



ESRC Research Group on
Wellbeing in Developing Countries



Wellbeing in Developing Countries Project

Community Profile

**Nai Muang Community,
Muang District,
Khon Kaen Province**

January 2005

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Nai Muang Community, Muang District, Khon Kaen Province

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Abbreviations and Glossary of Non-English Words

Amphur	district
Baht	unit of Thai currency
Baisrisuhkwan	a spirit ceremony to symbolize unit, involving the bidding of wrists with strings
Changwat	province
Dern	month
Isan	the northeastern region of Thailand
rai	local unit of land measurement in Thailand (1 rai = 1,600 sq metres)
Sin-sord	bride-price
Stang	100 stang = 1 baht
Songkran	the water festival and Thai new year
Tumbun	making a merit
Wat	temple

1. General Characteristic of the Community

1.1 Location and Territory

The community is located in Khon Kaen Municipality, Khon Kaen City sub-district, Muang district, Khon Kaen province. The entire area of the community, of around 7.5 rai or 12,500 sq m, is owned by the state railway of Thailand. It is about 2 km from Khon Kaen's railroad station. The community is bordered by:

The public land located between the railway and Mitraparb Road to the North

Burapha Fishery-Net Factory to the South

The railway and informal education office to the East

The Friendship Road to the West

1.2 Topography

This area of 7.5 rai is owned by the state railway of Thailand. Before the villagers moved to settle here, the area was unused as some part of it was surrounded by fertile natural resources. When the villagers moved to reside here, the resources were encroached on and replaced by housing. Dwellings in the community are located along 2 main narrow roads. The greatest density of housing is in the centre of the community. (For more data see the community's map)

1.3 Infrastructures

After the settlement was formed, the Khon Kaen Municipality came to manage the community after the municipality proposed that the railway authority should charge rent from the villagers rather than allow them to live there for free. This is because the municipality wanted to use the contract formed with the railway authority in order to ask for household numbers from the state agency. Although the municipality has overseen the community, the construction of the infrastructure here has to be allowed by the state railway of Thailand. Details of this are as follows:

Water supply, in the past, the villagers bought water; it cost 5 baht a pushcart–12 gallons of 5 liters each. The community was then supported with 5,000 baht from JICA which provided 2 tanks and the building of a water system too. The committee assigned to the villagers water that was sold on a day to day basis. The water was sold at the same price as by the merchant; that was 5 baht per pushcart–2 for the seller and 3 for the group. After the group had conducted this activity for a time, it was abolished because the seller did not send the money from the sales to the group.

In the middle of 1997, the villagers gathered and proposed to use the water supply from an agency. The agency provided a meter for the whole community then every household would be separated by using the sub-meter–1,200 baht each. The monthly expenses concerned with the water supply for each household consisted of: 10 baht for the meter fee, 10 baht for tax and approximately 200-500 baht for the water use–15-17 baht per unit.

The problem of this arrangement was that the charge for the water was higher than usual because the villagers previously used temporary meters and the committee who was responsible for collecting the charge from the villagers did not pay this to the agency concerned. As a result, the villagers became indebted and so at present, each villager pays individually for the water charge.



Figure 1 Shallow well used by some of villagers

Electricity, the community started to use electricity in 1990. When the households received their household number, they used it in order to get the electricity supply. At the time, there were five households that could access the service. The number of users has increased from year to year. Some will hitch the service from neighbors and some from their relatives who have got the main meters. The charges are different: from the main meter it is 3.5 baht per unit and 6-8 baht from the sub-meter.

Roads, there are two main roads: *Pattana 1* and *Pattana 2* Road. Their condition is rough particularly during the rainy season. In addition, both of them are quite narrow. In 1997, DANCED, an NGO from Denmark provided the budget of about 180,000 baht to build a cement road, with 150,000 baht for 499 meters of *Pattana 1* and the remainder for *Pattana 2*.



