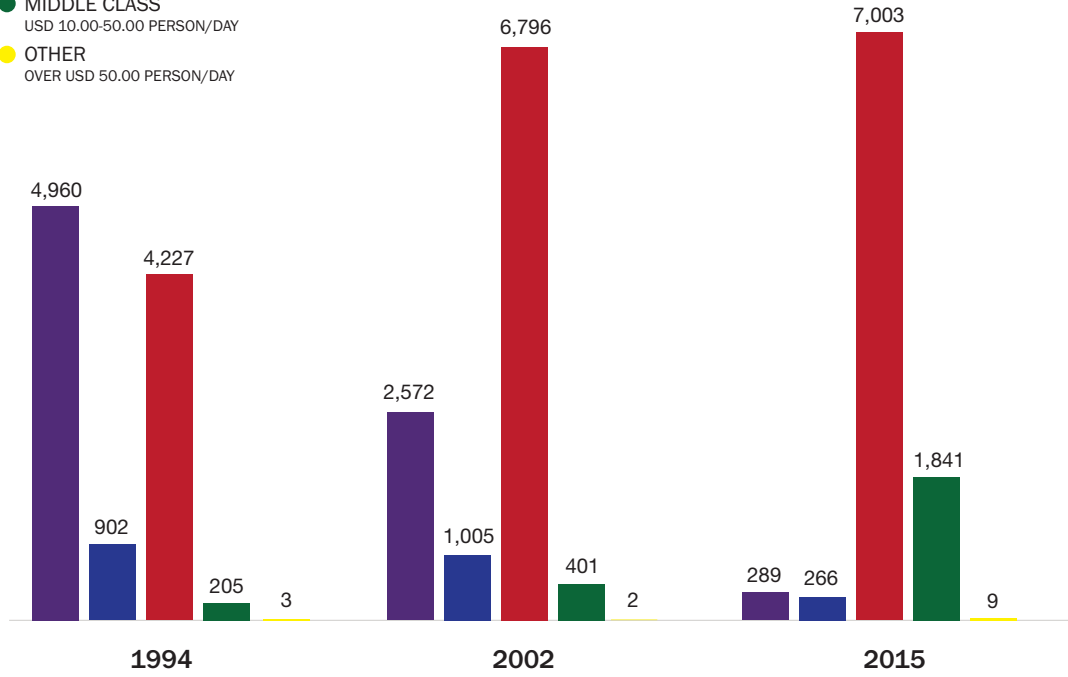
**Remark :** Income measurement is only of cash income, not including food crops and other resources the community may have access to which contributes to their livelihood without translating directly into cash.



### Evolution of per capita income categories in Doi Tung

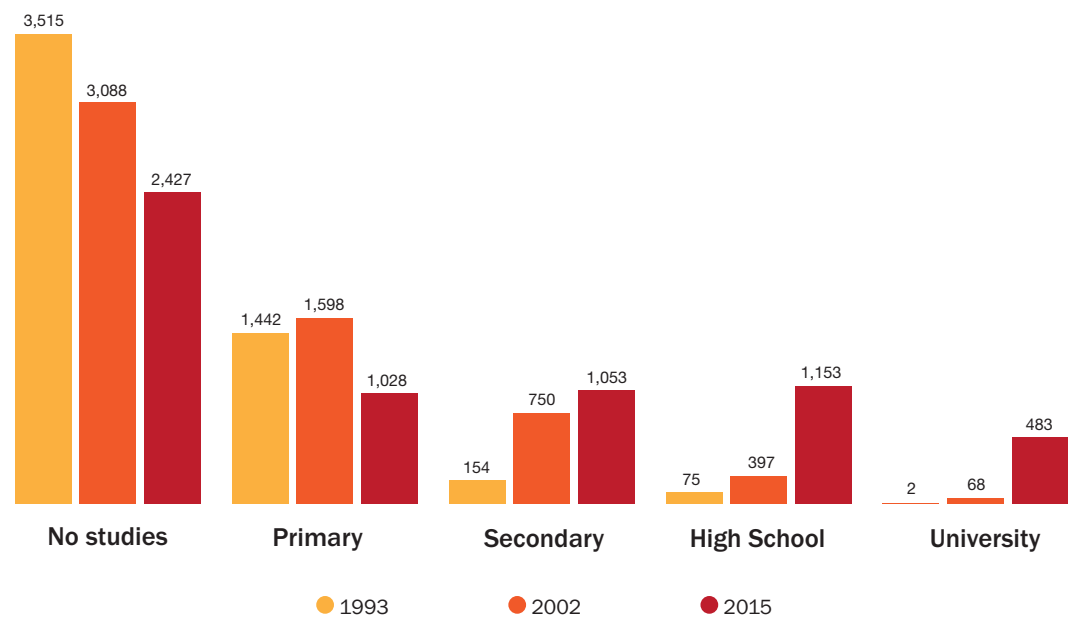
1994-2015

- EXTREME POVERTY  
UNDER USD 1.90 PERSON/DAY
- POVERTY  
USD 1.90-2.33 PERSON/DAY
- LOWER MIDDLE INCOME  
USD 2.33-10.00 PERSON/DAY
- MIDDLE CLASS  
USD 10.00-50.00 PERSON/DAY
- OTHER  
OVER USD 50.00 PERSON/DAY



### Students per educational level

1993-2015



## Tassanii Sophonaumnuaykit, Montessori school teacher

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Aorawan lives with her mother and eldest daughter Tassanii, who is 27 years old and unmarried.

Tassanii went to the elementary school in her village and could only study until grade 9; there was no high school in the district and her family could not afford the cost of transportation to the closest high school. She was thinking of working in the factory with her mother but the expansion of the local school to high school level allowed her to continue. A scholarship from the DTDP allowed her to go to Chiang Rai University to study at the teacher's training college. "Almost everyone now has the opportunity to go to university, with educational loans and scholarships, but mainly with individual hard work. Some families have money to send children to university, but they do not want to study," Tassanii said.

"In the past 10 years, our family has enough to live comfortably, and mother doesn't have to worry about her children anymore. My family is happy in Doi Tung, and the DTDP has helped to shape what we are now. But not all family members will stay. I have a younger sister enjoying opportunities outside. That will depend on each individual."

The DTDP started experimenting with alternative approaches to education to improve its quality. Tassanii was able to join the Montessori school being piloted in Doi Tung. She is responsible for a class of nine to 10 year-olds.

"I spend 80% of my time at school; I love my job." She was inspired by her own teachers "to be an educator, to take care of students, to take them on school trips, to help them to study outside." She also puts a lot of emphasis on a teacher's continuous education, to be able to perform in a changing world.

"In Doi Tung I do not feel any kind of gender or ethnic discrimination. With better health and education we can freely express our opinions. Of course, this has affected relationships between men and women, because women's rights have increased and will continue to increase in the future. We now have equal access to jobs and to do certain tasks. Our cultural integrity is a core part of the curriculum. All students learn about other ethnic groups through cultural performances or cuisine. The new generation is multilingual. Many speak Akha, Chinese and Thai."



Tassanii, at her school

## 2. Power with

The accumulation of collective power, through organization, mobilization, participation, solidarity and joint action has been a common character in the Doi Tung development process. Reforestation efforts, community environmental or infrastructure volunteer work in the villages, environmental protection of forests from fires and additional joint action, like the participation in numerous community groups, has allowed the communities to assume the responsibility of their own development. The multi-ethnic and multilingual reality of Doi Tung has not been an obstacle to this joint action.

### Rachapol Wisetpeimporn, DTDP Social Department staff

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Of Akha origin, Rachapol and his family have lived in Doi Tung for a long time. When the project started he was 14, and never thought at that moment how his life would be changed. He entered vocational training related to farming activities, and then joined a boarding school and finished 12<sup>th</sup> grade at age 21, just after getting married. He also got involved in reforestation efforts of the watershed forest, like some of his other siblings. They had to clear the land and make holes for the new trees. Rachapol also worked as an interpreter to communicate with villagers in their local languages.

