

## **The Progress of Poverty Reduction Strategy**

After TDRI had completed The Process of Formulating Poverty Reduction Strategies in Thailand, TDRI commenced another poverty-related projects, namely, the Poverty Reduction Partnership phase 1 on March 1, 2001. It is a joint project between the World Bank Bangkok Office, TDRI, CODI and NESDB. The first phase was completed at the end of October 2001. Following that the Phase 2 has just started from September 2002 to May 2003. The tasks completed under the phase 1 of the partnership are as follows:

*1. Steering Committee Meetings.* Given the rather short time frame of Phase I of the project and heavy schedules of potential steering committee members, the TDRI council of trustees and the Board of Directors, both Chaired by H.E. Khun Annand Panyarachun, assumed the role of the Steering Committees during this phase of the project. Advice on project activities were sought at meetings held in March and June, 2001. It was suggested that, apart from the more analytical studies in the project, the project should try to come up with concrete policy proposals on poverty reduction strategies, and to involve representatives of the poor as much as possible. The 2001 Year-End Conference on “Poverty Reduction Strategies” would utilize research findings from the project and focus on five strategies areas:-

- Development Strategies for Poverty Reduction
- Increasing Capacities and Opportunities for the Poor
- Social Capital and Participation for Poverty Reduction
- Social Protection Strategies, and
- Public Sector Reform for Poverty Reduction

A formal Steering Committee comprising of a subset of the TDRI Council of Trustees supplemented by some outside experts and World Bank representatives will be formed during Phase II of the project.

*2. Analytical Research.* There are seven aspects of research. Three of researches are completed. The remaining four analytical studies (d-g) are under development and will carry over to the phase II of the partnership. Final papers will be submitted at the end of Phase II of this Partnership. Three papers (a-c) are submitted to the World Bank Bangkok Office written in Thai with English summaries. They are,

- a) Reconciliation of poverty measurements. The paper finished is entitled “What is poverty? And How to Measure it?”
- b) Social capital, social coherence and poverty.
- c) Water resources management and the poor. The paper finished is entitled “Poverty and Water Resource Management in Thailand”
- d) Evaluation of the relationship between development and poverty. A preliminary overview has been done on both the theoretical suggestions and empirical findings on the relationship between growth and poverty. The next step is to broaden the concept of development of the country beyond the growth performance, and relate it to the various definitions of poverty studied under the analytical research (a).

- e) Study of chronic poverty in Thailand. A review of the literature on the theoretical issues concerning chronic poverty are under way. Attention will also be paid to the possible methodology to decompose the transient and chronic components of the commonly used poverty measures.
- f) Analyses of public sector reform and poverty reduction. Analysis is being carried out on the effectiveness of the current budgetary system in allocating resources to the right poverty target groups. Investigations of how more results based budgetary system, as planned in current thinking on public sector reform can be more effective for poverty reduction will also be carried out. In addition, reforms of the institutional set up within the public sector in order to achieve more effective implementation of poverty reduction programs will be investigated.
- g) Social protection mechanisms in Thailand. This will cover the various protection schemes in existence, as well as directions for improving protection coverage. Healthcare protection, social security protection including options for introducing employment protection, and other protections schemes for the disadvantaged will be studied.

*3. Participatory Meetings.* There are two main activities completed under this category. Firstly, two participatory forums involving about 30-40 poor villagers from all parts of the country were held with the helps from the Community Organizations Development Institute (CODI). Not only poor villagers shared their viewpoints as to the state of poverty, the measurement of poverty, the causes and the remedies, they also conducted very interesting surveys on the same set of above issues. Moreover, they had involved a large member of villagers in their communities to participate in the project. The surveys were thus conducted on the poor by the poor themselves, and are perhaps the first ever surveys to be conducted this way in Thailand. The preliminary findings are summarized in Thai. More elaborated findings were presented at the 2001 Year-End Conference, together with exhibitions prepared by these representatives of the poor.

The second activity is village field surveys. These are designed to supply information for the researchers to deepen their studies on poverty in the analytical research components. Ten communities are covered consisting of eight villages in rural areas and two urban poor communities. Ten young researchers were dispatched to these communities to 'live-in' for the entire two months (September and October) and learn first-hand as much as possible how the poor live their lives and how they interact within communities and with outside world. Knowledge gathered has proved to be extremely useful to the senior researchers at TDRI. At the end of the live-in surveys, the young researcher were asked to supplement their research endeavors with questionnaire surveys of about 25 households in each communities, consisting of the poor households, the vulnerable households, and the non-poor households. Both qualitative and quantitative information from these surveys will be analyzed in great details during the Phase 2 of the Partnership.

*4. Seminars and Conferences.* The research findings of this Phase was discussed at the TDRI 2001 Year-End Conference to be held on 24-25 November 2001.

5. *Publications.* Publications of the three completed research papers, as well as the synopses of participatory meetings are ready for publication. They all appeared at the TDRI 2001 Year-End Conference and also was included in the WB/TDRI Partnership publication. Most of the publications will occur during Phase II of the project.

6. *Website.* A comprehensive website on poverty issues in Thailand is complete. The site is designed to assemble information on diverse aspects of the poverty issue, including the significance of the problem, the overview of historical and current poverty situation, and poverty reduction programs and projects in Thailand. It will also provide a wide range of reading materials for those interested in the poverty issues. The website is designed to address to the Thai audience with most of the contents in Thai so that it will be more easily accessible to interested audience in Thailand. However, there will also be numerous links to various international websites on poverty in general. Further contents will be added in Phase II.

7. *Television Programs.* TDRI has contracted with the Nation Multimedia Group to produce a five-part documentary series, touching on various dimensions of poverty. Filming for a number of programs have already been completed. TDRI has been working on finding air time to broadcast this series. One of the episodes from the series was presented at the 2001 Year-End conference. It was a story of a poor farmer who migrated to Bangkok with his family. It described both his life back at the poor village in the Northeastern Thailand and his struggle in the construction work in Bangkok.

Phase 2: Poverty Reduction Partnership Phase 2 has just started in September 2002. This phase emphasize on the effective implementation of the poverty policies. This is to be consistent with the World Bank's recently initiated Country Development Partnership (CDP) protocol. The World Bank has chosen Thailand as the pioneer country to implement this protocol, and the Country Development Partnership on Poverty (CDP-P) is the latest of the CDP initiated with Thai implementing counterparts. In this phase, TDRI will establish a network with NESDB, CODI, The Bureau of the Budget, The Economic and Social Council and NGOs that are responsible for poverty reduction implementation or knowledge of related issues. Activities under phase 2 are as follows:

A) Participatory Implementation Strategy.

- Steering Committees
- Participatory Meeting with the poor
- In-depth Implementation Studies
- Regional Seminars

B) Continuing and Improving Public Awareness Programs

- Publications
- Website Updating
- Television program
- Wrap-Up Conference will be held around October-November, 2002.

C) Analytical Capacity Building.

- Continuing Analytical Researches
- Research on Governance and Poverty
- Poverty Mapping