North Mae Najon, 2/3/99
Tambon Mae Najon
Interviewers: Jean, Bia, Mun
13-15 villagers – headman, one assistant (another assistant came later to show us the fields), 4 old people (2 men 2 women), 5 middle age men, 5 women – middle age and younger.

Village Baseline Survey
Population:
Households: 160
Ethnicity: Thai
List of names: Received

A. Infrastructure

1. Schools: Highschool to M.3, Elementary 1-6
2. Health Clinic: in M.5 next door
3. Telephones:
   Telephone don’t have – only have the telephone box 41. Waiting for the line to come in.

4. Electricity: Electricity 31 started as water generated electricity. In 40 they got electricity from the district (govt).

5. TVs: yes
6. Vehicles (pickups): 12   Motorcycles: over 100
7. Other Facilities:
   They have a village water system from the mountain (gravity fed) built in 36-37. But it’s not enough to service the whole area or at least to their village it does not supply a steady stream of water. It’s also for Mae Najon with an extension to their village. They’ve asked O.B.T. and O.B.J. to come help with the water problem but so far haven’t gotten any help.

8. Roads: Seasonal Use:
   Road was started to be built since 27 (road from Mae Najon to Mae Najon Nua). The road to Mae Najon has been there a long time (Note: but now is under construction for improvement). Right after the headman came to live in the north part of Mae Najon. Built by the Naay amphoe named Jom. Also built by previous nay amphoe.

9. Travel to Market (most frequently used means of travel):
10. Travel time: MCh? 45 min.,   Hot? ~1.5 hrs   ChM? 3-4 hrs.

B. History

1. When was the village established?

This village was part of M. 5 (Mae Najon) and separated administratively in May of 40. So the village history is really part of Mae Najon. These people just had their land further north and so built their houses here and are now a separate village in order to get government budget for development. Now have 160 HH. Govt budget is the same for each village regardless of size so they wanted to get this separately from Mae Najon. Each year is 5,000 Baht.
This area was first settled 87-88 years ago with 5 households to be closer to their fields. They used to only plant rice. They have mostly all upland rainfed fields and have done shifting cultivation with them. In fact, some people still do.

(history from older folks about the old days)….  

Before in the old days didn’t use fertilizer or pesticide. The shifting cultivation took care of the weeds – they would just move to a new area and burn and then not have trouble with weeds. The soil was good that way. They would return every 5-8 years to the old fields. They would burn again in these old fields because they couldn’t clear the area fast enough otherwise.

If they didn’t have enough rice to eat they would go gather food in the forest and fish. If this was still not enough they would walk to Sanpatong to buy rice. They have never sold rice. It took two days to walk to Sanpatong by way of Mae Wak over the mountain. They would go to “Ban Gad” in Sanpatong. 10-15 Bt. would buy a lot back then. They also sometimes bought from Karen villages along the way. They could also trade forest products for rice. Or sometimes take cattle to trade. Also would buy salt in Sanpatong as well to trade for rice with the Karen. They used to walk over the mountain to Sanpatong and it was the closest city at the time.

They used to use buffalo to plow their fields. About 20 years stopped using buffalo but still kept some to sell for meat. They don’t raise buffalo or cattle anymore, because they eat the produce in the villagers’ fields and they had problems with this so no one raises anymore. They didn’t used to have wage work to do or shops selling goods.

One older woman complained to Jean that her kids were all married and she lives alone and doesn’t have anything (though the kids still live in that village).

C. Land

1. Land Area: 4,000~ rai of upland fields, but this was only from the survey for seed corn – and they said that there is actually quite a bit more than this, but they couldn’t say how much.

   Ten yrs ago: We asked but they couldn’t really say – said it was the same as now.

2. Irrigated by run-of-river: small amount – mostly all rainfed
3. Irrigated by other means (well, pipe):

4. Forest:

They have a forest area to use that the villagers take care of. But they seemed a little reticent about the forest and didn’t answer clearly. It’s close to their house area….but we didn’t see much if any forest. Said there is about 20 rai. (They likely gather products from the Doi Inthanon national park forest and so don’t say – just a guess).