He is presently in charge of coordination between the DTDP and the 29 villages. Rachapol participates in community meetings, reporting on project developments. Jariya, his wife is a teacher at Child Care Centre under the management of the SAO.

“Villagers take care of the forest, preventing and fighting forest fires. They rotate in fire-watching shifts.” They know the importance of the forest and of the need to protect it together. Recent experiences kept them alert: “We had three serious fires in the last 10 years in Doi Tung, each covering an area of 1,000 rai (160 hectares). It took around three days to control them.”



“Each village has rules on forest use, and a strict zoning of watershed forest, sustenance forest, where they can get wood, mushrooms, bamboo and other forest products, and economic forest. For cutting a single tree, the village committee has to give its approval on condition that the villager has to plant the tree back. Villages also have water management rules: a village water committee looks after the water system, leakages, and maintenance issues. They use the village fund to repair the system from the river or the weir to the village. For the pipelines from the village tank to individual households, groups of household using the same pipeline are responsible. The weir is cleaned four times a year by the community, and the work is financed by the village fund. They also have development activities in their villages such as garbage management and cleaning of the community hall funded by the government’s “Village Fund Project.” This government fund also gives loans to villagers at an interest rate around 3 - 5% per year, with a maximum of 30,000 baht per individual or 75,000 baht per household depending on rules and regulations set by each village themselves.”

### The story of Mayura Silawongsakonkun, deputy head of village (II)

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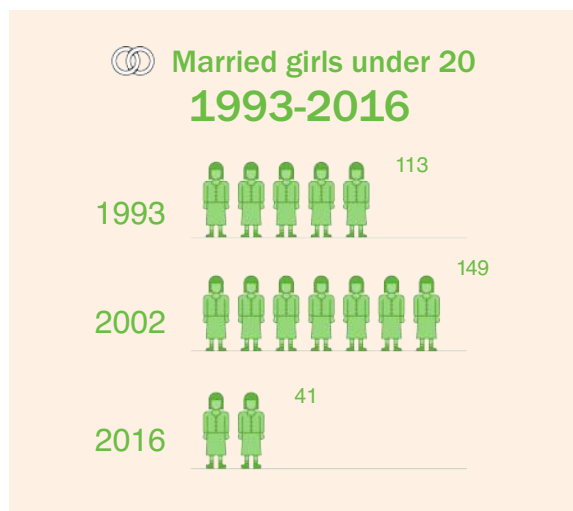
Mayura is very aware that opportunities for women in Doi Tung opened up along with education. She got involved in community work because she had the chance to be educated when the DTDP arrived. She had the opportunity to get involved as deputy head of her village because of her experience in community mobilization and volunteering. “We need more women participating in community development, as community leaders.” She contends that, sometimes, women have much more experience in the area than men from experience gained from participation in women’s groups in her village or from coordination with other stakeholders. She believes that women also use empathy and friendliness as a way to better connect

with people. “Women are more detail-orient than men, they pay more attention. These days, more members of the SAO and volunteers in the village are women”.



At home, all decisions are made jointly with her husband. “He helps with housework and loves cooking; sometimes he does the laundry.” While the traditional gender roles are changing especially for the new generations, men still tend to work mainly in the fields while women do handicrafts and housework. “In general, women work longer hours than men,” Mayura said.

Gender inequality has not disappeared, but is slowly being challenged and fading. “Now things are more or less equal for men and women. If a woman has the capacity and performs well, the community recognizes her. In many households, women hold the same responsibility as men, even getting a higher income.” Increased livelihood options and income sources, along with exposure to the outside world, are producing more empowered and independent women, able to earn their living with their own means, without depending on men. Girls now marry later in life: “I married at 17; my daughter at 24; and in the latest wedding at the village, the bride was 30.” Divorce is also more common: “If they receive no support from men, what is the point of putting up and staying with them?”



Some things are easier now for women than before. The SAO has made child care available in all villages from Monday to Saturday, including transportation. It allows parents to work free of worries. Still, “many children are being raised by grandmothers.”

Another improvement is access to women’s health care. Other than regular visits and follow up at the clinics, health care teams are sent to the villages to reach those women that shy away. This system was very effective when HIV/AIDS started to appear, so people were reached and received treatment and information on safe sex.

Mayura feels that men do not object to women in powerful positions but they do not open up many opportunities for women either. “Being a woman community leader in a man’s world is challenging; we need to work harder, do it on our own. I had to learn to drive a car so I did not have to rely on anyone to go to meetings.” She tries to push young women to actively engage in community activities, and she also advises them to get real hands-on knowledge. “Younger women cannot expect to be newly graduated and become a leader. You need experience and work, even as a volunteer, to know the community.” However, she is not interested in being head of the village and prefers to play a supporting role, staying behind the scenes and leaving the younger generation to lead. “Maybe, in the future, my daughter or granddaughters will want to lead. I opened up the way.”

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**Amporn Lorsa (Na) and Wiphawadi Phimonthitikun (Chris), DTDP Staff**

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After graduating from 6th grade, Na's parents wanted to marry her off according to Akha tradition. The school Principal talked to them, and helped her get a scholarship to finish secondary school. Na rode on the back of the motorcycle with her teacher to get to school. That saved her from a very different fate. "Parents still want their children to do whatever they did in life, be farmers," Na said. After she graduated from university, and after being on her own, her parents let her decide her own future. Now 27, she thinks that, with more educational and travel opportunities for youth, the world is open to explore. "Traditionally you had to marry young, at 12 years old, mostly through an arranged marriage." Her parents married each other when they were 14. "Now, dating goes for three years before marrying, but I still know a few couples of my generation who got married early."

Chris was also raised within Akha culture, she is 23 now and, even today, she was told by someone at the village: "You have to find someone to marry." People usually do not stay together without being married. The family would criticize them saying that they would get too old to marry later and the grandparents won't be able to take care of the children. She also added that "my parents want me to stay with them but, if I find a suitable partner, I may live somewhere else. Now a woman can earn enough income to live on her own and take care of her family. My family took care of me and I want to take care of them, to make them happy."

Na would like to get married, but not before 30. "Before, people wanted lots of children to work in the fields. Now, they do not want many; they cannot afford to raise them." Birth control options are available at the health centers, even for teenage girls, but many shy away. "You rarely see a girl buying condoms, and boys do not want to use condoms. The kind of sex education they get at school, in the health education curriculum, is still very theoretical, as with the rest of Thailand. Parents do not teach anything. It remains a taboo, even among young people. Learning about sex is still a self-taught process. Friends are the main source of information. In Akha communities, hugging or holding hands is not allowed in public. There have been a few cases of teen pregnancies, usually solved through marriage, though sometimes the girl raising the child on her own. In most cases there is no explicit support from the community, other than feeling sorry for the girl or encouraging the father to pay for support."

Nevertheless, they believe community cohesion is strong. “There are rules and they are enforced. Community members know each other, but families are less strict than before, more open to the world. Young people look up to the older generation and are grateful for the life they have now. The older generation do not have much trust in young people, and think that experience is more important than knowledge, not opening many opportunities on village committees. At the same time, young people are mostly interested in working and making a career, not in being community leaders. For those that want to participate, the community usually does not give them opportunities. This discourages participation, said Chris.”

For their generation, religion is less important. They also acknowledge that they are losing some of their traditions and identity. “The swing ceremony (or Yehkuja, one of the most important annual festivals for the Akha usually performed in late-August before planting the new crops) has almost disappeared. No one wants to organize it. I saw it last time when I was 12 years old”, said Chris.

Regarding the future, many young people in Doi Tung have a strong entrepreneurial mind. They want to stay home and be near their families while generating income. “Young people in the area usually think of opening a small restaurant or café, or getting their own brand of coffee or tea.” Many try to make money first, often working overseas, and then choose to come home later. Even people with higher education and good grades choose to go abroad to work in agriculture or in a factory to earn money. “Then they come back and open a business or invest in their house. It is a cycle”, said Na.

