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Training for Extension Workers) A-A
An Evaluation

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Introduction

This paper reviews the training programme for Hill Tribe Extension Workers at the Chang Khian Training Centre in Thailand, during the period 1974-80. Thailand is a country of distinct geographic regions; the coastal tropical south with its vast rubber plantations, the central predominantly rice-growing plain, the drought-prone flat lands of the east bordering the Mekon river, and the north dominated by undulating hills of up to 1,800 metres elevation. The hills of northern Thailand are the home of the minority hill tribes, who in 1977 numbered some 350,000 and whose main tribal groups are the Karen, the Meo and Yao. Traditionally the hill tribes, apart from other agricultural pursuits such as forest products, upland rice and small stock, have cultivated opium poppies, largely to use the opium for local social or medicinal purposes but also to trade small quantities on the open market.

Since the early 1970s the Royal Thai Government has been concerned to control opium poppy cultivation and to introduce substitute crops into the agricultural cycle of the hill tribes. The Pilot Crop Replacement and Community Development Project was established in 1972 and carried on through 1979 according to an agreement between the Royal Thai Government and UNDPAC (United Nations Programme for Drug Abuse Control). The activities were continued and extended in 1980 through the present Highland Agricultural Marketing and Production (HAMP) Project. The basic development objectives of the HAMP project were explained as follows:

"The project aims at supporting the Royal Thai Government's efforts to eliminate the illicit cultivation of opium poppy in the northern Highlands of Thailand, to raise the standard of living of the highland populations traditionally dependent on poppy cultivation through improving their competitive economic position. It is designed to encourage their long-term integration into the economic and social mainstream of the country. The fundamental approach in defining these objectives is one of developing self-reliance to ensure that the capacity to continue various activities envisaged in this project can be sustained and enhanced after project completion."

The project works in 38 villages in areas where opium poppies are under cultivation. The main objective has been to promote the replacement of the poppy with other crops from which farmers can earn incomes comparable to or higher than they earn from opium poppy production.

An important aspect of the Hill Tribe Development Project is the training of hill tribe farmers to act as extension workers in their own villages. The training is carried out at the Chang Khian Agricultural Development and Training Station which is managed by staff from the Faculty of Agriculture, University of Chiang Mai. Continuous training programmes are offered to hill tribe farmers in general on specific crops or other aspects of agricultural development. More importantly longer courses have been held at Chang Khian to train hill tribe farmers as

Evaluation

It was decided that it was most important that the results of the hill tribe extension worker training should be followed up in order to make the programme more effective. Chang Khian Highland Agricultural Training Center, therefore, decided to carry out an evaluation by measuring the ability of the hill tribes people who have been trained as extension workers. This study should include their level of knowledge and how this knowledge was being applied in their daily work. This study was expected to give information on the hill tribe people's development after they have returned to their home villages.

In any evaluation of the Hill Tribe Training Programme, it should be recognized that hill tribe people differ from other groups of people in Thai society in general. Their learning and experience are directed toward the culture and the psychological atmosphere prevailing in their own community and society. At the same time it was hoped that the hill tribe people could be brought to understand that they must also attempt to recognize that the training is primarily structured for a culture which may differ quite significantly from their own.

The central problem which the study was concerned to identify was certain aspects of judgement held by different hill tribe people who have been trained at the Chang Khian Highland Agricultural Training Center. It was hoped to establish any difference of opinion between the hill tribe people who were selected as village agricultural extension workers and those who were not. If there was a significant difference of opinion, the evaluator might be able to spot some weak or strong points in the training programme which may be of assistance to future work on the modification of and improvement of the Hill Tribe Training Programme. Equally importantly the evaluation was concerned with the application of the knowledge gained by the hill tribe farmers in their work for highland agricultural development. The ultimate outcome of the evaluation should be to give guidance for the development of the Hill Training Programme in the near future, not only for the Chang Khian Training Center but also for others.

Since the Crop Replacement and Community Development Programme of the United Nations and Royal Thai Government were launched in 1973, there had been no evaluation of hill tribe training. This extension training programme is one of the most important activities of the project in which training is essential for successful extension in the highlands. Over 100 hill tribe farmers have been trained on the project at Chang Khian Training Center and about 21 hill tribe farmers selected as village agricultural extension workers of the project stationed in different villages. The evaluation expected to study the effect of the training programme on the hill tribe people still working with the project as village agricultural extension workers and on the ones who continue as farmers.

Purpose and Objectives of the Evaluation

The primary purpose of the evaluation was to determine how effective the Highland Agricultural Training Programme at the Chang Khian Training Center was in terms of meeting the needs of the hill tribe people, and its suitability to the Highland Agricultural Development Programme. This evaluation was directed at those hill tribe farmers who had been trained at the Chang Khian Training Center

Hill tribe farmers who were educated or under-educated (only read or write) showed willingness to participate in the training programme. A small number dropped out of class at the early stage of training. This reflected the willingness and attention of hill tribes to this training programme.