Figure 2 The roads in the community

Child developing centre, it was established as part of the policy of the municipality and was supported by the state agencies, NGOs and the villagers. This support provided materials and a salary. The children who attend the centre are mostly from the poor families or orphans who live with a grandmother or a grandfather. The children's behavior is somewhat more aggressive than others. The behavior changes when they attend the centre but when they leave it, they often return to be as they were before.

The KK municipality supports the center with milk and foods and those parents need to pay to join the centre 5 baht per day each. The centre contacts a health care centre to look after the children's health.

The problems of this child centre are as follows:

1. The children's parents are poor and always migrate to make a living. Those children need to follow their family. As such, the children's study is not continuous.
2. The committee of this centre does not understand their role.
3. Its budget for expenses does not balance each month.
4. The superintendent does not participate in any training courses concerning caring for children.
5. The center suffers from a lack of funds to pay for the superintendent



Figure 3 The child developing centre

Artesian wells. There are 5 places with underground water. All of them were constructed by the villagers themselves. Those wells are still useable by the owners and nearby neighbors.

Loud speaker. The community has 1 loud speaker that was supported by the KK Municipality and the toilet fund of the community. Constructed in 1993 it is used for informing any information from the stage agencies and the community itself.

The shop. There are 7 grocery stores in the community and the biggest one is Mr Sumrit Deebhum who is now the leader of the community. During the day time, which is working time, it does not have many customers. It is very busy when the villagers return from their work in the late afternoon until night time.

For the poor, they always buy supplies for consumption in their every day life e.g. soap, toothpaste, wash powder, fish source among others from these shops. The best seller item of each shop is liquor and cigarette. As for the rich, they usually buy it from big department stores in KK City.

1.4 Land and land renting

The entire area of the community is owned by the state railway of Thailand. The total area is about 7.5 rai or 12,000 sq m. The villagers have to rent the area from the rail authority at a rate of 3 baht/sq m/year. The villagers have to make a contract with the authority each year. The size of each rented area is mostly less than 100 sq m. The greatest area owned by a single household was 240 sq m and the smallest size was 48 sq m.

1.5 Dwelling

The survey by *Charunya Wongprom* found that most of the villagers lived in single-floor housing, and few lived in houses with two floors. The homes have been constructed from wood, cement and Zinc.



Figure 4 Some of dwellings

1.6 Asset

According to the study by *Charunya Wongprom*, relating to the three main assets possessed by the villagers, the whole community has 19 cars, 97 motorcycles and 76 refrigerators. Few households have a computer

2. History of the Community

Nai Miuang Community is one of 13 slum communities in Khon Kaen Municipality. In the past, the area was unused land until the state railway of Thailand developed a locomotive storage area here.

In 1970, an area near the railway authority's land was developed as a golf course, consequently, the construction workers of the golf course encroached onto the state railway of Thailand's area, which was vacant land suitable for construction of a shelter. The first group of the workers who settled here consisted of: Mr *Sak Pronngam*, Mr *Lmi Jullanit*, Mrs *Mak Pongvinam* and Mrs *Bunthum Thammarong*. At that time, there was no electricity service, so they needed to use candles for lighting. Water supply was from a pond. Subsequently, more people followed and settled here permanently. The unused land was used for more and more shelters, while temporary homes became more permanent dwellings.

In late 1990, when Mr *Ruang Tanchai* was the mayor, the municipality negotiated with the railway authority. An important issue was that every household could live in the area but had to pay rent to the railway of 3 baht per sq m per year, and anyone who wanted to sell their right to occupation must inform the authority.

In 1991, there were 75 Hhs, so the Khon Kaen Municipality began to manage the community; regulations was drawn and a committee was elected. In addition, the municipality, in cooperation with the state agency and NGOs, began community development activities. The activities at this time were: supporting group construction, surveying and producing preliminary data of the community, promoting health aspects and training and study tour.