“We would love to have better foreign language education in Doi Tung, especially English, to be better prepared to go out into the world. Working at the Project pays enough to live, but it is difficult to save. If you want to be an entrepreneur, you need savings and salary is not enough.” Both of them dream of having their own business: Na a café at the city center and Chris a restaurant at her house in the village. “I would like to open a restaurant, but not with any partners. My family is the perfect partner. If it’s not my family, I would feel like an employee, not like the owner.”

According to them, inequality is not very pronounced. Some have more, some less, but it does not affect the sense of equality in the community. Even without money, families have access to many things and the DTDP offered many opportunities. But both Chris and Na agree: “our whole society is becoming greedier and more competitive. Now everything is about income, about whatever job pays more. People want to buy goods that make their lives more comfortable. Happiness is not conceived without money, even for elders.” On the other hand, they think that money allows you to stay with family and loved ones. “Many people go out to work and get money to get a better house so the family can live more comfortably. If parents are sick, you also need money. So money is important as a tool to get what you want; whether education, medical bills or luxurious things, but it is not the most important thing.”

### 3. Power to

Rachapol<sup>46</sup> defines it very clearly. For him, empowerment “is the capacity of communities to look after the forest and to create rules and regulations to govern themselves. It depends now on each community’s capacity and conditions”. This type of empowerment has to do with making effective choices, having the capability to decide actions and the capacity to carry them out. It is also very connected with the previous types of empowerment. Villages in Doi Tung, individually and jointly, have developed, along with the local government administrations, a participatory and democratic decision-making system, a body of rules and decisions to govern life within their communities, as well as sufficient management capacity to take over the operation of sustainable development in Doi Tung.

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46 Interview with Rachapol Wisetpeimporn, Social Department Liaison DTDP, May 29th, 2017, DTDP Café at Doi Tung.

## Jintana Nakwichet, Head of Village

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Jintana is very proud of her community, of the quality of life they enjoy today, of the way “people smile and talk nicely to each other”, of their good health, and of the level of participation in community meetings.

She is the daughter of a former tribal militia member from Myanmar, and was raised for a few years by one of the teachers of a child care centre in Mae Sai, Thailand’s border district. She had the chance there to get a primary education and a Thai ID before returning to stay with her parents in Doi Tung, where they settled. Jintana couldn’t go back to school because she had to help in the family shop, but she became occupied with the youth committee. At 19 she got married and had her first child at 20.

Jintana is the oldest village head in the Doi Tung area, and the only female village head of 29 villages, although many are increasingly occupying deputy head roles. She was recently recognized with a good governance award at the provincial level, which was determined by issues like development facilitation, security, village planning, economic development, health care, education and culture.



All of this has earned her the respect of fellow male community leaders. They call her to give her a ride to meetings up the hill, and they get along well. “Older people still think that men should be leading, quoting the Thai proverb: ‘Men are the front legs of the elephant, women are the back legs.’ But times have changed and more women are stepping up and have a more active role on development.” The new generation accepts this as natural, without resistance. They have already been out into the world, they have already experienced it at school.

Jintana is result-oriented. “I have a list of things, a clear plan of what I want to get done in my time in office.” She also comes from a “fine school”, having worked for many years as a development volunteer for the DTDP. “People are confident that I can get things done.”

Her actions reflect her political and management moral creed that, she says, “every decision-maker should follow.”

1. Responsibility, by delivering results and keeping your promises
2. Putting heart and soul in the work, so you do not get discouraged.
3. Sacrifice for your village, 24 hours a day and seven days a week
4. Logical reasoning behind every action, after listening to all parties involved, being able to explain all decisions
5. Transparency, especially in the managing of public funds and budget, and communicating progress and problems to the community
6. Efficiency, being able to deliver tangible benefits for the community.

More than 30 people in the village now have finished university degrees, a number that gradually increased since the DTDP started scholarships program. Many of the graduates, 50% of whom are women, work for the DTDP as accountants, doctors, dentists, and teachers. Others have opened businesses and restaurants, or manage coffee and tea plantations. “It is a great return of the educational investment.” She is also trying to involve younger people in the village committee. “I plan to bring them to participate in community activities so they get engaged. But in order to excel, they need experience; they are not ready yet. It is a life cycle issue. To become the leader of the community, you need to give all your time and no time is left when you are young, trying to build a family or stabilizing a business.”

## Aphiwat Oakkharaphonmetha, Head of Village

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Aphiwat, 41 years old, one of the youngest village heads in Doi Tung and also an ex-development volunteer of the DTDP, is trying to invigorate sustainable development in Huay Nam Rin village, a place with a quite different story from the rest of Doi Tung. It sits at the bottom of the hills on the outskirts of the border city of Mae Sai. It has no land allocated for agriculture because the soil is rocky, mostly forest. People usually work as employees in different businesses in Mae Sai. Most of the neighbors settled in the village during the 70's, after being displaced from Mae Sai because of their opium addiction problems. The influential business community in the city offered them a settlement in this village in exchange for money, effectively ghettoizing them because of drug addiction. That is why it is also the most diverse village in Doi Tung, with people from eight ethnic groups living in it. "All the households at the time had addiction problems, but that changed with the arrival of the DTDP," Aphiwat said.



Drug Rehabilitation was offered to everyone and people received vocational training and jobs in the Project. Because of the village's history of drug addiction, the village decided to implement very strict village rules on drug use and trafficking. "Families are obliged to report its members that are involved with drugs to the village committee. A fine of 3,500 baht is imposed on those using drugs. After the third fine, the individual is expelled from the village. In the case of drug trafficking, there are no warnings. They are expelled immediately and their property is auctioned."

The political and participatory system in the village is the same as in the rest of Doi Tung. The village heads are chosen for five years by every villager over 18 who holds a Thai ID. Their salary is paid directly by the government. They hold assembly meetings every month; each household has the obligation to send at least one member. If they do not come, they have to pay a fine of 100 baht or perform community service.

Aphiwat thinks that his community is quite united. "Every household helps organize weddings and religious festivals where everyone participates. The younger generation, however, do not have the same interest in the community. We tried to organize activities for them to get interested in the village, like training on technology or environmental issues, like a youth greenhouse project."

The village heads articulates his progress with the different administrations and informs the community. Once a month, he participates in meetings with SAO officers to deal with common issues like road and other infrastructure repair, village boundaries, or missing people. His role includes acting as a conflict mediator, mainly regarding family disputes or land boundaries. Along with the Village Committee, he is also responsible for community mobilization for specific projects. Each household is accountable for sending at least one member to do community work. They also draft annual village development plans which is approved by the Village Committee and sent to SAO. He feels the weight of being in this position: "The Doi Tung Development Project gave me concepts and a sense of responsibility, inspired me to become head of my village. My responsibility is showing and leading by example."



## Weerachit Waranchitkun, President of the Sub-District Administrative Organization (SAO)

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The same spirit of responsibility and equity that inspires most villagers participating in Village Committees affirms Weerachit, acting President of the SAO until the next election. “Village committees’ representatives take joint decisions at sub-district level by consensus and do not stick to a mathematical distribution of funds among villages. This is very important because there is a holistic view and it allows the villages to confront common problems and more ambitious projects together.” Nevertheless, he added, “this is only possible due to a very transparent accountability regarding management, budget spending, monitoring progress and reporting of development results and impact for the community to Village Committees and other stakeholders”.

Weerachit is a living example of Doi Tung’s transformation. The son of a former supplier of Khun Sa’s Army, his family was engaged in marijuana production and other drugs and weapons trafficking when the Project started. “The project took three years to generate enough income for villagers,” he said. “Development takes time, it varies from family to family, and the transition from illicit economy is a different story in each case”.



“Illegal activities faded due to continuous presence of the authorities and development actors. People slowly joined the Project, as my family did when the Project arrived; I participated as volunteer”. He went to school in Mae Chan district nearby until 9<sup>th</sup> grade before the Project arrived. Because he could read and write, he joined the Project as a volunteer, took over the house (his father died one year before the Project started) and learned Thai.