3. *Measurement of the effectiveness of the training programme in terms of knowledge and experience gained by hill tribe farmers*

In general, hill tribe farmers judged the knowledge gained and the application of knowledge to highland agricultural development to be average or a little above average. In terms of the application of training knowledge, hill tribe farmers generally showed that they applied this knowledge after they had been trained. In general hill tribe farmers felt that they had understood the knowledge of the training programme even though there had been some courses which were difficult to understand. In terms of the appropriateness of training knowledge, the results showed that almost all of the courses were evaluated at the average level. Some courses were seen to be more appropriate, such as insecticide use, upland rice growing, animal and plant disease control, and coffee cultivation. Others were considered as less appropriate, such as flower cultivation, strawberry growing and wheat growing.

4. *Assessment of the training programme in terms of administration and organization*

In terms of administration and organization, the hill tribe farmers felt in general that the training programme was average. It needed to be developed in some aspects, such as more emphasis on practical training, offering courses of training more related to the actual needs of the hill tribe farmers and appropriateness to highland conditions. Training materials and audio-visual aids were also needed for more efficiency, instructors should be more used to hill tribe teaching, and the "demonstration" teaching method could be more widely employed.

5. *Hill tribe farmer self-development after returning to home villages*

It was generally found that the hill tribe farmers did improve, especially in their knowledge of agricultural practices, social participation and community development and crop replacement cooperation.

6. *Problems in hill tribe recruitment for the training programme*

Problems identified included inadequate number of hill tribe farmers who met the criteria for selection, unwillingness of hill tribe farmers to participate in training and an inadequate amount of time for recruitment. These were the main problems. Other problems which were considered less important included the difficulty of accessibility of hill tribes due to their remoteness, unawareness of hill tribe parents and the absolute lack of hill tribe farmers interested in the training programme.

In conclusion, it is hoped that the evaluation will affect the development and improvement of the hill tribe training programme, especially for those people who will be in charge of administration and organization of the training. It is anticipated that much benefit will occur as the training staff of the Chang Khian Training Center and the HAMP Project continue to train the hill tribes, whose assistance is needed in the crop replacement programme and in the development of highland agriculture in the years ahead.

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and who were at present working as village agricultural extension workers in different project villages.

Specifically the objectives of the evaluation study were stated as follows:

1. To observe the agricultural knowledge, skill and working ability of village extension workers after training.
2. To study the effect of the trainees' educational background in determining the success of the training programme.
3. To measure the effectiveness of selected aspects of the training programme in terms of the knowledge and experiences gained by the hill tribe farmers, using as a basis the hill tribes' perceptions of the programme effectiveness, particularly in relation to the highland agricultural development.
4. To assess the training programme in terms of administration and organization.
5. To investigate different types of courses and possible reasons for successes and failures of the training programme.
6. To study the hill tribe farmers' self-development after they returned to their home villages.
7. To investigate some problems in the recruitment of hill tribe farmers for the training programme.

The total population for this evaluation was about 100 hill tribe farmers including Karen, Hmong, Lisu, Lahu and Yunnanese, who had been trained at the Chang Khian Training Center in the period 1974-1979. These hill tribe farmers were divided into two groups. The first group were those who were selected for training as village agricultural extension workers of the project and the second group were those who came for farmer training. When the evaluation was designed, we tried to get as high a sample as possible and not lower than 30 per cent of the total population. However, because some hill tribe farmers had moved to other places, it was only possible to include 35 trained hill tribe farmers in the evaluation study. The evaluation was carried out by means of a questionnaire which covered the following main issues:

1. Basic Information on the hill tribe farmer.
2. Training Curriculum and how it was being applied after the training.
3. Farmers' opinion of the appropriateness and usefulness of the course.
4. The reactions of official extension personnel toward the trained hill tribe extension worker.
5. Problems in recruiting hill tribe farmers for training.

Evaluation Results

This short article sketches only briefly a very substantial evaluation exercise which involved a lot of collaboration. Space does not permit to explain exhaustively the analysis of the questionnaires and the results obtained. However, the analysis did permit the grouping of our findings under the series of issues identified beforehand.

1. *Agricultural knowledge, skill and working ability of the hill tribe village extension worker*

Village extension workers show some ability to work as a source of knowledge to the other hill tribe farmers and also they function as good cooperators between the project and the hill tribe people in growing substitute crops. Knowledge gained from the training programme was shown to be fair.

2. *Effect of educational background in determining the success of the training programme*

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