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Media Supported Communication

in Agricultural Extension and Participatory Rural

Development in Northern Thailand

vorgelegt von

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7. Summary

The inhabitants of Northern Thailand, Thais as well as the members of the different ethnic groups, the so-called *hill tribes*, have to face a variety of very complex problems that range from *Natural Resources Conflicts* via *Human Rights Issues* to *Health Problems*. All in all, those problems constitute the initial position for every extension-, development- and research activity that are carried out by governmental, non-governmental and/or other institutions in this region.

Whereas the first development efforts concerning the hill tribes were initiated by Thailand's government, namely the Ministry of Interior, in 1956, with the establishment of the *Committee for the Welfare of Remote Populations*, the first NGO, the *Thailand Rural Reconstruction Movement (TRRM)* was founded in 1969. Since these early activities, the development process of the region surrounding the area of the *Golden Triangle*, where the countries of Thailand, Myanmar and Laos meet and which is still famous for the growing and trafficking of opium and heroin, were significantly influenced by innumerable national as well as international projects. Whereas previous drug-replacement programs were initiated in many hill tribe villages, the main emphasis was put on *Natural Resource Management* in later years, as it turned out that more and more environmental damages were caused by high-input farming, which was brought in to the members of the different hill tribes before, as a substitute for opium growing.

In order to analyze the current extension situation in Northern Thailand, I carried out my research in collaboration with different GOs, NGOs and other development organizations. In the course of this process, I had the chance to get a quite detailed impression about the variety of difficulties that have to be solved by the extension staff of the organizations, and I was able to gain a first insight into major areas of operation and communication tools that are used in extension and rural development. In addition, with the help of a semi-structured questionnaire, which was developed in collaboration with the other members of our little interdisciplinary research team and which served us as a guideline during the first, more general interviews, I was able to differentiate the gathered information into two different parts. On the one hand, I tried to get as much information as possible, about the extension methods and the kind of media, especially the pictorial material, which is used by the different organizations in their extension and development work. On the other hand, I was looking for a few organizations that I could observe in more detail, over a longer period of time, for example, through visits in their project areas.

During my whole research, I focused exclusively on the extensionist's or organizations' point of view, therefore the presented results, which offer a very detailed overview about the current extension situation in Northern Thailand, have a kind of subjective character that have to be considered, especially at the end of the thesis, where an analysis and a comparative evaluation of the methods and media is conducted.

General information about the different kinds of institutions, including their activities, their main objectives and their target groups are presented with examples from different types of organizations, GOs, NGOs, etc. In addition to the use in this study, the general information that could be gathered through a lot of interviews with representatives of the different organizations, was collected, together with leaflets and brochures, in a file in the UPLANDS PROGRAM'S office. In consequence, every researcher of the UPLANDS PROGRAM, who needs some information about one of those organizations that has already been visited, has the opportunity to check out existing data in the office first, before contacting the organization.

Beside the description of general information, I focused on the identification of methods and media (especially picture supported communication tools) that are used within the organizations communication in development, extension and research in different settings, with different objectives and for different target groups. A list of methods, media use and those activities, which are usually carried out by the different organizations, as well as a detailed description of those meetings, workshops etc. that I was able to join during my field research phase in Thailand are presented in the course of this report. Beside the problems that highland people have to face at the moment, one should not forget to realize that there are also problems with the relationship between highlanders and lowlanders. Those conflicts arise between highlanders and lowlanders due to different perceptions of problems and of development. In order to solve those kind of problems, a lot of organizations try to close the gap between the highlanders and lowlanders through public relations work. Examples from different kinds of efforts and the thereby used media have also been given in this report.

After the presentation of different target groups, different types of organizations as well as four selected case studies, the last part of this study offered a discussion of potentials and limitations of different methods and kinds of media that are used by the different organizations. Therefore *Methods and Media Used by Different Organizations* are listed as well as major *Criteria for Using Media in Extension and Development Work* are presented. In the further course the *Application of Criteria for Different Methods and Media* in addition to other relating issues that are offered in the thesis, will provide the basis for the discussion of major potentials and limitations of currently used media in comparison to the *Flannelgraph method*, which was chosen as a major methodological tool of reference. Thereby, possible approaches for increasing the potential of the used methods can be identified during the presentation of three examples of those organizations that were mentioned as case studies, in addition to further aspects that are briefly discussed in the conclusion chapter.

All in all, the extension situation in Northern Thailand is too heterogeneous to identify one "right" extension approach, therefore one can conclude that the use of media and the choice of extension methods depends on the previously listed criteria as well as the further added issues, such as the infrastructure, target group and the costs of the respective tool. As the development process, which rapidly changed the surrounding and in the end the behavior of the different target groups throughout the last decades, still takes place in the whole country, the methods as well as the media that are used e.g. in extension work, training or public information, also have to be adapted to the current situation.

Finally, I would like to conclude that the previously presented analysis and evaluation as well as the conclusions that were drawn out of the gathered information could be taken as a starting point for further research, which should, according to my point of view, focus on the target group's perspective. Thereby one could gather very interesting data e.g. about the suitability of the used extension methods and media according to the target group's point of view. A comparison of both results could finally lead to an adaptation of current approaches, in which the objectives and necessities as well as the cultural peculiarities, e.g. in perception and communication, of both parties, the sender, as well as the receiver of extension, development or research activities would be taken into account.