He expressed that the Project was very successful in part due to the work of volunteers, acting as liaisons between the DTDP and the villagers. “In 1988, nobody believed that the Project would benefit the people; the government had no presence in the area.” Volunteers lived in villages and knew about needs and problems, and connected the Project with the people. They also collected detailed data from the community since the beginning of the Project and every year through the household surveys.” Along with the construction of infrastructure, “it helped the Project show improvements, and people became confident.” But volunteers also helped the Doi Tung team learn important field lessons from the villages.

He quit the DTDP development volunteer to work as a coordinator for the ID - citizenship process with government officials. Working in this process helped him gain more trust from villagers, and he attributes his success in the last election to this fact.

The Sub-district Administrative Organization (SAO), which is responsible for rural areas, was created by the Thai government as part of the decentralization process in 1999. Initially, Weerachit did not want to join, but the community asked him and he was elected representative of his village as well as deputy

representative to the Mae Fah Luang sub-district. The position is a four-year term. His position is now elected by the whole community. This is his second term as president. “I asked the village heads many times to listen and learn from others. If you think that you are right all the time and do not listen to others, you will not be able to solve the problems of the community. I am not here to act like a boss, but to be a problem-solver.”

According to his view, one of the most important difficulties at the sub district level is the existence of different rules and regulations in different bureaucracies, making it difficult to standardize data and resources due to diverging fiscal periods. In addition, local planning has to be aligned with the national 5-year plans and the longer 20-year plan, and with the SDGs.

The planning at the Sub-district level follows a 5-year cycle. These documents are coordinated with and have the participation of 19 village committees (Mae Fah Luang sub-district comprises of 19 villages), along with other government agencies (for example; agriculture, health, social development and irrigation department). The Village Committees decide on the priorities and on budget allocation for the 5-year plans and for annual plans. A discussion to prioritize 10 projects takes place within each village and then they hold a sub-district meeting with all villages to decide (by consensus) on sub-district priorities and on budget distribution.

The main objectives for Weerachit’s administration and the villages in the next years have to do with the development of community-based tourism through home-stays, and new tourist projects like a walking street, trekking options up the mountain, or planting of flowering trees along the roads to create attractions, as well as with improving the quality of education in area. These new initiatives have people’s benefit up front, stating very clearly what the people can get out of them.

Regarding budgets, Weerachit complains that the allocation of budget transfers from the Ministry of Interior for Sub-district Administrations in Thailand is the lowest among the different levels of sub-national administrations. It’s 3,000 baht/person for sub-district vs. 5,000 baht/person received by urban municipalities or 8,000 baht/person received by provinces. For him, transparency is important, something that the DTDP have been able to manage from the beginning. “For the management of ethnic diversity in Doi Tung, it is key to show equitable treatment of villages and communities, regardless of ethnicity, language, culture. I am Chinese, a minority in the area, but I have the trust of all the ethnic groups. The budget to support ethnic and religious traditions is distributed equally, without any bias. My advice to politicians and community leaders: whatever you say during the campaign, do it!!”

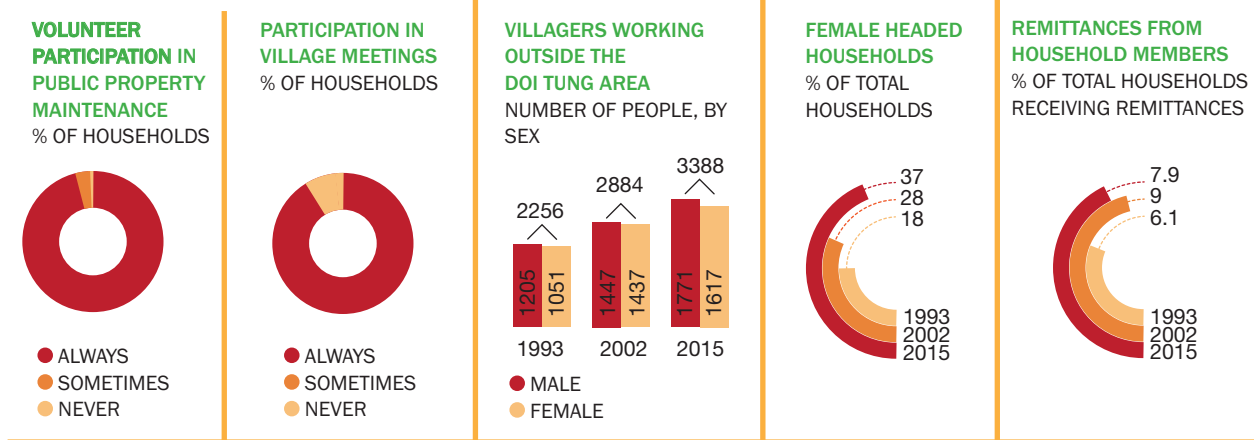
## THREE DECADES OF MULTIDIMENSIONAL TRANSFORMATION IN A GLIMPSE

*"Inequality is not only about income, but needs to focus on quality of life, on many dimensions. In some villages, people are richer, but poorer on health; in others, people have lower income, but live more comfortable lives".*

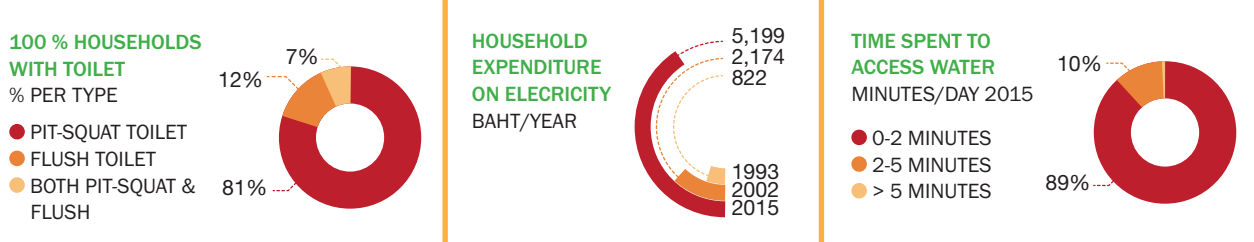
**Weerachit Waranchitkun, President of Sub-District Administration.**

Some specific details of the multidimensional transformation that happened in Doi Tung in the last thirty years are presented here. Like the 2030 Global Sustainable Development Agenda, it is an integrated and indivisible process that has balanced the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental.

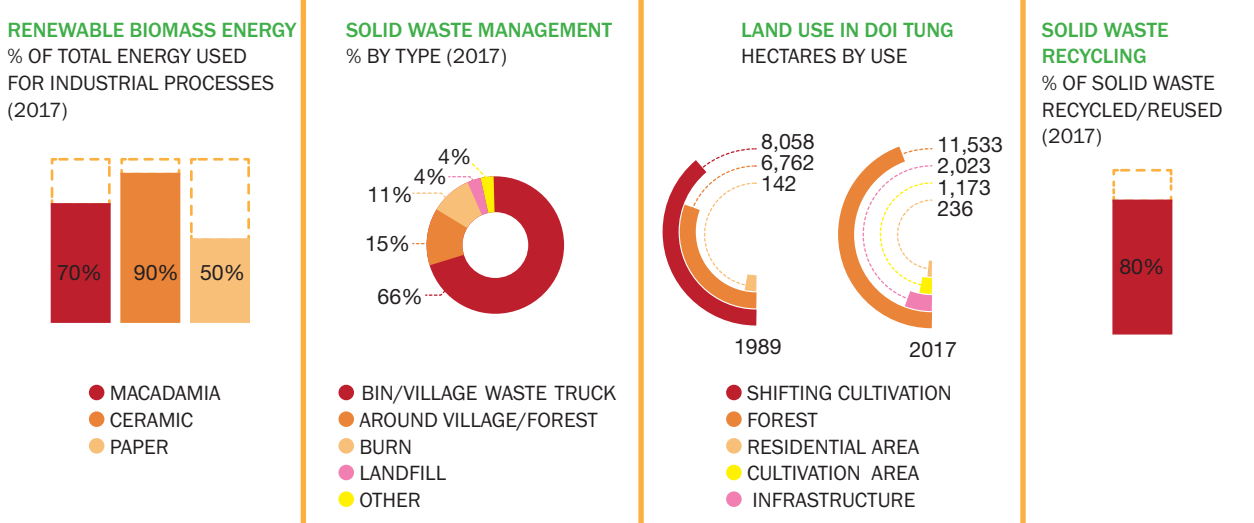
### SOCIETY & PARTICIPATION



### INFRASTRUCTURE



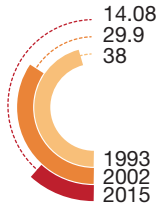
### ENVIRONMENT



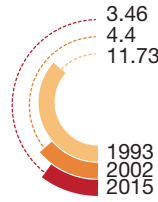
Sustainable and resilient paths of affirmative transformation: the Doi Tung Development Project case

