

**The Roles of Human, Social and Cultural  
Resources in Adapting Livelihood Strategies to  
Meet Wellbeing Aspirations in  
Contemporary Thailand<sup>1</sup>**

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## Abstract

The adaptation of livelihood strategies is important if individuals and households in Thailand are to improve their living conditions and meet rising wellbeing aspirations in the context of population growth and increasing pressures on natural resources. Rapid changes in economy and society, and the development of physical infrastructure have enabled a considerable degree of flexibility in changing livelihood strategies at the local level, but it is important that other aspects of adaptation to development and change are considered. This paper draws on the research of the Wellbeing in Developing Countries research group in Thailand (WeD), and uses empirical evidence from comprehensive field studies in seven communities in both the South and Northeast Regions of Thailand. The research confirms that most rural and peri-urban households can no longer depend on a single economic activity and that ‘pluriactivity’ is increasingly common. While farming activities continue to provide an important foundation for livelihoods in rural and peri-urban communities, the trend for young household members to seek non-agricultural or ‘modern sector’ work outside their communities is increasingly evident. This trend provides important insights for our understanding of the dynamics of wellbeing in contemporary Thailand.

The research explores the resource profiles of households and individuals and identifies a number of key factors that differentiate them in the processes of adaptation to change. Social resources are important as these provide networks through which it is possible to make connections to and secure non-agricultural work. Additionally, strongly embedded social resources that appear in the form of strong ties with families and close relatives help in easing obstacles and hardship faced in some processes of livelihood adaptation. Human resource development is also highlighted as providing an important means of effectively adapting livelihood strategies to meet wellbeing aspirations. The educational improvement of young household members plays a significant role in them acquiring “good jobs” in the modern sector, as well as in broadening their opportunities for further learning for continued livelihood adaptation. However, it is also important to take account of the cultural dimensions of these processes. A good education is still highly regarded in much of Thai society and it can defer social status. As such, a ‘good education’ can be regarded as an important cultural resource in the context of change. But, cultural resources acquire their significance from their foundations in social values. These same systems of value affect a persons’ decisions about what “to do” or “not to do” in the process of livelihood adaptation. The study indicates that decisions about what “to do” or “not to do” differ among different groups of people and this affects the ways in which they adapt to change. Differences in all of these resource dimensions, between regions, communities and household socio-economic categories are discussed and compared.

## Introduction

The development process adopted in the contemporary Thailand has been widely known as following the modernisation approach which is strongly believed that the country economy and wellbeing of the population can be improved through enhancement of economic growth. Based on this principle, all sectors have been enhanced to promote growth and increase productivities. Apparent evidences are witnessed through the emergence of several changes aiming at to facilitating the growth, especially improvement of infra-structure and institutions (Keyes, 1989). As a result, the growth in economic points of view has been impressive at the macro level which is evidenced by the rapid change in the country economy from being one of the poor countries in the world in 1950s to become a middle-income country at the present. Industrialisation and urbanisation have also been apparent, as a dramatic increase in values of products from the industrial sector has been evidenced along with rapid expansion of urban areas (Wyatt, 2003; Warr, 2005). The development of the agricultural sector which is rather large as compared to other sectors has also been apparent, but in a much slower pace. Nevertheless, the importance of agricultural sector remains significance since it covers the majority of the country's population, especially those who reside in rural areas which are still predominant in the country. Moreover, the agricultural sector forms an important basis for industrial and service sectors in terms of its provision of cheap inputs. This makes modernisation in Thailand to have its own style which is different from what is normally experienced in the western industrialised countries. Structural change in favour of urban-industrial sector has not greatly reduced the importance of rural-agricultural sector as the time passes.

Agricultural modernisation in Thailand has been promoted through the enhancement of modern agricultural practices with the main aim to increase productivities, especially of cash crops and other marketable commodities. The influence of the green revolution that became apparent in 1960s brought about remarkable changes in the agricultural sector with respects to type of commodities produced and mode of production (Silcock, 1970; Rigg, 1987; Tomosugi, 1995; Changrien, 1999; Falvey, 2000). The production of cash crops has been widely adopted and made these commodities become popular among farmers, although types of cash crops produced varied regionally according geographical suitability. The adoption of high yielding varieties and modern agricultural technologies accompanied by intensification of practices has changed mode of production to be more cash oriented. These changes have been great and brought about substantial impacts on most rural areas throughout the country, especially on labour arrangement, as wage labour and mechanical technology have become increasingly employed and partially substituted household labour. Although more recently there have been active movements from both non-governmental organizations and governmental organizations, the latter is influenced by the King's New Agriculture Theory and is currently incorporated into the state agricultural policy, to promote alternative agricultural practices that are more self-sufficient and environmentally friendly, responses to such movements are rather slow. Only a handful of farmers adopted such practices, despite its strong publicity (Unno, 2003; Masae et al., 2007).

Industrialisation has also expanded remarkably but more recently in comparison with modern agricultues. Unlike agricultural modernisation, early industrial development appeared to take place mostly in urban areas, especially Bangkok and its vicinity. Expansion to major cities of each region such as Chiangmai in the North, Rayong in the East, Khon Kaen in the Northeast and Hat Yai in the South happened later. This expansion is contributed by the continuation of infrastructure development together with a clear policy to widely promote industrialisation. More recently industrial expansion has been beyond major cities, as some factories were built in many rural areas nearby where good infrastructure is available. As a result, job

opportunities outside the agricultural sector are widening and allow for more rural labour to participate (The Industrial and Finance Cooperation of Thailand, 1990; Phongphaichit and Baker, 1995; Banphsirichote, 1993; Parnwell and Aghiros, 1996).

