



*Development of Children and Youth  
in the Remote Areas*

A Lecture by

*Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn*





Office of Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's Projects

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All - China Youth Federation

中华全国青年联合会

# **Development of Children and Youth in the Remote Areas**

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**Her Royal Highness Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn**



In the Sino-Thai Seminar

on

**Empowering Youth:**

**Cooperation in Building Basic Quality of Life for the Future**

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ทรงกรมมณีเรือง





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*I intend to give this lecture to the Chinese participants, because the Thais in this audience seem to know about what I am going to say already. In this seminar we have agreed that the Thai speakers speak Thai, and the Chinese speak Chinese. In this way the speakers can talk about their topics without having to worry about using wrong words or causing misunderstanding. Thus may I ask the interpreter to please translate my talk from Thai into Chinese.*

## **Inspiration from Their Majesties**

My talk will mainly be about helping children and youth in the deprived or remote areas. I have been to the so-called remote places since I was a

child. I had a chance to play and had fun with the children in those areas until we became acquaintances. I saw His Majesty the King and Her Majesty the

Queen thinking about ways to solve the people's problems, for example, about their health, hygiene, education, occupation, etc. At that time my duty was to interview people to get information and to find out about their needs individually.

Those experiences inspired me to help them in a systematic way. I had seen a lot of sick, unhealthy or improperly educated primary school children. One hypothesis is that children cannot learn well if they have ill health, or their bodies and brains are not well nourished. People around the world think so. Once during my visit to China, I met an expert who did an experiment on iron-deficiency among female workers in a textile factory. After supplementing iron to the workers, they performed more efficiently. Also in schools students did mathematics better and faster after they had had iron supplement. They asked more questions, and some teachers might not like that. They said it was because of the iron, the brain worked better, and the children argued more.

I had learned from my parents how to interview people and had helped in the field work since the late 60's. It was during 1970 to 1980 when I learned and thought about how to develop my own project systematically and how to identify the target group. At first I went to a school. It seemed to me that students in this school had inadequate food intake. In Thailand at that time, there was a foundation called "Founda-

tion for Needy Students", and so I started by requesting some money from this foundation for the school lunch. Later I did it in my own way by helping the schools grow plants, fruit trees and vegetables for food.

## **The First Project**

When I started my own project, I chose to work with the border patrol police schools. Many people often ask why border patrol police teach children, since their duty is to guard the borders for peace and security. While patrolling along the border, they saw school age children not going to school. So they tried to transfer knowledge to the children, even though they did not have any teaching experience. They wanted the children to learn how to read, write and communicate.

So they set up schools. His Majesty the King, Her Majesty the Queen and Her Royal Highness Princess Mother helped raised funds to build the schools, and the police continued teaching. At that time the schools and the students were in really remote areas. When other local people along the border knew about it, they asked the police to teach their children too. Some areas were so remote that regular teachers could not access at all.

Helping those schools should have been the right start for me. My first aim was to improve the children's health in those remote schools. Good health could develop and prepare them to be

useful to their communities in the future. Education in those days aimed at the ability to read and write only, so that they could read official announcements or documents and could write about what they wanted. Many of their requirements were already provided by the Royal initiated projects.

When I worked with my parents, besides taking notes, sometimes I helped with first aids. I once even taught needlework which many might find it hard to believe that I could teach needlework! At first we emphasized agriculture. They grew their own plants for food. It was impossible for me as a new university graduate to have enough money to buy food for them. My little money was enough to buy things like hoes, shovels, seeds and some cooking condiments that we could not produce by ourselves. Sometimes there was no money to buy enough seeds, and we could not feed the children every meal. At first we were able to feed only one good meal a month, then once a week. Later on the police reported that they could feed the children every school day. This may sound strange today, but in those days it was true that we could not feed the students everyday. However at the end, we could eventually provide free meals everyday. Later on many people rendered their helping hands.

At the beginning, the work was more from my idea than from a systematic plan. Then many experts and people from both governmental and private organizations knew about it and

offered help. Some provided knowledge. Others donated materials. I myself did not dare to publicize about my project, because I was not sure and did not want to be “the shepherd boy” if the project failed. So I tried to work hard. When people found out about my good intention, they helped me. At present this project covers 44 provinces.