LIVELIHOOD

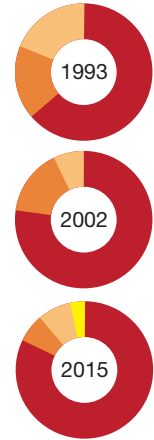
**HOUSEHOLD DEPENDENCY RATE**  
PERCENTAGE OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH A DEPENDENCY RATIO >1 (INCOME GENERATING VS. NON GENERATING MEMBERS)



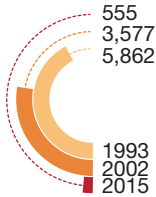
**INCOME INEQUALITY BY VILLAGE**  
RATIO BETWEEN VILLAGE WITH HIGHEST AND LOWEST AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INCOME (1988-2002-2016)



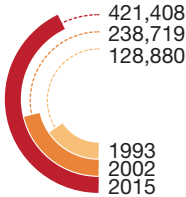
**MAIN INCOME SOURCES**  
RELATIVE WEIGHT OF MAIN INCOME SOURCES FOR HOUSEHOLDS



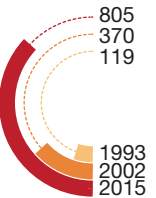
**POVERTY INCIDENCE**  
NUMBER OF PEOPLE WITH INCOME UNDER USD 2.33/DAY



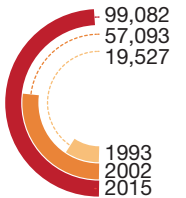
**AVERAGE VALUE OF HOUSEHOLD ASSETS**  
BAHT



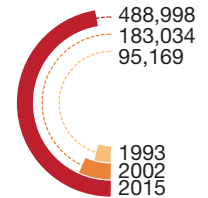
**PER CAPITA HOUSEHOLD ASSETS GROWTH**  
NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS WITH ASSETS/PER CAPITA VALUE OVER 50,000 BAHT



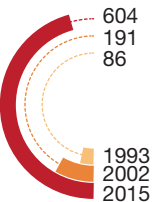
**AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD SAVINGS**  
BAHT/YEAR



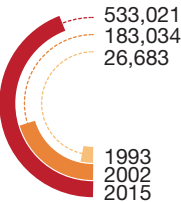
**AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES**  
BAHT/YEAR



**TOTAL INCOME GENERATED BY FAMILY MEMBERS WORKING OUTSIDE**  
MILLION BAHT

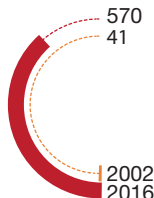


**AVERAGE INCOME PER HOUSEHOLD**  
BAHT/YEAR (1988-2002-2016)



HEALTH & SANITATION

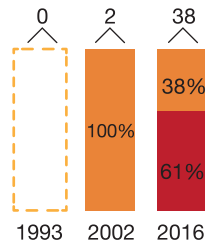
**ELDERLY, DISABILITY & HIV/AIDS ALLOWANCE**  
NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING SUPPORT (2002-2016)



EDUCATION

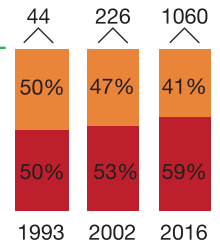
**UNIVERSITY STUDENTS & GRADUATES**  
NUMBER OF STUDENTS/GRADUATES (1993-2002-2016)

● MALE ● FEMALE

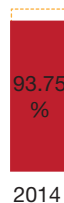


**HIGH SCHOOL OR VOCATIONAL DIPLOMAS**  
NUMBER OF HOLDERS (1993-2002-2016)

● MALE ● FEMALE

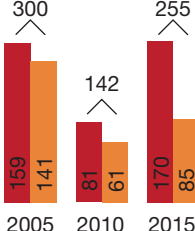


**COVERAGE OF VACCINES FOR 5 YEAR-OLD CHILDREN**  
% OF 5 YEAR-OLD CHILDREN FULLY VACCINATED (2014)

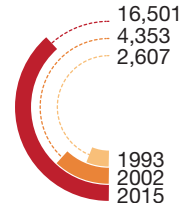


**SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED**  
TOTAL NUMBER OF SCHOLARSHIPS (2005-2010-2015)

● MALE ● FEMALE



**AVERAGE HOUSEHOLD INVESTMENT ON EDUCATION**  
BAHT/YEAR



# 03

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**DOI TUNG AND THE 2030  
AGENDA: EMBRACING  
WIDER COMPLEXITY AND  
MULTI-DIMENSIONALITY  
IN AN INTEGRATED AND  
INDIVISIBLE AGENDA.**

**“ We resolve, between now and 2030, to end poverty and hunger everywhere; to combat inequalities within and among countries; to build peaceful, just and inclusive societies; to protect human rights and promote gender equality and the empowerment of women and girls; and to ensure the lasting protection of the planet and its natural resources. We resolve also to create conditions for sustainable, inclusive and sustained economic growth, shared prosperity and decent work for all, taking into account different levels of national development and capacities. ”**

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development



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

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 2030 Global Sustainable Agenda. Many of Doi Tung's results regarding the well-being of people and nature point into the direction that the Agenda has set for the next 13 years. The investment, effort and commitment that the MFLF and the Thai government are dedicating to scale up its model in order to reduce rural poverty, create rural development, and protect a stressed natural environment within the country moves Thailand in the right direction.

Doi Tung's visionary work, almost 3 decades old, has numerous elements within its conception and implementation that connect it to most of the characteristics of the 2030 global blueprint. It overlaps in the five pillars dedicated to People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace and Partnership. It also shares an ambitious and transformational vision. In Doi Tung's case that was established from the beginning through the leadership of the Princess Mother.

# 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.



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

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



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

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



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

Climate-sensitive technology, respectful of biodiversity and resilient.



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

Tackles water scarcity and pollution, land degradation and drought.



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

Promotes resilience and disaster risk reduction.