Originally, the members of this community migrated from provinces including Pachinburi, Burirume, Srisakate, Yasothon, Pichitra, Nakhonpathom and Lopburi. The two big clans of the community were *Srichumpa*—4 households and *Cancunlum*—3 households.

Although the villagers have lived here for a long time, their way of life does not include any relationship with their neighbors. As almost all of them are poor, they can only make a living day-by-day so they have no time to create relationships with others. Problems inside the community include theft, drugs, gambling and brawling.

Timeline of key events in the village

1970	The first 4 households moved to settle.
1990	The villagers had to pay rent to the railway for the land. The first 5 households could access an electricity supply.
1991	The Khon Kaen Municipality began to manage the community and the committee was elected.
1993	The developing child centre was built.
1994	JICA, a Japan-based NGO, provided 5,000 baht in order to construct a water supply system.
1997	DANCED, a Denmark-based NGO contributed 180,000 baht to the construction of a road in the community.

- 2002 The government gave the community one million baht as part of the village and community fund policy
- 2002 The community was chosen as the Home Security Project, which is in cooperation with the University of Khon Kaen, the Khon Kaen Municipality and the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI).

3. Demographic Data

3.1 Population

According to the data in a survey conducted in 2003 by state officials, the village had 163 households and a total population of 800: 470 male and 330 female. The age group and number of people can be divided as follows.

Age Range	Numbers	Percentages
1 day - 3 years	40	5.00
3 years 1 day - 6 years	65	8.13
6 years 1 day- 12years	86	10.75
12 years 1 day- 14 years	99	12.37
14 years 1 day- 18 years	79	9.87
18 years 1 day- 50 years	320	40.00
50 years 1 day- 60 years	63	7.87
60 years 1 day and upper	48	6.00
Total	800	100

Source: the Community's Fund of Nai Muang Community, 2003

Table 1 Numbers and percentages of the population

According to the table 1, the largest group of villagers, at 40% was between 18 years 1 day and 50 years and the latter group was 12 years 1day- 14 years at 12.37%. Therefore, this data can be assumed that the villagers were mostly labour force group, middle age group and teen age group.

3.2 The Family

Most families of the community are extended families. This is because the size of the dwelling area that cannot be extended. Thus, when a household member gets married, they need to stay with their parent including other relatives. Some of them have households with over 10 people. The decision-making power is dependent on each household. Some families depend on the husband and the wife. For some the power is with the household member who is a main source of household income.

3.3 The Status of Women

The villagers are mostly the poor and for most of whom income from only the husband is not enough for making a living. The women need to work to earn an extra income to support their household. In several households the women generate a substantial source of the household's income because their husband is a disabled person. The occupations of those women are the road sweeping officers of KK Municipally, street vendors, or employees of service sector in KK city among others.

From interviewing it was found that most of the villagers' income is from the women and those women are also expected to send a remittance back to the family, more so than the men.

There are many women of this community who often drink and smoke. This behavior has caused to have a brawl within the community, though it is less than the men.

3.4 Education

Within the community there is a child developing center that has been provided for children aged from 3-5. Afterward the children mostly attend a primary school at *Non Nong Wat Municipality School*. The school supports a scholarship or a lunch for the children of the community. The school is about 1 km from the community and the children always go to the school on foot or by bicycle. For secondary school, the children attend *Kaennakhon Wittayalai School*. Most of the children who can study at this level are from the rich households of the community and only 3-4 persons can enroll in a bachelor's degree at Northern University, those who can get a scholarship from the university.

When the children finish a lower secondary school, most of them cannot continue to higher education. This is because;

- 1) Most of the villagers are poor so they cannot afford course materials, uniforms, transportation and fees. Apart from this, the parent does not have a saving behavior and does not want to invest in education because they consider that education is not important. Moreover, they need their children to work to earn more income for the family amidst a higher cost of living as well as paying for water supply, electric charge, foods, liquor, cigarettes and gamble.
- 2) Some children are hardly any committed to education. They are addicted to computer games, drugs and gambling. So their parent decides not to support the children's education.