### **The Target Group**

Primary school students were the first target group. Then pre-school children came to our attention when we worked in the villages. My duty was to de-worm the children and immunized them with oral polio vaccine or giving them vaccine injection. I did not do the injection myself, but I worked along side with the doctors and nurses who injected the children. I dropped oral vaccine into their mouths and gave them de-worming medicine. It was too tiring to run around catching the children in the villages, and we might miss some. So I persuaded the parents to bring their children to the pre-school centers. In this way we could estimate the right food for small children. We could also improve the quality of de-worming and immunization at the right time.

Later on the work has expanded because I was told that it was not enough. To improve the quality of life we have to start even earlier, for example, from birth to 3 years of age, or even while the mothers are pregnant or nursing the babies. So now the target

groups include both mothers and children. We started our work in primary schools. We did not include teenagers in secondary schools. So we have tried to expand our work to cover them, so that those who graduate from the border patrol police primary schools can move on to secondary level in other schools and still get our school lunch.

There are also private schools, for example, novice schools in Buddhist temples, where parents send their children to become novices because they cannot afford secondary education for their children. Novices can study in the temple schools under good care. Muslim children usually go to private Islamic schools. Their parents are satisfied because they trust that the children are religiously disciplined. The children stay away from drugs. These are the examples of the role of religion in education, which is not much mentioned. Lately, I have not worked much with the Christians. They have helped me a lot by admitting many students, both Christians and non-Christians, into the Christian schools.

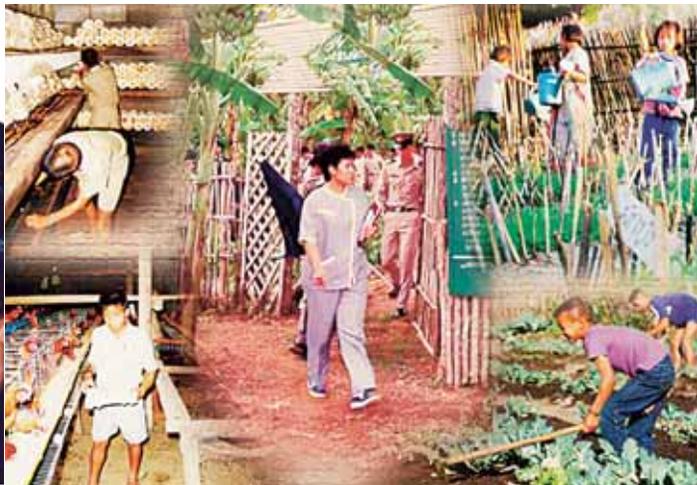
The number of children in the target groups that I can help has increased every year, from fewer than 100 in 1980 to 76,574 registered students last year. Almost everyone came from very poor farming families. There were diverse ethnic groups. We also have Hmong as in China, and there are many other tribes. Their religions were Buddhism, Christianity, Islam, Hermit Teachings and Animism.



## **Food, Nutrition and Health**

Now I would like to talk about food, nutrition, health and hygiene issues in more details. In developing children and youth if basic health and hygiene are not taken care of, children are not ready for further development and cannot be the future of a nation.

When I worked with the World Food Program in India, an extension officer of the World Food Program said that as a food and health officer, he felt that education had to come first. He said if a person was well educated, development of health and hygiene became easy. But for those who work in education, they feel that health and hygiene development should come first. I am not sure which is correct. So I think we do both at the same time. I am interested in education and have been a teacher myself. My higher education was in education. I have learned in the educational administration course that a



school is a government office. Even in nongovernmental schools, we should consider that school is the place where knowledgeable persons are in charge. Therefore it is the base for development of all kinds of knowledge fundamental for lives. The teachers are agent of change in raising life quality of students and communities.

### **Agriculture for School Lunch**

We talk about lunch because we are dealing with regular day schools, of which students have breakfast and dinner at home, and lunch at school. But this is not true in all communities. In some, no one has eaten anything from home. So the schools have to provide breakfast too.

In many communities there were no schools. In the past parents built small huts in the schools for their children to stay while studying in schools far away from home. Later on most schools have dormitories. But the number of students has increased, and some schools may not have enough budget. So the children can still go hungry and live in difficult conditions. They might dig bamboo shoots, taros or sweet potatoes for food, but sometimes those are not enough. Life can be quite difficult. I have tried to help those children more.



Sometimes the problem is about religious belief. For example, Muslims have the so-called Ramadan fasting period. They cannot eat while the Sun still shines. I even thought about conducting the Night Food Program, but on the second thought it was not a good idea, because this activity should be family business. What I did to help was to provide them with some food materials for cooking, and they were satisfied with that.