They want help with the forest as well – want to have forestry come and help them.
5. Home-gardens:

6. Prevailing land quality /soil description:

7. Tenure:
Each person has on average more than 10 rai. Paddy each family has on average 2-3 rai or up to 5 rai. Now, they are still doing shifting cultivation but only a small amount of families who are doing this still. People are still expanding but some people have been caught and are not allowed to have that land to use.

S.B.G. (the area we saw – can’t sell or buy but can use or change owners) and S.T.G. (also can’t buy or sell but can change use between different people – in other words it is for the village to use and whoever agrees in the village can use and change). They have these in a couple areas. S.B.G. area they cannot expand anymore, because they will be caught.

They’ve had to divide up their land area among their children – one older woman has 7 children. (we think this means that such a family can no longer do shifting because the land area is not enough). Most people have some upland land but many don’t have paddy anymore. One woman chimed in that there really isn’t anyone able to shift now – they have brothers and sisters that come in and are using the land.

If they expand it would have to be area that has no title at all. Only a few people are still shifting.

Other areas there is no title and this is actually more area than the others.

They can’t sell their land - no title.

One problem is with land use within the village. If they don’t use the land for one or two years (fallow) then another person from the village will come in and use it. There will be a conflict and the headman is supposed to bring the two parties together to settle the situation. If the person didn’t ask permission to use the land then they will fine that person. This used to happen a lot but now happens less – people ask permission beforehand and then there’s no problem. Another reason they are using the land every year is that if they leave it fallow for more than one or two years then trees will begin to grow back and the government will claim it again as forest land.

8. Any communally controlled land? (specify)

9. Major crops and rotations:

Right now they are planting soybean and corn and a little upland rice. But next year they are planning to plant more rice because this year they did not have enough rice to eat. Income from corn is about the same as from soybean but corn is easier to plant and manage than soy. Corn seed is 400~ Bt. per bag (5 kg). 5 kg can plant about 5 rai. So input cost of corn are less than for soy. But price for soy is much higher than for corn. Price for corn is steady though. Also corn uses less labor to harvest because they can harvest over a longer period than soy which has to be harvested all at once.
10. **Major changes in land use by crop:**

We asked if they have enough labor for the land when people leave the village. They said they don’t have enough labor. They can’t do it just as a family anymore. But they still do labor sharing in this village and by helping each other they can work all the land. But the labor sharing is usually done within extended families – they don’t like to go outside the extended family to do it.

Labor sharing: For example, when they want to harvest their soybean they tell the whole village when. On that day they write down the names of everyone who shows up to work. Often many people 70-80 (soy takes a lot of labor at harvest). So after the harvest they know that they must go and help all the people on their list. If they can’t help everyone in return one year then they help the next year. They supply the food (gap Khaw) for everyone who helps but each person brings their own rice. They can substitute harvest labor and planting labor this way as they figure the exchange based on a day’s worth of work.

They may also use wage labor if they have the cash. They feed these people as well, but don’t have to work for them in the future as they have paid them already. If they have money they will choose the people they want to hire first. For the labor sharing they cannot choose – whoever shows up they will have to work for in return.

This year they did a lot of labor sharing.

This year they will definitely grow more rice because they didn’t have enough rice to eat this year.

1 rai of soy yields about 20 tang. If they sell they’ll get about 2,000~ Bt. But the costs include fertilizer (1g = 450), herbicide 90 Bt., and plow costs 350. Without counting labor this is OK and they feel worth it. But when include their labor it becomes not so worth it. You get just about an ag wage for your own labor. So it’s like paying yourself as a wage laborer.

Before doing agriculture was a pain (older people). They had to carry their produce to their homes and it often took three days to get it all there. They had to sleep in the fields for three days without returning.

4-5 years ago started planting corn. It uses labor less than soy. And it also uses less time and they could plant it after the soy as well.

Planted rice and about 10 or more years ago started planting soy. They changed because they couldn’t sell the rice but they could sell the soy and they wanted to have money.