The education level that the villagers have finished is mostly preliminary school–*Prathomsuksa 4 and 6*. Some others, especially elderly people, enter an informal education.

3.5 Health

There is a primary healthcare centre which has been established by the *Khon Kaen Hospital* in 1996. It supports a budget to establish a drug fund and training for the village's committee concerning with a sanitation and primary healthcare.

After the training, those who participated became a community health volunteer and a primary health centre and the drug fund was established. At that time, when the villagers get ill, they would come to heal at this centre. For those who are poor the centre would provide them with free medicine. Nowadays, these activities were given up because no one in the community wished to proceed.

However, when they face a serious illness, they would be taken to the *KK Hospital* because every villager named in housing registration would get 30 Baht ID that they would submit the same time as they went to the hospital. The patients will be charged 30 Baht each time. Some employees who might have a social security card usually get treatment at *Srinakarin Hospital*, of *KK University* as only few of them can get cure at a private hospital.

Traditional healing is rare in the community. The healers are Mr Tuk Promvisai and Mr Chin Sawitee. The villagers would get this remedy only when they face a diseased that is not too serious.

In relation to the survey by Buapun Prompakping it was found that few of the villagers suffer from chronically ill health. 52% of the villagers have smoked. 93 % of all villagers hold a health card. The villagers can receive information concerning taking care of their own health from sources such as Khon Kaen University and Khon Kaen Health Office.

4. The Community Economy

4.1 Occupations

The main occupations of the villagers can be divided up as follows:

1. Wage labour

The villagers are mostly employed inside Khon Kaen City. Their kinds of work consist of:

1) Manual laborers at Khon Kaen railway station, everyday the villagers from the community will go to gather at the railway station. This is because some goods from Bangkok will be transported to Khon Kaen province by goods trains. When these trains arrive at Khon Kaen station the goods owners will hire laborers to carry those items to trucks and also from the trucks to each shop in the city. Wages depended on negotiations between the carriers and the laborers. Normally, it will depend upon the size of the truck. Some trucks may pay up to 1,000 baht and use 10 persons; they will divide this wage by the number of workers. Some can afford to hire only one person.

2) Tricycle-tray cyclist: they will be hired to carry food from *Nong Phai Lom* Markets, *Bang Lum Phoo* Market and Railway Market to restaurants within Khon Kaen City. The villagers will rent this transport for about 20 baht per day. Wages are between 10-20 baht per journey. They can earn about 100-200 baht per day

3) Other forms of wage labor are construction and factory employment. In other words, the community's members can be employed in any type of work that provides a wage.

2. Commercial: the villagers sell types of food that involve low investment costs. These kinds of commercial activities include selling fruit, grilled sausage and local food. Some are vendors that sell things both inside and outside the community. In addition, there are five grocery stores within the community.

3. Service worker: the villagers who work as service workers can be divided into two groups. The first group is a youth group; they work in many kinds of shop including restaurants, department stores, petrol stations and other shops in the city. They have worked for only a few years. The other is a middle aged group. This group will have more experience and skills than the first group and a few people of the community are in this group. They usually work in the business sector.

In the future, it is likely that the livelihood of the villagers will depend on the expansion of the service sector of Khon Kaen city. Some of the villagers who are skilled in this kind of work will be able to create a career for themselves, as they will be able to apply their experience and skills to their work.

4. Rubbish selling; there are a few households which depend upon selling rubbish. Those villagers have usually been around the municipality to collect the rubbish. They need to rent a motorbike with cart to do their work for around 25 baht per day. They would collect the rubbish for 2-3 days in order to sell it to a shop and earn about 200-300 baht per time. Those people who perform this occupation said that *"this kind of occupation can get*

money regularly and we do not need to invest in anything, though we risk some diseases which could come from the rubbish".