Letting children cook their own food is to teach them which kinds of food they should eat. Developing skills in agriculture can also be useful for their occupation in the future. We teach them how to grow plants and how to raise animals by themselves. Communities also help their children in those activities. So it is like technology transfer from schools to communities to help increase food production and food security in the households and the communities. Sometimes those working



in the project wonder how the border patrol police or the school teachers can do such a job like transferring agricultural knowledge to skillful farmers and their children. It seems as if the teachers were taking up the job of the Agricultural Extension Department. But actually those teachers, being in the areas all the time, can help figure out how to transfer new ideas or knowledge to solve specific problems. In this way they assist the agricultural extension officers who cannot be in the areas all the time to do their work more effectively. Staying in school with the children all the time, the teachers can transfer knowledge anytime.



### **Multiple Crops and Fruit Plantation Project**

We grew multiple crops and a variety of fruits. In some schools we also grew local plants. This was due to small budget in the beginning. We tried many local vegetables that were not yet on the list of the Agricultural Extension



Department, and we analyzed their nutritional values in order to substitute for the regular food. In some schools, excess of food produce was preserved, for example, as pickles. Sometimes the villagers brought their own food produce to feed the students. The schools could give them seeds to be planted and animals, like chickens and pigs, to be raised. Where the soil was not good, we built the plots surrounded by brick or rock walls to

prevent the fertile soil from being washed off. In some cases, we also grew hydroponic or soil-less vegetables. We grew some plants to enrich soil.

### **Animal Husbandry**

They raise several kinds of animals; pigs, cattle, chickens, ducks, goats, crickets and most commonly fish. Fish are raised in natural ponds, floating baskets in natural ponds, cement ponds or plastic-lined ponds. We cannot just dig a pond anywhere. In some place dug pond cannot hold water, or there may be water in the rainy season, but not in the dry season. There is no water all year round. In the schools in the cool highlands, fish do not feed well when the weather gets cold. They may even stop eating and become very thin. The Fishery Department has advised us to use plastic sheet to cover the ponds in



order to raise the temperature. Later on we have found the breeds, for example, some carp species, that are cold-resistant. Some ponds are too deep and so too difficult to catch fish. It is not easy even by using nets and seines. In that case we raise fish in floating baskets placed in the ponds.

Ducks, chickens and eggs are main food products. When there was an outbreak of the avian flu epidemic in Thailand, almost all of our schools were not in the epidemic areas, because they were remote from transportation, and disease like that could not reach them. However, we advised them to follow the government's regulations. For example, the cages must be free of straying birds and their dung, those entering the areas must have worn gowns and stepped their boots in disinfectants before

entering, and new chicks must not have been introduced to replace the slaughtered ones until they were sure that it was safe.

### **Young Farmers in Schools**

The Young-Farmers-in-Schools project is to develop in children good attitude toward agriculture and creativity in planting trees. They have to practice since they are little. We use the word "schools" because "Young Farmers Project" has existed in Thailand for more than half a century. In the past it was about youth who already left schools to work in the agricultural sector. They gathered in groups, like the farmers group, the farmers' wives group, and they were the young farmers group. The last group consisted of young people, usually in their teens. They were strong



and active. They gathered to do agricultural activities together, under certain supervision.

Later on the activities have been organized in schools for small children in primary education. It is quite easy to organize the activities in the border patrol police primary schools, because the schools emphasize agriculture from the beginning. In fact they can start the activities in kindergarten through activity like gardening. One good example is about the children who did not like to eat vegetables usually eat them if they grow the vegetables themselves. It is a good incentive.

In fact it is quite easy to organize the young farmers group within than outside schools, because the children already gather in groups in schools. The disadvantage is that the members are too small to learn complicated techniques. Nevertheless, it is good for building up good attitude toward agriculture, and this is one way to do non-formal education. I would like to suggest that students and adults should read the manuals of the Department of Agricultural Extension, including other manuals, and try to follow their instructions. The manuals should be available in public and school libraries for those who want to study the know-how by themselves.

### **Experiments with New Plants**

We do experiments by introducing new plants into the areas. For example, we have tried growing some plants from

the temperate climate zone in the areas that seem suitable for such plants. We have also tried grafting them on stems of local plants. The aim is for the schools to transfer technology. In rubber plantation areas, the schools have the know-how about rubber, from planting to production of rubber sheets. For decorative plants, like colorful *Caladium* (บอน), that can be source of income, we teach them how to breed and propagate those plants. It has been successful mostly in the schools in the South. Next we might try to enter the *Caladium* contest.