One person said that a middleman came to suggest they plant soy, but then others said that it was district ag and they helped them find markets for it as well. Then there was no problem with the market for soy and the price 4-5 Bt./kg. But they did have a problem with the harvesting because they didn’t have a sheeling machine. They had to pound the pods off. But after that they had a middleman come in that had a machine to shell it for them – then no problem.

A company also came to suggest planting marigolds and they planted a little to see. But they didn’t produce well (not much flowers) because not enough water. Also it wasn’t very profitable.
Also had a company from Sanpatong come in to suggest sweet corn as a crop. But they haven’t planted yet. They have looked at the numbers and think they will not make a profit. Sweet corn uses a lot of labor and they’ve looked at labor costs and input costs (fertilizer, seed etc.) and it wouldn’t be worth it.

With the marigolds and the sweet corn they maybe wouldn’t lose money but wouldn’t make as much as with corn and soy.

CP came to survey for growing seed two years ago (40). They tried to plant 10 rai (experiment) and it didn’t produce very well. The ears were small and so was the seed but some of it was OK. (41) CP gave enough seed to the village for 2,000 rai but people who signed up to grow the seed was over 4,000 rai. Thus, they have a problem and people were fighting. So CP took back the seed completely because they couldn’t (or didn’t want) to decide who should get the seed. So they didn’t plant.

Quite a few people are planting fruit trees - mango, lamyai, jack fruit. But just starting last year. And they aren’t growing very well because the rain wasn’t good. They’ve had to carry water to irrigate them. So they started planting just near the village. They plant to invest for the future. It was advised they plant fruit trees by the Naay amphoe and they agreed so they planted. Some planted teak, but not many, because if they plant these trees it becomes like a forest again and they can’t plant crops there. Plus, they can’t cut the trees either without permission.

They plant vegetables to eat but not to sell.

It’s about 5 km to one of the field areas on the way to Mae Sa from the village.

12. Major land investment decisions?

People who have money use a tractor to plow both upland and paddy. Others plow by hand. One man has seen only about 10 rai plowed by tractor (but actually we think this means they just use labor more than tractors.) But in the paddy they use small tractors (kwai lek) almost exclusively. They have about 30 small tractors in the village. The tambon owns one large tractor that they rent out.

They built terraces during the Watershed development project period (24). But these don’t have much use anymore. They only helped with erosion. But now as the water would sit in the terraces it made the soil by each step hard and they can’t plant there anymore. They are losing yet more area to plant so for the past two years they’ve been breaking down the terraces. Some places they don’t exist anymore but others still have them. They think is better and now a tractor can go in to plow – it easier and they say the soil is not hard anymore.

Are there other decisions in which community takes the lead?

13. Major agricultural problems –

The biggest problem with ag for the farmers is input costs are high (fertilizer, herbicide, pesticide etc.). The second problem is with money. They borrow two ways – money (use for labor) and input. If they don’t have money enough for labor it’s OK because they can share labor in the village. but they have to borrow for the inputs and they’re expensive.
Before the biggest problem was that they didn’t have enough rice to eat. Because they didn’t use fertilizer or pesticides so production was low. About 10 years ago started using fertilizer and their production increased (of rice). But it was still not really enough because they don’t have irrigation. So they had to go trade.

This year they had a problem with brown hopper in rice. One case, last year got rice from his paddy of 1 tang and even this he couldn’t eat but gave to his chickens to eat. But before he used to get 60 tang.

14. Other areas of concern or interest at village or community level.

Right now they have a problem with off-farm employment. They want to have more jobs for people in the village outside of agriculture – they’ve asked for help from the amphoe but gotten nothing yet.

17. Effect of economic crisis?

Input price: The economic crisis has made input price increase. (We asked what they will decide to do with the money problem). They said some people will do the same thing but just have higher costs. But others will use less inputs especially herbicide and pesticides but will probably then use more labor to weed etc. If they don’t use herbicide for example the labor requirement for one rai goes up from one person to three. But in many cases this increased labor cost will still be higher than the cost of herbicide and so they may still do as before and just make less profit.