16



5

Figure 5 Collecting rubbish for selling

5. Some occupations of the villagers have been supported by many external bodies. All of them are conducted in group form including the organic vegetable group, Brick group and Farmers' group. For example, the farmers' group which now has 30 members was supported by Ko Yu Ha Company. The company allows the land that the group rents to be used as paddy fields. The group's members have to pay rent of 500 baht each and then every person will be allocated about 5 rai of land. They will keep this yield for consumption in their household.

4.2 Income and Expenditure

Income and expenditure is related to the villagers' careers. The villagers mostly work as wage laborers and as a result, their income is not stable. According to the survey statistics produced by the project, the average household income was 8,957 baht per month, while the average household expenditure was 8,972 baht per month. As this data shows, villagers' average income does not cover their average expenditure, with a corresponding effect on the level of debt.

4.3 Debt

According to the data mentioned above, the villagers mostly work as wage laborers. This kind of work involves variable income and does not cover their everyday household expenditure. This means insecurity for the villagers and forced them to borrow money from informal and formal sources. The informal sources are money lenders from both inside and outside the community. Even though these money lenders charge a high interest rate, the villagers resort to using them in order to cover their living expenses. Formal sources of borrowing are found only inside the community and include the Million Baht Fund. The survey data produced by Charoon Wongprom found that 85 households, or 59% of the total number of households in the community, have got debts. The average debt was 31,411 baht per household. Hence the villagers are faced with a high rate of indebtedness.

The money lender inside the community is Mr *Sumreng Suknan* who is also the community's chairman. He will charge a high interest payment of 20 baht per month.

4.4 The Consumption

From the observation on the way of life and the villages' consumption it was found that they do not consider the nutritional value of food. The behaviors such as drinking, smoking and eating raw meat are seen in both the men and women.

The smoking behavior of the villagers is often co-occurs with drinking; moreover, some of them are addicted to either drinking or smoking or both.

Even though the villagers know the effect on their health of the behavior mentioned above, comprising of several diseases and having brawls, they still do it. Their different reasons are that they believe that drinking a local whisky can help them to eat more and to improve the taste; some think it is the way to relieve their economic stress and some think it will make a tight relationship with neighbors.



Figure 6 The local shops

4.5 Migration

Some of the villagers migrated to work in a form of temporary migration. It consists of being employed to cutting sugarcane in Kanchanaburi and Supauburi Province, from December to April of each year. Also some of them would migrate to work in the rubber tree field in the South for about 1 month. For the younger group, just a few migrated for work. They were often employed as construction workers in BKK and they mostly worked for a short time.

5. Ways of Life, Culture, Traditions and Beliefs

5.1 Traditions and beliefs

Most of the villagers are Buddhist. Every tradition conducted in the community is the same as other *Isan* communities, locally called *Heed Sibsong*. The main traditions are conducted by the villagers and consist of *Boon Phraves* or *Boon Mahachat*, *Boon Sonf Ngam* (*Songkran* Festival, *Boon Kaow Pan Sa*, *Boon Kaw Pra Dub Din* and *Boon Kao Sak* among others).

The villagers commonly practice Buddhist activities at *Wat Wuttaram* and monks from this temple will come to the community early every morning in order to allow the villagers to offer their food in the process of making merit

In the community, the villagers believe in “*Poo Kaew Shrine*”. It is an anthill and its form looks like a man. It was formed before the community was established. When the villagers perform ritual activities—either at the community or at household level, they have to offer food to the shrine as a sign of respect. The strength of villagers’ beliefs about this shrine has been declining however, shown by the encroachment of this area by a chicken coop and pigsty.



Figure 7 *Poo Kaew Shrine*

5.2 Marriage

In the past, men and women in the community married people who had to be approved by their parent. The couple could only see each other at the woman’s house or at a festival but the woman needed to ask for the parent’s permission. The process meant it took a long time to construct a relationship. The man would then ask for the parent to talk with the woman’s parent in order to make the decision to marry.