For schools that have a large piece of land, we teach them how to grow and harvest rice, and how to mill rice grains and cook rice. Many schools are located in remote areas where there is not enough rice for consumption. We asked the alumni to experiment on double crops, that is, growing rice one more time in the dry season. We have tried growing rice twice a year. We have also grown rice and beans alternately to increase the production. While the experiments to increase rice production were on-going, we tried cooking rice mixed with bananas to increase the quantity. However, the local people said that they did not like rice cooked this way. Perhaps they did not cook it right, because we had tried it and it tasted good. So we have to keep on trying. If it really does not work, we have to search for other ways.

I would like to add that in Thailand banana trees are very easy to grow, whereas in China they are rare. When I

studied in China, I wrote a sentence in Chinese saying that those in remote areas had nothing to eat but bananas. My teacher said that the sentence was good according to the Chinese grammar, but it was unreasonable. It was impossible for poor people to eat bananas. In China the weather is too cold to grow bananas. They come from the South of China and are expensive because of transportation. This is a lesson. To promote anything one must take geographical condition into consideration.

### **Pest Control**

Insecticides are expensive. Farmers used to spend a lot of money buying them and ran out of money. Spraying those insecticides is also harmful to the farmers. Dangerous chemicals in insecticides can kill humans as well as insects. Those who eat the contaminated agricultural products can also get sick. Nowadays when people have doubt about insecticide residues, they do not buy the insecticide-sprayed produce, and the sale drops.

So we have tried to solve the problem by using other methods of insect control, such as, using insect trapping bags coated with sticky stuff, growing plants in big nets, using biocontrol methods like parasitic insects or molds, non-toxic to human, to kill pests, using biomaterials produced by the Department of Soil Development, using biofertilizers and insect repellants from natural products. There are natural



products that kill both humans and insects. Some kill only insects, and so we can use them as insecticides, for example, neem (สะเดา). We like to eat neem with sweet and sour sauce, but insects die when they are sprayed with neem extract.

### **Mushroom Culture**

We teach students how to culture mushrooms, starting from packing the materials in the plastic bags, steaming the bags, inoculating the bags with mushroom spores and tending them. There are many





kinds of mushroom like sajor caju, *Pleurotus sajor-caju* (เห็ดนางฟ้า), oyster mushroom, *Pleurotus ostreatus* (เห็ดนางรม), shiitake, *Lentinula edodes* (เห็ดหอม), and straw mushroom, *Volvariella volvacea* (เห็ดฟาง). The yields are harvested and cooked in the school kitchens for students' meals. The process is managed by school cooperatives. In case there is a surplus of the products, it is sold to the villagers

through the cooperative shops of the schools. Those products can help sustain lives in difficult times like in case of natural disaster that blocks the communication.

### School Lunch

A student should have the right amount of food to eat according to the nutritional requirement to assure complete nutritious value in each meal. So the teachers have to calculate the amount of raw materials for cooking school lunch. If their own food materials are not enough, we provide additional funding to buy materials necessary to make the meals completely nutritious. Another point that we emphasize is food sanitation. Food must be clean and safe. The staff from the Department of Agricultural Extension, the agricultural home economist section, and the house

wives, usually the parents of the students, take turn in cooking lunch for the students. Their help starts with thinking about the menus. Many of them are





alumni of the schools, and were in the school lunch program before. So they understand about the values of good food and good health and can transfer such attitude to their households.

Managing school lunch that has nutritious and hygienic values for students not only improves children's nutritional condition but also serves as a learning process towards good eating habits. Children learn to eat balanced meals complete with the 5 major food groups, complete with vegetables and fruits, exactly what they learn in primary schools. This has been a routine activity that teaches students about hygienic habits like washing their hands before

eating and brushing their teeth after meals. This is the promotion and development of good nutrition in the future. Another benefit is that it is an example for a community to learn about cleanliness and how it can be applied in each household and community to create sustainable development in the future.