D. Major sources of information

1. Agricultural development or other projects in village: When begun?

They don’t have a rice bank but 3 years ago did have in M.5. There is no village fund in this village – they’re starting to look for money to use this way.

2. Credit institutions: (When people need money where do they borrow from?)

Nearly every household is a member of either the ag coop (S.) or the ag bank (T.)

S. 80% of village are members of S. which is about 100 people. About half the amount are member of T. which is about 50 people.

28-29 S. came in and people became members. They borrow inputs more than money. One case, you can borrow inputs not more than 8,000Bt. Money also cannot by more than 8,000Bt. But it’s harder to borrow money because the ag cooperative itself is in debt. If a person in the coop dies each member must pay 200 Bt. per person. This money is used to help members who have died – they give an amount to the family to help. They also have to pay 1,000 Bt. membership fees.
Also have to pay 50 Bt. service charge. So the total 1,050 Bt. per year. They also have to pay service charges depending on how much they borrow. If they don’t service the interest they are fined. And if they want to borrow again they have to pay back both principal and interest before. But what happens sometimes is that they borrow from their relatives so that they can payback S. and then borrow more.

The decision to plant more or less area to a specific crop depends mostly on money available. The second consideration is labor.

32 - T. came in. Members can borrow three ways. Short, medium and long term. 20-30,000 max for short term, medium – max 50,000 Bt., long run can borrow more than 100,000 but not more than 500,000Bt. To borrow long term you need to have a title for collateral. Member costs is 1,500 Bt./year. If a member dies their family gets 130,000~Bt. So they divide this by the number of members and charge this if someone dies. They borrow as money only and buy the inputs with this money.

People prefer T. because they can borrow as money only and can use however they want. If they borrow inputs from S. they often come slowly and not in time to plant. Whereas, if they get money like with T. they can go immediately and buy their inputs.

Savings: If they do wage labor they will usually save about 10-20 Bt. per day out of their wage. In the time that they don’t have any work to do they need this money to rely on. They also go look for forest products in the times they have no work in order to increase their income in other ways.

Money to buy rice comes from soy, corn. But if that money is not enough they will look for wage labor on a day to day basis (within the village mostly, at least within Mae Najon M. 5 – some outside the village) in order to have money to go buy rice.

3. Where do people learn about market prices?

When they sell they compare between S. and middlemen. They sell to the highest price. But if sell to S. have to take themselves which means transport costs. Middlemen come and buy themselves in the village. Therefore, most people sell to middlemen because it’s more convenient. Also for example with soy the middleman will bring a shelling machine as well. For corn they sell as ears to middlemen – if they sell to S. it has to be grain – so again it’s more convenient to sell to middlemen. S. is good for them though, because they set the price at a certain level so that the middlemen have to offer a similar price – this price is probably higher (they think) than the price would be without S. participating in the market.

If sell to S. usually use a truck in the village to send the produce. They have about 12 pickups in this village (probably a lot more in M. 5 that they can use). Motorcycles over 100.

4. Where do people learn about job opportunities and wages outside amphoe?
5. Where do people learn about agricultural crops and technologies?

Care came in and made suggestions for water management. They suggested digging openings in the terraces so that the extra water would flow down to others. But they only suggested this in a training but no one did it. The said that the terraces were not flat and so the water would not have flowed down correctly even if they dug these small channels. They feel the terraces didn’t help them because of the hard soil around the edges. This made it necessary to plow often with small plows and so made expenses increase.

E. Labor and migration

Do people leave the village to look for work elsewhere?

Lots of people leave this village to work elsewhere. Some leave as families and some as individuals. They estimated over 100 people have left total. Some have left to get married but to work probably about 40-50 people. They go to both Chiang Mai and Bangkok. The people who leave, some send money back to their parents (average about 10,000 Bt – one case of a man in the group – like about 1,000 Bt. per month). What they make outside is more than they would make doing agriculture with their parents. If they stayed in the village they would make about 4,000-5,000 Bt. per year. But if they work outside they earn more than this. On average a family in the village will make about 40,000-50,000 Bt. doing agriculture. But a person who leaves can earn 20,000-30,000 Bt. per person. 4-5 years ago – young people would leave to work about 50%. Only had old people in the village. But this year only about 10% have left (or still live away). People have come back too – a lot – they just live with their parents and don’t do anything. There is no work for them in the village. They haven’t started planting yet either so everyone is just at home doing nothing.