At present, the young, both male and female, are able to decide to marry by themselves. The average age that people get married is between 17 to 18 years old. Those who married have often met each other at the work place. Though the decision making of the marriage has been changed, most of the young in the community still respect the local tradition. The parents are still important people on the engagement and wedding day. Just a few people neglect the traditional ceremony.

After the wedding ceremony, the bridegroom who comes from outside always becomes a member and stays with the bride's household in the community. For the bridegroom from the community, they have to move to live with the bride's family outside. However, several couples still stay with their parent after the wedding because they do not have enough money to buy or rent a place of their own.

5.3 The regular traditions over 12 months (Dern)

Dern Ary (January): *Bun AudTa*. The idea here is to offer food to priests and follow religious precepts, and to make dedications to the spirits of their relations that have passed away.

Dern Yii (February): *Bun Pii Mai* (new year). They make food and other offerings to priests at the village granary, encircling the tree *Nam Kor* where they believe that good spirits live.

Dern Sam (March) *Bun Kum Kaw, Bun Kaw Ji and Bun Audta* (in *Kun 9 kum Dern* 3 in the Thai old calendar). For this ceremony villagers bring rice and offer it to the temple (they carry two loads suspended from the ends of a pole). Villagers are also able to produce an income from employment in paddy farming – this can generate 120 baht per day. Sewing from factories in Bangkok can earn 12-15 baht per pack.

Trade There are two shops in the community however there is no market or shop that sells fresh food except for peddlers. They go by car, motorcycle and self-trader carriage. These peddlers have to bring kitchen equipment with them for example knives, Huad (rice steaming equipment), pans, flippers (used for frying) and cloths. They also bring fresh food for example pork, beef, fish, vegetables and dry food. Most peddlers come every day at about 7.00 am and in the afternoon at about 6.00-7.00 pm.

Villagers buy food from outside of the area because of the impact of flooding: when the *Mun* River flood reached Pa Tam it was difficult to find naturally growing food.

The quantity offered by each villager depends on the impact of flooding during that year. After villagers collect the rice, they sell it and give money to the temple. In the evening the priests and villagers must take part in ceremonies and priests must pray. In the morning villagers prepare *Kaw Jii* (rice anointed with egg and laid on the fire) and make offerings to the priests.

Dern Sii (April) The older villagers put sand from the *Mun* River into a cup and place the cup upside down, behind the house. Also they make cups of *Kaw Dum* (black rice) and *Kaw Dang* (red rice) and lay them in the area whilst the priests pray.

Dern Ha (May): *Bun Pra Wat* or *Bun MaHaChat, Bun Par Pa*. Money is collected from villagers, depending on their willingness to offer, then offerings are prepared for the priests. The priests pray 13 *Kun* (chapters) during one day and one night.

Dern Hok (June): *Bun Leang Jao Pu and Jao Ta* (offerings for ancestors and the spirit of the landing). Offerings for *Jao Pu* is in *Khun sarm khum* (the third lunar month) and for *Jao Ta* it is in *Ram kao Kum* (the day in June when the moon is 9 out of 15 sections full). In the ceremony for *Jao Ta*, villagers in *Ban Tha* and *Ban Lao* prepare food and make other offerings to priests.

Dern Jed (July) This month passes without any traditional activities. However villagers are included in the *Bun Bung Fire* activities within *Amphur Phone Sai*.

Dern Pad (August): *Bun Kao Pun Sa* is in *Kun 15 Kum* (the Buddhist Lent). During this time villagers offer food and other things to priests, including candles and materials that are useful in the rainy season. They prepare cups from banana leaves and flower decorations and offer them to priests. At night the villagers go to the temple for *Rub Sin* (a promise to follow the commandments pronounced by the priests) and *Vean Teian* (walking around the temple 3 times holding lighted candles in their hands).

Dern Kaw (September): *Bun Khaw Pra Dub Din* in *Kun 15 kum* (the full moon). Villagers make *Khaw Tum* (rice wrapped in banana leaves and boiled). These may consist of steamed rice, fish, chili, salt, fish produce, black rice, red rice and piper beetle. In the morning these offerings are brought to the temple and priests pray in dedication to the spirits of the village. After that the villagers who brought the offerings surround the temple to prey to the spirits of their ancestors.