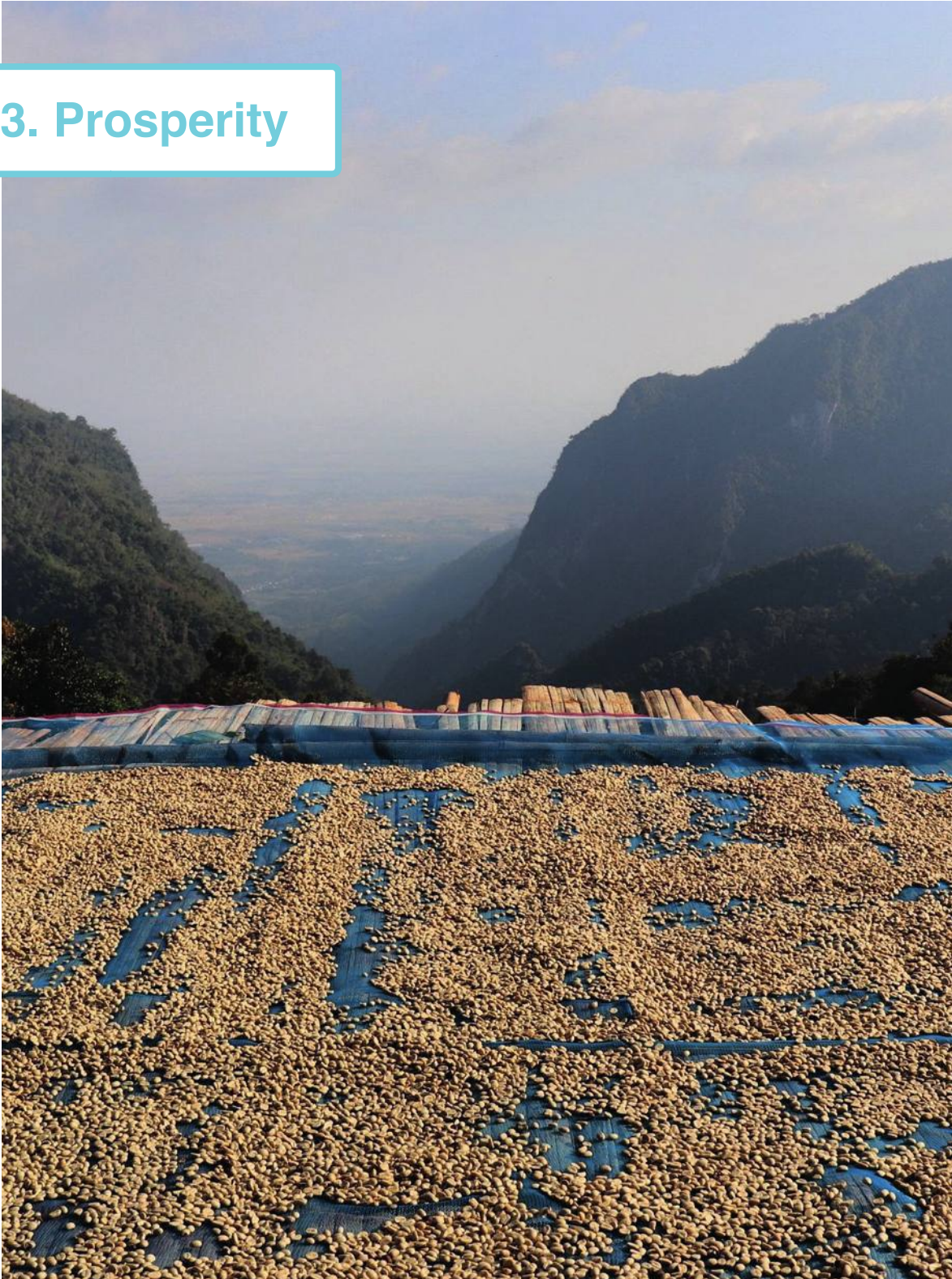
Communities developed plans and mechanisms to prevent and fight fires, floods and landslides.

Promotes sustainable tourism.



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.

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



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.

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



Income generating opportunities have allowed for people to have decent jobs and living conditions.

Build dynamic, sustainable, innovative and people-centered economies.

INDUSTRY, INNOVATION AND INFRASTRUCTURE



All economic activity in Doi Tung was developed to improve its people’s and forest’s wellbeing.

Promote youth employment.

1 NO POVERTY



Youth have obtained multiple job opportunities by increased access to education and training.

Promote women’s economic empowerment.

1 NO POVERTY



Job, education and childcare opportunities have allowed for major incorporation of women to work.

Eradicate forced labor and human trafficking and end child labor.

REDUCED INEQUALITIES



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.

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



A healthy forest has been the foundation of all economic activities developed in Doi Tung.

Increase productive capacities, productivity and productive employment.

SUSTAINABLE CITIES AND COMMUNITIES



Added-value chains have been developed in Doi Tung to increase productivity and stable income for people.

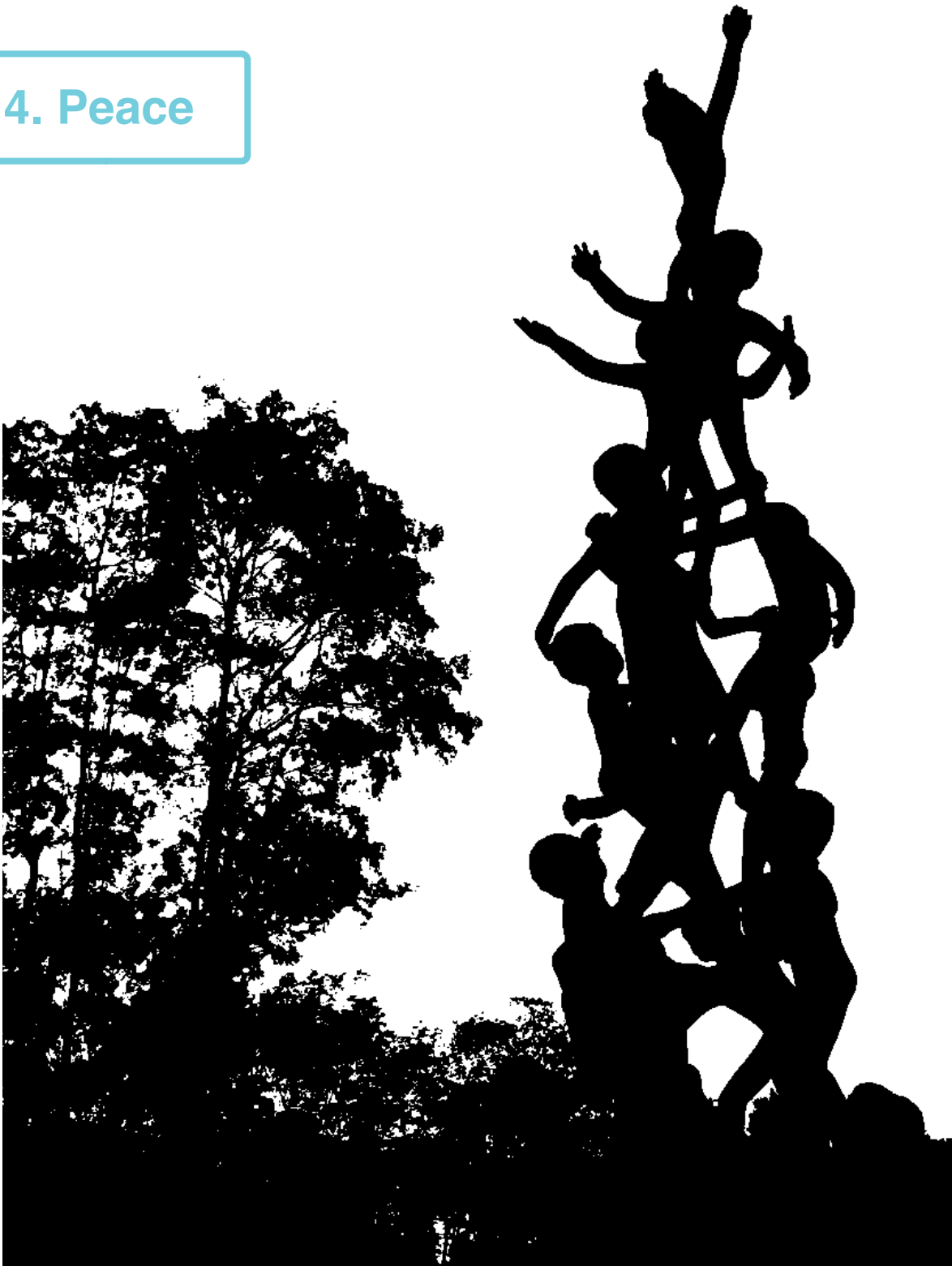
Promote financial inclusion.

DECENT WORK AND ECONOMIC GROWTH



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

Mobilize the means required through a revitalized Partnership for Sustainable Development.

PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



Public and private partners were mobilized and sensitized to make the long-term DTDG possible.

Participation of all stakeholders and all people, especially those with most needs.

PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



Integrated and coordinated a wide group of public agencies, private firms and all the villagers.

Comprehensive agenda with interlinkages and integrated nature of the SDGs.

PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



Articulated sustainability objectives in all the components of the project and corrected course for best results for people.

Need for different approaches depending on local circumstances and priorities.

PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



Specific context in Doi Tung required specific conditions regarding partnerships and sequencing interventions.

Quality, coverage and availability of data to ensure that no one is left behind.

PARTNERSHIPS  
FOR THE GOALS



Household surveys, natural resource survey and other tools have provided disaggregated data for monitoring and evaluation.