### **Assessment of School Lunch Project**

Once a school lunch project is launched, we must follow up the nutritional status of the children. At present we have many indicators like weight and height. There are standard





graphs from the Ministry of Public Health to compare their weights and heights with those of the children of the same ages. So the teachers must weigh, measure the heights, calculate and record the statistics of the children. Then they can plot the graphs according to ages and preschool or primary levels. For each class we need to know the number of students. We can then analyze and try to help the problematic cases. The weight ranges from low weight, rather low weight, normal and rather overweight. The height ranges from short, rather short, normal and rather tall.

When we first started the project, we measure height to calculate proper weight for that height. Today we also consider shortness. Children who have suffered chronic food deficiency become short. Those who have low weights can gain weight after a period of food intake, but shortness is more difficult to deal with. Now the problem of short children is reduced. Some say that shortness is genetic. Small parents are quite normal in some tribes. Nowadays we keep the records. In the past we did not know the

ages of the children who came to schools, but we do now. We have known some of them since they were born, or even since their mothers were pregnant. Some children just did not grow well even after nutritional treatment. We have found out that the problem was their incorrect way of exercising. Children need high impact exercises like running to grow well, and so we need help from experts in sports science.

### **Iodine Deficiency**

I have been interested in iodine deficiency because I saw so many villagers with big lumps on their necks. One day I listened to a radio program, in which a paper by the Ministry of Public Health was read on air. It said that iodine deficiency caused cretinism. The affected would look as if they had lost their minds. I recalled that they were called “mad ghosts” in the villages. They seemed to lose their mindfulness, and this was caused by lack of iodine in their diet.

So I tried to find ways to correct this defect. The teachers are trained to examine the neck in order to detect the

abnormality. Nowadays there are much fewer cases. In the past we added iodine in their salt. Today we drop iodine in drinking water for children. Later on there is a more precise way of diagnosis, and so we have found more cases of iodine deficiency than expected. No one knows how to solve this problem yet. So we just use the old method of adding iodine in cooking condiments and drinking water for all when we suspect about iodine deficiency, even though they may not show enlarged necks.

### **Other Illnesses**

There are other illnesses in our records, for example, diarrhea, cold, malaria and parasitic worms. I used to work in many malarial endemic areas. The disease is an obstacle to teaching and learning. Both sick teachers and students lay down shaking and could not teach or learn anything. So the public health personnel, the university faculty, the teachers and others had to cooperate to cope with the problem. At first I bought some microscopes for this purpose, but they were very expensive and we could not afford many of them. So some people donated the used microscopes that usually needed repairs or change of parts. We trained the teachers how to examine the blood and give primary treatment. We promoted the use of mosquito nets coated with mosquito repellants that were not harmful to humans such as pyrethroid substance. Some might use metallic nets to cover the windows and doors.



We taught students about malaria by producing pictorial books on malaria and integrating them into subjects like science, Thai and English. Students did science projects on the disease by interviewing people and presenting the results in front of their classes. Later on the government had a project to train the villagers how to screen the patients by using test kits. This helps reducing the work of the teachers, and the microscopes in schools are still useful for other purposes.

There were cases of some children who had had nutritious food for a long time but never showed any improvement. My hypothesis was that they might have had worms to share the food in their digestive tracts, or they just had poor dental health. So I tried to solve both problems. I did find a lot of worms of so many kinds and in so many forms. Some children had many kinds of worms at the same time. We used worm purgative drugs to remove as many kinds of worms as possible. The teachers said that we should not treat just the children, but we should cover



their parents and sibs as well. So I tried, but we might not be able to cover them all. I also tried to have them wear shoes, advised them to practice hygienic habits like washing hands before eating and eating only cooked food, etc. Nowadays the situation is better. The hook worms cause anemia, and so we must keep watch and supplement them with iron. We also take care of anemic prevention in pregnant women, preschool children and school age children.

### **Mothers and Children**

At first I did not have any project for mothers and small children, but I got the idea after talking to Professor Scrimshaw, a member of the Interna-

tional Committee of the Prince Mahidol Awards Foundation for over 10 years. He said helping the children as small as those in the kindergartens was not enough. We must also take care of expectant mothers, nursing mothers and babies since birth till 3 years old. So I have asked the teachers to work with local health personnel to record weights of newborn babies and weights and heights of children up to 3 years old. The teachers help take care of the new target groups by paying house visits.

It is difficult to ask pregnant women to take good care of their health, because most of them have fear about the risk of difficult labor due to big-sized babies. In fact this is the case among the communities we have worked with. They live far from the hospitals, and there are no modern equipments available. If there is any problem with the labor, it is impossible to perform caesarian section, and the mothers and the babies might die. What we can do is to give them some minerals and vitamins. We can focus more on nursing mothers, by improving their milk quality.