Dern Sib (October): *Bun Khaw Sak, Wun Pen Dern Sib* (full-moon day). Before this day, villagers bring rice, fish produce and *Mun Sang* (sweet potato) as gifts for their senior relations. After that they prepare offerings for priests and make dedications for the spirits of their relations. For *Khaw Sak* food is offered from 8.00am until noon. After finishing at the temple, they must lay *Khaw Sak* on the paddy fields as an offering to the spirits of the earth, the paddy fields, the orchard, the cows and the buffaloes. They believe the spirits will ensure protection.

Dern Sib Ed (November): *Bun Ook Pun Sa*, in *Kun 15 Kum* (full moon) and *Bun Kra Tin* (the next day), in *Ram 1 Kum* to *Kun 1 Kum Der 12* (until the end of the month). For this ceremony, villagers prepare food and other offerings for priests, as well as cups decorated with flowers to demonstrate their faith to Buddha.

Dern Sib Song (December): *Bun Kra Tin*. They worship the *Jao Ta* (spirit of the landing where boats dock) and cooperate with neighboring villages, for example *Ban Lao Khaw* and *Ban Yang*. Villagers from each village compete to show their worship of *Jao Ta* and *Mae Cong Ca* (the spirit of water)

6. Institution of the Community

6.1 Lineage

The members of the community migrated from many places to settle down, so their kinship is not as strong as in rural area. However, from studying it was found that there are four main clans in the community consisting of *Buddathum*, *Srinarak*, *Pinpol* and *Tanta*. Each clan locates their house in a cluster in the community.

Concerning the rapport within the community, the economic status is the distinction that affects the relationship of the villagers. It separates the poor and the rich. In addition, their way of life means a struggle to make a living from day to day and they hardly take part in any activities of the community except for the time when the officers distribute things to them. The rapport has been pursued only among their relative. Therefore, this has caused each villager to be isolated from the others and there is a shortage of solidarity in this community.

6.2 The community administration

The community administration has been carried out by *Khon Kaen Municipality* since March 8, 1991. The chairman of the community will be voted from the members of the community every two years, and this election is conducted by the Municipality. After the election, the chairman will have to choose the committee. The structure and role of the community's committee must be in line with the municipality's regulations.

As these positions have not been assured by any law, they appear to be volunteer roles. Hence the villagers who hold these positions do not receive any salary or benefits from the government.

The first chairman of the community was Mr *Bun Srisangpun*. At present, the community is run by Mr *Samran Deetan* who is the chairman of community and has 17 committee members. Mr *Samran* became the appointed chairman as none of the other villagers wanted to volunteer to run for election.

6.3 Social Features and Groups

Since the community's members migrated from many places in order to settle here throughout the past two decades, their relationship to others within the community is just as a neighbor and fellow villager. As a result, almost all of the villagers do not have possessive feelings toward the community. This phenomenon is in line with the study of *Buapun Prompakping*, who argues that all of the communities in *Khon Kaen City* have two main problems. The first is that the villagers lack a possessive sentiment toward the community. Another is that those villagers way of life has changed to be more urban, hence they feel less like members of a community. The effect of this has been a lack of participation in any development activities in the community.

However, the community has been supported by external organizations from both the government and non-government sectors, with projects aimed at creating villagers' possessive feelings toward the community and increasing villager's self-reliance. The following activities are being run in the area.

1. *Water Fund* that was supported by 5,000 baht from Japan International Cooperation Agency – JICA, on December 30, 1993. This money was used to buy 2 tanks for storing water which was then sold to the villagers. Its cost is about 5 baht per 12 gallons—capacity is 5 liters each. The activity was dissolved because of corruption of the community's committee.