**04**

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**TOWARDS A  
BRIGHTER  
FUTURE**

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## Towards a brighter future

*“This is just the beginning; we have to continue working; there is no success.”*  
Princess Mother’s remarks on the success of the DTDP

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 has a clear memory of the hard work and years of sustained intervention it took to get free of depending 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 an 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.

“Before, people would do anything to participate and stay in the area. Now, it is more about getting additional comfort, some luxuries and getting higher education for their children. The new generation that received a higher education does not want to work in agriculture or in the factory.”<sup>47</sup> The process is very similar to rural areas anywhere else in Thailand or in other countries where the reduction of poverty, and access to health and education have raised expectations for youth. “We do not want to keep people here like animals in a zoo. Let them think about how to adjust. Let them go out. But we need to create incentives to draw educated people to Doi Tung. The idea of converting Doi Tung into a ‘Living University’ moves in that direction. Other factors also help, like the generation of strong local social, cultural, and political organizations, while maintaining local actors’ behavior within ethical parameters.”<sup>48</sup> “The challenge for the future is how to blend the influences of the outside world with the values of the community in Doi Tung. For example, if I pretend to live like a city dweller, the forest won’t be respected,<sup>49</sup>” said Weerachit.

New times come with new challenges. Access to land within Doi Tung has been limited due to its nature as a forest reserve, making inheritance processes more complex. The average age of people in Doi Tung is also getting higher due to improvements in health. There has been a reduction in the number of children per family. Two to three is the new norm. There is also a temporary to long-term migration of many young people to study and work outside of Doi Tung. “If more people live in the area, rules and regulations will have to be implemented rigidly.”<sup>50</sup>

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. 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. Regarding income generation, “The thinking in Doi Tung goes along two lines. The first one is about people thinking of adding more value to products: processing, getting their own business or brands.

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47 Extract from Group interview to DTDP Officers, Heads of the Agricultural and Social Development Units, May 31st 2017 at DTDP Headquarters.

48 Interview with Narong Apichai, Mae Fah Luang Foundation’s director of field operations – Former DTDP Director, June 7th, 2017, MFLF Headquarters, Bangkok.

49 Interview with Weerachit Waranchitkun, President of the Sub-District Administration, May 30th, 2017, at his residence in the Huai Rai Samakkhii village.

50 Interview with Racchapol Wisetpeimporn, Social Dep. Liaison of the DTDP, May 29th, 2017, DTDP Headquarters.

The second one, for people without enough capital to get their own business, is mainly thinking on increasing productivity and yield while being sustainable.”<sup>51</sup>

The MFLF is 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.

The quality of education is another challenge directly affecting the future. The DTDP is trying to consolidate a diverse offering of learner-centered education, but people in Doi Tung will have to decide on the kind of education they need for the future, to align teacher’s training “Doi Tung curriculum, a curriculum adjusted to fit Doi Tung geo-socioeconomic realities and community’s needs.”<sup>52</sup> “Some of the community leaders fear that some young people, raised by their grandparents, will get used to living on remittances from their parents and will adopt “the city way,” which is not knowing their neighbors, and not caring for the environment. This would erode cohesion between families and communities. “The younger generation needs to know the history of development in Doi Tung and about the situation in the past to appreciate what they have. They also need to participate and know the community so they do not lose the value of helping each other.”<sup>53</sup>

In terms of governance, as many of the public goods and services in Doi Tung are taken care of by national and local administration, there will need to be an increase in budgets. “The local government will need to collect taxes from productive activities in Doi Tung to be able to properly run local government functions.”<sup>54</sup>



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51 Interview with Weerachit Waranchitkun, President of the Sub-District Administration, May 30th, 2017, at his residence in the Huai Rai Samakkhi village.

52 Interview with Racchapol Wisetpeimporn, Social Dep. Liaison of the DTDP, May 29th, 2017, DTDP Headquarters.

53 Ibidem.

54 Interview with Mom Rajawongse Disnadda Diskul, Khun Chai, Chairman of the Board of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, in the Doi Tung Development Project Headquarters, May 26th 2017.

Discussion with

## Mom Rajawongse Disnadda Diskul, (Khun Chai)

Chairman of the Board of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation  
under Royal Patronage



### On the relationship with the community and a bottom-up approach:

- “A key to a good start is to empower and gain trust from the people by being with people, sleeping, eating and singing the same song and the same tune with them; going to the area to understand them, walking the area with them and asking people about their problems. You need to ‘walk the walk before you can talk the talk.’ Work with them during the day, and then go to their house in the evening to keep talking.”
- “You need to have a majority of the community agreeing with the interventions, not only the heads of villages or public officials.”

- “Become a catalyst, part of the community, work with villagers... but start with the people who are ready to work with you. If it works, the rest will follow.”

### **On the need for integration, holistic intervention, coordination and continuity:**

- “We need to overcome silos and follow a common plan together.”

### **On knowledge:**

- “We need to raise the platform all the time, always learning, to get a higher bottom line and adapt it to the local culture, as a key to sustainability”.
- “It is important to transfer experience within the teams, bridging the gap between the older team members and younger newcomers.”

### **On innovation and risk-taking:**

- “Any project idea, do it!!”
- “Trick people to think outside of the box, outside of traditional plans or approaches.”

### **On transparency and trust:**

- “You must not have any agenda beyond the will to help people.”

### **On the economy:**

- “The economy must work for people, business has to be people-oriented, like social enterprises, allowing for transformations to happen. This new century has to be a lot about ‘caring and sharing,’ about people and mother earth.”
- “We need to stop with the greed of capitalism. A change to ‘having enough’ means not being dependent on anyone else. This has to be taught, has to be embedded in the economic DNA.”

### **On the government’s role:**

- “It is important to be associated with the government at all three levels (central, local and people). We can show them how to listen to local people, to learn about their needs, to see, feel and work. If the government helps, you can get results at scale.”

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(Interview to Mom Rajawongse Disnadda Diskul, Khun Chai, Chairman of the Board of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, in the Doi Tung Development Project Headquarters, May 26th 2017.)

## Doi Tung as a Living University



*“We do not have to make it big. We do it small but successfully so it serves as a model.”*

- The Princess Mother's remarks upon embarking on the Doi Tung Development Project

Doi Tung has become an example of knowledge-based tourism under the Princess Mother's philosophy of “cultivate land, cultivate people.” Local people are faculty members of this “Living University” on sustainable development, social entrepreneurship and reforestation initiatives, which has become a reference point in Thailand and abroad.

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 and villagers also learn from those visiting Doi Tung.

As an example, an important exchange of best practices is taking place with Colombian officials from central, regional and local governments. They are accompanied by academia, NGOs and farmers related to narcotic cultivation. Colombia is looking to strengthen their rural development, reduce their dependence on illicit economies, fight deforestation, and create alternative livelihoods. The approach developed in Doi Tung and its many lessons learned offers a long-term sustainable and inclusive reference that could strengthen Colombia's efforts in a crucial phase of its peace process after more than five decades of internal conflict.

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. The main focus of the training is on principles and approaches, as well as the experience and lessons learned from DTDP and other development areas of the MFLF. This will allow Colombians to adapt MFL principles to their local challenges, needs and geo-social reality.



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

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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 MFLF 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. The objective remains the same: helping the people to help themselves, to care for others, for their communities and, as they develop, to be able to give back to society.



Site of the MFLF & RIDF Nan Project

In 2009, the Royal Initiative Discovery Foundation (RIDF) was initiated by MFLF Chairperson and established by the Thai Government in order to accelerate and expand rural development in the country under the principles of H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej's development approach, 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 core contributors, particularly in on-the-ground implementation and development approach. In the same way that the Princess Mother's presence helped bring together numerous governmental departments during the initial moments of the DTDP, RIDF share the goal of seeking cooperation of all parties involved 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 order to generate ownership in the community and gradual development, they adopted HM the King's three-step implementation principles:

1. Understanding – of the problems, their root causes and geo-social reality
2. Outreach – to establish interaction and participation, building trust and confidence in the community to assume its responsibility on its own development
3. Development – enhancing each community's potential through an area-based rural development intervention.