Some families are leaving. Many young people leave. And more women leave than men. Men go to work in construction and other wage labor. Many people have returned because employers aren’t hiring for wage work now either. So they return but aren’t doing anything now.

(Need to find out more about why more women leave than men and what they do in the cities – but will be a difficult topic to probe!)

Income: from agriculture clarified 40,000-50,000 is revenue but once inputs and labor are deducted they only earn about 20,000 net profit. This 20,000 is what they have to use all year for consumption. They begin planting in May and during the dry season they use this money to consume.
F. Prices – 1=last year, 2=two to three years ago, 3=10 years ago

Agricultural wages: 1. 80 Bt.(m), 60 (w) 2. 60 (m)  Bt. 50 (w) 3. (m) 25-30, (w) 15-20  (only within the village and it also varies by season this is probably an average for the year).
Tractor Services: - large tractor or the tambon 1. 350 Bt./rai, 2. 350 Bt./rai  (but pay own fuel, but plowing may also get easier each year – not sure)
Farm Gate Corn (animal feed) –1. 2 Bt ear, 2. 2.5 ear 3. Didn’t plant

Farm Gate Soybean: 1. 9.9 Bt/kg or 130-140 Bt./tang 2. 100 Bt./tang, 3. 100 Bt./tang

If the price for Soy was 150 Bt/tang then they would plant all soy and they would be very pleased – which is about 10 Bt/kg. That’s the price they really want.

Fertilizer: Rabbit Brand (16-20-0) 1. 450 Bt./g, 2. 370-380 Bt/g, 3. 220 Bt./g

This is cheaper here than in Mae Chaem because a person from Chiang Mai brings it directly to Mae Najon and only charges a 20 Bt. service charge per grasop (included in the 450Bt. above). They thought about going to buy themselves, but they don’t all need it at the same time and they don’t always have the money at the same time either to coordinate purchase. (sounds like this is a person who is actually from Mae Najon but lives in Chiang Mai now – we didn’t ask this but are guessing).

Headman for example buys fertilizer in Chiang Mai himself also. He can get credit in Chiang Mai.

Diesel 1. 9.5 Bt/l, 2. 6-7 Bt. 3. Didn’t have
Gasoline: Benzene – 1. 12 Bt./l, 2. 10 Bt. 3. didn’t have.

Herbicide: Kamuckson 1. 900 Bt./5l, or 180Bt/l 2. 430 Bt/5l, ~90 Bt/l  (Five years ago is was also about 80-90 Bt/l) 3. Didn’t use

Milling Cost: 1. 5 Bt/t , 2. 2-2.5 Bt/t, 3. Didn’t have
They have one rice mill in their village
Rice (Consume):
1. 200-280 Bt./t, 2. 180 Bt./t  3. Unmilled rice 20-30 Bt./t

Other household goods are equal to Mae Chaem prices.

Notes: We had the largest turnout for this meeting. The village headman is relatively young and the village is new (so his job is as well). I don’t think anyone has come to speak with them like this before which made it easier. There were many older people to answer history questions. The men said that they don’t do much wage work – only within the village sometimes. But I got the feeling that women do quite a bit within the village. They were participating from the back of the group and kept talking about various strategies they have for earning money. And their wages are less than the men’s. They didn’t ask for help from us – I guess they understood it was just information we were there for. Except the one older woman who talked a lot to Jean about her problem of living alone (but she didn’t seem bad off financially as her kids give her money – just lonely.) Also they have debt in the village, but it did not seem to be such a large issue here as in other Thai villages we’ve studied. The area seems to be a large island unto itself there with it’s own set of connections to the world outside of Mae Chaem.