In schools that are far away from medical services, sometimes the teachers themselves have to act like midwives in newborn delivery, or they may teach the midwives about cleanliness during the deliveries. There were cases of maternal or newborn deaths, which according to the interviews were probably due to infections or abnormal positions of the babies during the labors. Nowadays there are fewer cases. I have seen one case in which the mother died while delivering her baby, and the baby's sister was only a 4<sup>th</sup> grade student. She then had to take care of her newborn brother. At first, the teachers helped by feeding the baby with regular milk available in the school, by diluting it a little for the baby. Later on they could get formula milk to feed the baby at home. Now the girl comes to school with her little brother everyday.

We have also tried to teach students how to take care of their family members. Those who work in the World Food Program told me that they were assigned by UNICEF to take care of the expectant mothers at an early stage, like two to three months of pregnancy. This



is such a good idea, but the problem is; how do we know who is pregnant? Many women do not know yet whether they are pregnant. So we should start even before they are pregnant, that is, when they are still in schools, by teaching them how to take care of themselves at every stage of life. However, the students that we take care of are mostly primary students. It will be a long time before they start their families and get pregnant. By then they may already forget what they were taught in schools.

There are also mobile medical units consisting of voluntary doctors from many hospitals, universities and the Border Patrol Police Headquarters of the Royal Thai Police. Those units are set up occasionally in the villages to treat sick people and to transfer serious cases to the hospitals. Each person can have basic medical services free of charge. In the cases that need to pay extra, they can receive help from His Majesty or Her Majesty. There is also the problem of transportation to the hospitals or the bigger hospitals. The expenses are usually too high for the villagers, and so we try to help them.





## Education

We cannot just teach children anyway we like without educational principle. We have to emphasize the quality and the opportunity of education, because education is the process that empowers people to live well and become useful to themselves, their families and the society at large. Children may be disadvantaged due to different causes, but each should have the same basic rights. They should be given an equal opportunity to education. We help those in the remote areas, where they are deprived of educational services. We also help those who have physical deformities, including those with brain defects, children of the refugees, and grownup prison inmates.

Giving them educational opportunity will help them a lot.

We have tried to provide educational opportunity by various means, for example, by building schools at the sites where we have surveyed, and the villagers were very happy to help build the schools for their children. The schools can be under the responsibility of the Border Patrol Police or the Ministry of Education (the Division of the Non-Formal and Informal Education or the Office of the Basic Education Commission) depending on the sites of the schools. There are many donors who would like to help build schools and buy educational, agricultural and kitchen equipments for the schools. They want to help, but the parents must also help.





This is not just to save the money, but to show that they really want the schools for their children. There are repair, renovation and construction of some buildings to make sure that the children have enough safe places to study.

## Scholarships

Another way is to provide scholarships for children to give them opportunities to continue their studies at higher levels, as high as they can, to become high quality citizens of the country. However, there is no way to provide the opportunity to all students. So we must select as many as our financial capacity can cover. At first the money came only from selling the books I wrote. Later on there have been more and more donors. I would like to take this opportunity to announce about my new book, entitled *When I Was a Student Abroad*. I wrote this book a long time ago, but in Thai language. Now it is translated into Chinese. It is about my experience during the time I studied at Peking University. Today it is for sale in this seminar. I do not know whether the Thai version is also available.

The money from selling these books can be scholarships for about 200 students each year. There are about 3,000 students receiving scholarships so



far. Some are at the secondary school level, and others study at the Bachelor's degree level. Later on there are some at the Master's degree level. They have studied in various disciplines. At first I wonder if there would be any student whom we have helped since kindergarten in the border patrol police school who could become a medical student, and this year one student got into a medical school for the first time. Many have studied engineering. Now we also support some students to study abroad, like China and India, and in the future some other countries.

## Religious Schools

### *Buddhist Novice Schools*

These are schools for Buddhist novices. After finishing primary education, children from the families that cannot afford to send their children to main stream education may be ordained as Buddhist novices and educated in these special schools. The teachers can be both monks and voluntary laymen. They not only teach Buddhist religion but also academic subjects. For example, many senior



monks participating in this seminar are the teachers of the mentioned children in our project in Nan Province. The novice schools in Nan cooperate in a network, in which the novices learn about Buddhism and observe the novice precepts for their spiritual development. They also study academic subjects to acquire knowledge about the world. They can join their non-novice peers in activities like science project presentation at the national science fair. In this way they become both knowledgeable in academic subjects as well as well-trained in moral quality.