2. *Toilet Fund*, this was also supported by JICA with funds of around 10,000 baht. The aim of the fund was to enable the villagers to borrow money to construct a toilet. The borrowers have to repay money to the group within 5 months along with an interest charge of 3 percent per month. Subsequently, the purpose of borrowing has been changed to be for other activities, as all the villagers in the community now have toilets. At present, the administrative system is not clear, so the fund has no role in the community's development any more.

3. *Drugs Fund*, this fund involved collaboration between Khon Kaen Hospital and Khon Kaen Municipality in 1994. The total fund was 3,000 baht. The community committee was trained on issues concerning primary healthcare in order to become health volunteers, and the primary healthcare centre was then set up. Its activities include: selling low cost medicines for the villagers or for free to the poorest people, promoting cleaning up of the community and weighing children. This activity is likely to fail because the group now has a shortage of money to buy more medicines.

4. *Chemical-free vegetable group*. This group was formed with the encouragement of the Population and Community Development Association based in Khon Kaen's Banpai District and the Khon Kaen Municipality, in 1999. The objective is to support the villagers so that they can earn more income. The group has 32 members of which most are the members of the community while some are outsiders. They have all rented a vacant area of land from the railway authority. It costs 100 baht per person. They will have someone who is responsible for selling the group's products and then pay the owner of the vegetables. The group will sell their products not only in front of the field but also to a hospital and a school in Khon Kaen City. Aside from the afore-mentioned activity, the group has tried to set up a savings activity in the group. But this activity failed because some members neglected to send the money to the group. On the contrary, the group's members did not rely on managing the activity of the committee.

In addition to those mentioned above, the community also has other groups that are supported by external organizations. These include a farmers group and a community fund, the details of which will be in the occupations section.

6.4 Problems in the Community

1. The villagers have no income security as most are employed as wage laborers. . Their incomes vary depending on the number of people who use the market or the train station within Khon Kaen City.

2. Most of the villagers have debts. This is because of their occupations as mentioned above, so they need to borrow money from money lenders even though the interest rate is 20% per month. The sources of lending can be either people from outside or within the community. In particular, the source within the community is the chairman. Overall, the villagers have increasing levels of debt.

3. The whole area of the community is on land owned by the state railway of Thailand. The villagers have to make a contract with the authority each year. They have tried to ask for the right to make a long-term contract and at present, the community's proposal is pending a decision from the railway agency.

The community also has other problems concerning the environment, drugs, health, gambling and fighting.

6.5 Threats to the Development of the Community

The details are as follows:

1. The lack of leadership by the chair and committee resulting in the community members losing faith in them.
2. The members of the community are mostly poor and they have always worked hard to make their living. As a result, the members do not have enough time to take part in community activities.
3. The members of the community migrated from many places hence they lack both a sense of belonging to the community, and a feeling of solidarity within the community.

6.6 The Relationship with Wider Society

1) Relationship with the private sector

This sort of the relationship can be divided into 2 forms. First, the villagers had a relationship with several NGOs which worked in the area. It was formed when the community was set up. At that time, both organizations supported a budget to develop the community. Second, there were few business companies. One of them gave a loan to the villagers with a high interest rate of 20%. Even though it was at a high rate, the villagers borrowed from it because they are poor and their income did not cover their expenditure in every day life. Apart from this, in the past, 30 villagers used to rent Ko Yu Ha Company's land as a paddy field.

2) Relationship with the state agency

The types of involvement are: (1) the KK Municipality that supported the community administration and public utility development (2) the KK Hospital for health care (3) the KK non-formal education centre to provide the villagers' education (4) the state railway of Thailand for renting the land for dwelling (5) the Community Organization Development Institute—the CODI to support constructing a permanent home for the villagers-- the so-called *Ban Muankong* Project.

3) Relationship with the market

The community is located among KK City, so their way of life is dependent on the market. The significant relation is that it is a source of the villagers income—both industrial and service sector. The other aspect is that the villagers need to buy necessary materials for consumption as they will sell their products to the market in return.