Khun Chai has been at the heart of this effort, in hopes of sharing best practices and lessons learned from H.M. King Bhumibol Adulyadej, the Princess Mother and the work of the MFLF domestically and internationally for the greater good. "We need to present public officials with results and show them how to listen to local people, to learn about their needs, to see, touch and work, so they can scale things up in other regions. The best working strategy is to let the government jump in but use our model. The RIDF has helped the government to think out of the box, always along with other actors. Now, most ministries are aligned and work hand-in-hand with the Foundation."<sup>55</sup> He is now the Secretary General of the RIDF on the boards of which sit many high-level officials from key national ministries, such as Interior, Agriculture, Natural Resources, and the Prime Minister's office, which controls the national budget. The Army, the Office of the Royal Development Projects Board, the Community Organization Development Institute and the Provincial, Municipal, Sub-district and village Associations of Thailand are also represented.

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55 Interview with Mom Rajawongse Disnadda Diskul, Khun Chai, Chairman of the Board of the Mae Fah Luang Foundation under Royal Patronage, in the Doi Tung Development Project Headquarters, May 26th 2017.

From 2009, along with the MFLF, the RIDF initiated a pilot project in Nan Province. It is still on-going and now covers 21 villages in three districts. The goal is to transform a local reality of deforestation from slash and burn agriculture, mono-cropping, pollution of the Nan river watershed from pesticides, associated health problems and heavily indebted communities. The Project helped these communities build and improve water distribution systems as well as soil conditions, and then provided livelihood opportunities through diverse agriculture, livestock and handicraft activities to reduce their household expenses first, then raising their income and reducing their debt.

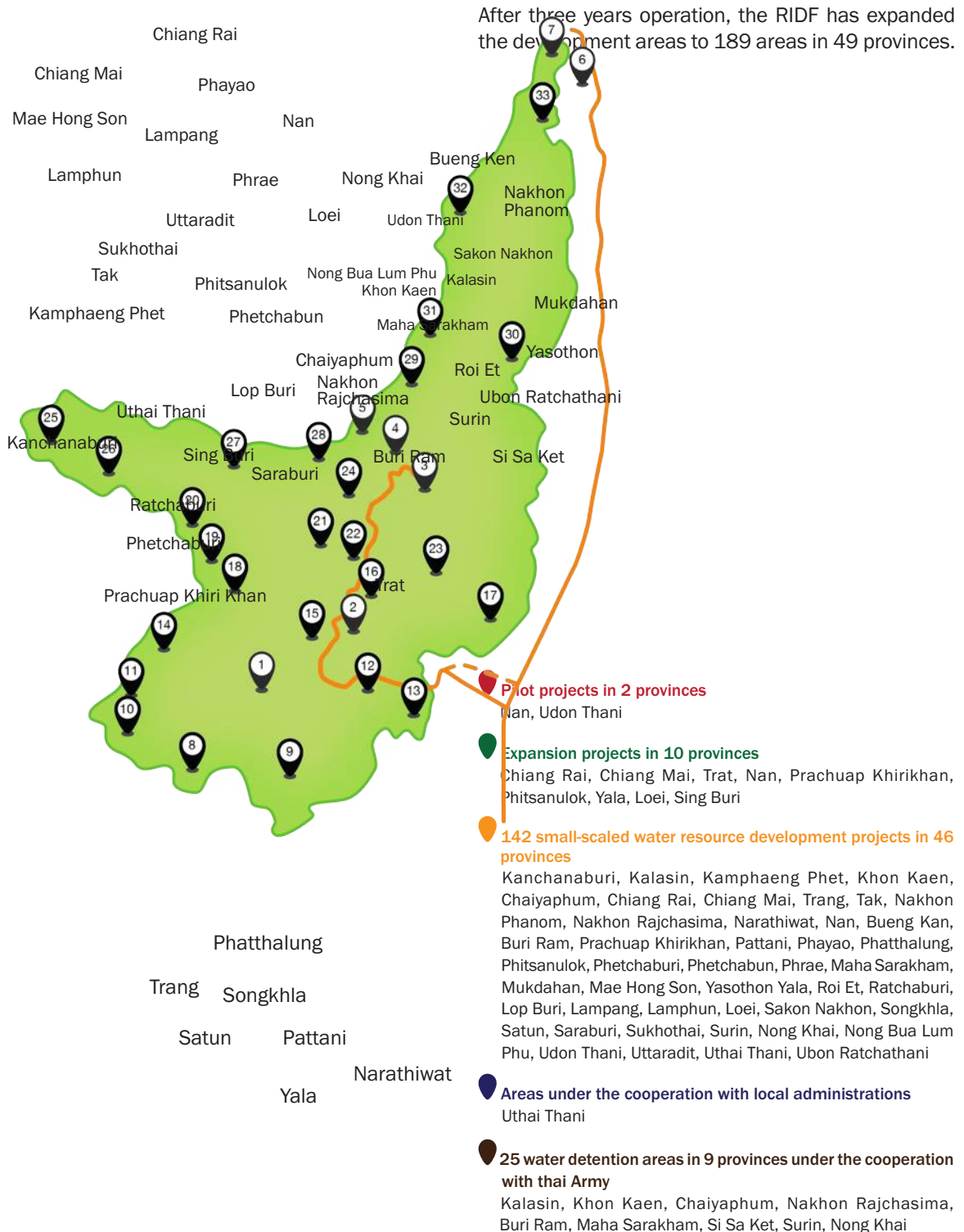
After eight years of operation the RIDF has developed five model projects around the country. It is about to start a new model project in the southern province of Thailand. With strong collaboration with the Ministry of Interior, 17 area-based projects in 10 provinces and 142 small-scale water resource projects in 46 provinces has been developed. "The idea is to reach 24,000 villages, which means 24 million people, half of the population of Thailand."<sup>56</sup> RIDF is asking the same questions: what do the people get out of it? Villagers' participation, local government planning, assessments of the community preparedness, and the agreement of at least 70% of the local population are some of the basic requirements of these projects.

Water is an entry point to a holistic approach to sustainable development, particularly in agricultural nation like Thailand. Through working with provincial level government and the Department of Irrigation, budget was allocated to provinces to repair existing agricultural weirs, maximize their capacity and overhaul the distribution system to crop cultivation areas. The RIDF supported equipment and materials, but relied on local volunteers for labor to allow them to gain skills in water management through a learning-by-doing process. Once the water distribution problem has been solved, they will concentrate on improving the soil, increasing yield and income, adding value to the economic processes, and accessing markets. Other issues like health are tackled along the way, as well as additional environmental issues. Ultimately, the success of these local projects will depend on the fact that the structure developed to manage them acts for the common good.

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56 Ibidem

Expanding from 2 pilot projects, to 189 areas in 49 provinces





Participating farmer - Udon Thani project

The national government has already allocated budget for this strategy in order to support local authorities willing to jump in. This effort connects the development strategies with the 5-year and 20-year national development plans laid out by the government.

A wider look at area-based local economic development is also starting with the incorporation of private sector partners to develop added value chains for the communities. Some corporations are supporting the effort by helping villagers create community-based enterprises, with the plan to gradually transfer ownership when conditions are optimal.

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

Along with this effort through the RIDF, and within its Living University mission, the MFLF has developed training courses for policy makers, government officials, community leaders and development volunteers from different provinces to transfer knowledge and experience as well as embed values to create change agents to scale up their development model at the national and international level.

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, the Mae Fah Luang Foundation has done in projects in Myanmar, Afghanistan and Indonesia as well as nationwide. Through a strategic, holistic and integrated development plan that approaches to problem at the root cause of poverty, empowers people and achieves upward socio-economic mobility through providing viable livelihood opportunities while preserving environment, Doi Tung has become a living example of a sustainable and thrivable society.

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Towards a brighter future

**“Help the people to help themselves”**

— *The Princess Mother* —



มูลนิธิแม่ฟ้าหลวง ในพระบรมราชูปถัมภ์  
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