#### *Private Islamic Schools*

These schools also cooperate in network like the Buddhist schools. The teachers teach about Islamic practices.

To help them with the academic subjects, we provide trainings for the teachers, for example, in computer, agriculture, vocational education, cooperatives and hygiene. I have followed up this project and found that it has worked well.

#### *Catholic Schools*

Some catholic children go to catholic schools. We have worked with catholic priests in the remote areas, and some students have become catholic priests.

#### **Libraries and Teaching Media**

Library is the heart or the brain of a school. It collects books and learning media for all students for their study and entertainment. Students must





learn to enjoy reading, and teachers must also use the libraries for knowledge searching and entertainment. Alumni and other people can also use them. The teachers and the students learn how to be librarians and know how to catalog books, to organize reading motivating activities such as news through intercom, reading for younger children, library contest and award presentation. Some schools may have computers and use them for cataloging, CAI installing and CDs for self-access learning about Thai, English, science and mathematics. Some may have access to knowledge via the internet.

## **New Learning Media**

New kinds of learning media like distance learning via satellite are now available. This enables students to study the subjects that their teachers might not be good at. The teachers can also learn this way. When I was in China, the teachers there explained to me that besides learning about the subject matter they also learned about good teaching methods that were more fun and not stressful for the students. They said the teachers did not get upset while teaching.

## **Teaching Computer and Science**

At present the schools in my project still have too few computers. There are some donations. The teachers must learn how to use computers effectively to improve the teaching of their classes. For example, they should use the computers to type teaching materials, search information and update knowledge. The problem is that when there are more electrical equipments in the schools that are not in the main electrical supply line, they have



to think about the power that they generate by themselves from wind energy, solar energy or fossil-fuel generators. Therefore they have to learn how to use the equipments more effectively. In my observation the equipments there have shorter lives than those used by the people who know the computers well.

There are activities like science projects for students to search for knowledge in their daily lives, for example, by interviewing people about local wisdom, organizing lectures for local people, etc. Besides malaria there are topics like natural dyes for textile. The purpose of science projects is to let the students learn science principles in physics, chemistry and biology through what happen in their daily lives.

### **Extracurricular Activities**

There are also extracurricular activities in education, for example, simple method of plant tissue culture which does not need expensive equipments. In my experience at first they did not have enough skills, and so a lot of cultures got infected and died. But

I see this as learning experience. It teaches students about different methods of plant propagation. Unsuccessful experiments create a lot of questions for them to find out why they were not successful. Students may investigate the molds that infected the cultures and study their characteristics in details. We can always learn. The same method can be applied to mushroom culture because they have the same principle. Once the students can master the method, they can produce young plants for the villages by tissue culture technique.

I observe that the new generations like robots. So I have tried to use robots as teaching media. Many border patrol police have carried out this activity well in their schools. It helps children learn science and arts at the same time. For example, students design battery-run racing robots, tug-o-war robots, pick-up robots, bottle-shaking robots, etc. In the contest, they have to explain why some robots win, and why others do not. This should develop in children creative ideas, love of art and designing skills. The students used to enter a



competition in Hong Kong (China) and got a prize. I do not know whether he got it because his robot was good, or whether he was good at presenting his robot, because he happens to speak Chinese well.

## **Teacher Development**

We have allowed some teachers to study in the degree programs without having to be on-leave from schools. They are teachers in the border patrol police schools, schools under the Office of the Basic Education Commission and the Division of the Non-Formal and Informal Education. Those who have not had Bachelor's degrees have studied for Bachelor's degrees. Those who already had Bachelor's degrees can further their study in the Master's degree programs. However, we cannot yet provide this program to all.

In some areas, the teachers who wish to study have to travel from different schools to one place where we set up interactive distance learning classroom. They can study their lessons real-time sent from the universities or the station in the Palace. The universities also provide each of them hard-copy course materials. In some programs, the teachers who cannot leave the schools every week have to accumulate their weekends, so that they have a longer period of time to attend classes. The teachers who studied in this distance education programs are very attentive. Some said that the

subjects were difficult. Others complained about some inconveniences like occasional electricity problem at the station, which caused blackouts and wasted their study time. We have responded by preparing the generators to solve the problem.

## **Vocational Training**

In the past we focused on vocational training for the children who did not have nationalities. Those could not go to schools or get jobs. At present there is less restriction. They can go to schools or do some work. Later on we provide vocational training for the children who do not continue their study in regular schools. For small children in schools, we give them some basic art and handicraft skills. These are good for muscle development to do refined work. They also develop love of hand skills, love of arts, concentration and determination. For older children or school alumni, they can use those skills to earn income for their families. The Vocational Education Division of each province offers teachers and school alumni different vocational courses, like car mechanics, electrical wiring, barber, agriculture, cooking and handicrafts using mainly local materials. At present the Phufa shops are the outlets to sell the products from those students and housewives. If the teachers in any school have passion in handicrafts and arts, they can promote creativity and work skills among their students.



### **Promotion of Cooperatives**

There are cooperative shops, cooperative agriculture and cooperative savings. The purpose of cooperatives is to promote team work and democracy. One person cannot dictate or be in full charge. Students are taught about work process, accounting, etc., by staff from the Department of Cooperatives Promotion and the Department of Cooperative Account Auditing. For each cooperative, there is a student committee that has studied the work of cooperatives in a study tour. There is a contest for good meeting minutes. These are lessons on good writing and bookkeeping. Those who work in agriculture must also know how to do

accounting and sell their products to the schools' kitchens.

The process intends to demonstrate to students about good work: how to get things done with the help from many people. Everything costs. Nothing is free. They have to design their bookkeeping in such a way that their teachers, friends, parents and also local administrators can understand about how much they have invested, how much they can sell their products, how much they earn, and after balancing the account how much they profit or lose. They must learn how to figure out the prices of their products and how much more they should invest in their future business before they return the



profit to the committee members and the members of the cooperatives.

Cooperatives teach students how to manage their farms, families and personal money. In the beginning the students record their accounts in the books. At present some use computers, but they are still required to check their accounts by hand calculation and write them down in the books. Saving is very important, because with savings they can make plans for the future. They can use the money when needed, for example, when they get sick. They should not spend more than what they have.

### **Conservation of Natural Resources**

Conservation of natural resources is important especially for children in the areas where there has been forest destruction before. Recently there was thick smoke caused by people burning the forests, which is harmful to health. We have tried to teach students about the values of forest, water and soil.

There are academics and local experts to teach the students about reforestation and plant genetic resource. For example, they are taught to hike along the trails, take photos, write down the plants along the way, search for their scientific names, search in the internet or books for the details and grow vetiver to protect the soil and water, etc. The idea is that when they know the plants well and become familiar with them, they will not destroy them.

### **Preservation of Cultures**

Besides conserving natural resources, we teach students to preserve their cultures, which are their roots. They should be proud of their local wisdom. They should record those valuable things as human creations and spirits of the people in the old days. They should do development work together with the preservation of their cultures.

### **Expanding the Projects**

After working on those projects for a while, one important aspect is to





expand them. There have been Thai and foreign visitors visiting our works in the border patrol police schools and later on in some schools under the Ministry of Education. They become important resources. In some schools where there are large areas, they can set up a learning center for visitors. The knowledge gained from our projects can be applied to other schools, peoples and communities.

Knowledge and experience from our work in the schools in Thailand have been applied in some neighboring countries, i.e., Lao P.D.R., Cambodia, Vietnam and Mongolia. We are resource persons for international organizations like World Food Program and UNESCO. We are also mentioned in many lectures both in and out of the country. After this, I hope to have a chance to exchange with you, for example, in a Thailand and China cooperation project. I have supported the staff in my projects to take detailed notes of what they have done, so that they can produce the

media and share the knowledge with others. In this way we can help build equal opportunity for all lives in the world.

## **Conclusion**

In the present society, a country can thrive forward when its citizens are educated. The globalized world is full of new challenges, for example, advances in technology make it possible for people in the world to meet and link. We can see how peoples think and want differently. Those who are development workers have to be more careful. Even though I believe that the way I have done my development projects is not wrong, and it is still good for the remote areas, we have to adjust our thoughts. In the past we thought that, for a person in a remote area, just to be able to read and write was quite enough. But today those in the remote areas should also have the right to study at the levels as high as those in town. We have to plan more strategic development. 

*I should end now, because I have already talked too long.*

*Please take a look at this last picture.*

*Can you tell whether the people in the picture are Thais or Chinese?*



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