Although the country economy is known as agricultural-based with a high proportion of the population engaging in farming, the increasing importance of the industrial sector in accelerating the overall economic growth has led agricultural significance to the country economy gradually faded out. The declining importance of agricultural sector has been more apparent most recently and appeared to be rather stagnation as compared to the fast growing industrial sector (Phongphaichit and Baker, 1995; Parnwell and Arghiros, 1996; Rigg, 1998a). As a consequence, farming activities lose their popularity especially among younger generation. The increasing expansion of modern consumption and life style into rural villages are not uncommon not only in Thailand but also elsewhere in Southeast Asia (see Sugunnasil, 2005; Thomson, 2004). Such change results in substantial rural-urban integration and increasing deagrarianisation of rural societies. Full-time farming is no longer common feature of rural households, as members of rural household tend engage in multiple activities of which some are off-farm, and located outside the community (Rigg, 2005b). The availability of jobs with relatively higher wage and more secure income in industrial sector as compared to the agricultural sector induces considerable proportion of rural labour mainly from farm households to migrate or commute to work in the industrial sector (Chamrattirong et al., 1995).

The successful growth of the country economy has undoubtedly brought about several advancements in the country that benefit the overall population. Nevertheless, it has been also observed that unequal distribution of wealth is apparent and poverty incidence remains an important problem in the country despite the overall decline in the proportion of the population below the poverty line (Deolalikar, 2002). Disparities between regions and between rural and urban areas are often addressed, especially in the area of income, and more recently through other areas such as occupation and education. These disparities are strongly caused by the incidence of uneven development in the country that undoubtedly affects people's ways of living in many respects (Parnwell and Arghiros, 1996). The most common feature is the increasing dependence on cash income both in relation to production and consumption. Different groups of people tend to be varied in their ability to cope with this change. Whilst a handful of well-off population enjoy luxurious life styles, entry into debt among disadvantaged groups is widely documented and also apparent among farmers (see for example Hirsch, 1990; Bunmee, 2000; Thongsongsang, 2004). As economic activities and job preference tend to lean towards cash-oriented activities and wage work, educational attainment increases in response to aspirations of 'better jobs' and 'better social status.' Government educational policies have also been developed gradually in the last two decades in the direction that enable more children to participate in education at all levels. At the same time local culture and social values remain strongly influential at the local level where social bonds and traditional practices are widely observed (Masae, 2001; Nartsupha and Lertwicha, 1998; Mulder, 1996).

The co-existence of the relatively large but stagnant agricultural sector with the rapid growing industrial and service sectors in the country is undoubtedly peculiar to the country at this stage of development like Thailand. This peculiar feature of modernisation is particularly interesting for further investigation to understand how people adapt their aspirations in response to related forces in the development path and their adaptation in making their living in order to fulfil their changing aspirations and therefore to pursue wellbeing. Proper investigation of the process of livelihood adaptation should help explaining how people transform different types of resources available to them and reflect the importance of these

resources in comparative terms in pursuing wellbeing. Based on our comprehensive field studies in 7 communities -- covering urban, peri-urban and rural communities in the Northeast and the South regions of Thailand, this paper attempts to explore and discuss rapid changes taking place at the local level and livelihood adaptation of local people under conditions of rapid changes. The discussion is based on synthesis of both qualitative and quantitative field data based on the WeD framework that views livelihood as an important process involving resource transformation that is substantial for sustaining people's livings and pursuing their well-being. The focus of our discussion in this paper will be on the adaptation of livelihoods strategies among households and members at the local level in their coping under conditions of rapid changes. It will also highlight the results on the roles of human, social and cultural resources in supporting livelihood adaptation in different localities. Conclusions will be made in relation to the importance of these resources in fulfilling wellbeing aspirations.

## **Research Background and Methodology**

The discussion appears in this paper is based on a partial analysis of data collected under the Thailand component of the research program entitled "Wellbeing in Developing Countries" or "WeD Research Program." The WeD Research program is a large research program operated in 4 countries -- Ethiopia, Peru, Bangladesh, and Thailand -- with the general objective to reconceptualize wellbeing based on a thorough understanding of its social and cultural constructions at the local level and communication with the universal conception. The overarching of this research program is to test the assumption that development brings not only prosperity, but also a better quality of life, despite its effects on social cohesion and cultural integrity (McGregor, 2007).

This research adopted an integrated methodology of both quantitative and qualitative natures. A wide range of techniques was employed in the research operation with some adjustments to suit each country and study site. Quantitative data collection was primarily undertaken through the use of a specially designed questionnaire for all research sites called "Resource and Need Questionnaire" (RANQ). Qualitative studies were undertaken by means of community profiling, key informant interview, household diary keeping and thematic process research based on in-depth interview of household heads and related individual members. Fieldwork was started in June 2004 and completed in March 2006. The RANQ survey began in June 2004 and finished in April 2005. In-depth interviews related to livelihood took place between January and March 2006.

The study in Thailand was conducted in 7 communities, of which 4 were in the Northeast region and 3 were in the South region. These covered rural, peri-urban and urban communities. Rural communities selected were: Ban Dong and Ban Tha in the Northeast and Ban Thung Naam in the South. Peri-urban communities selected included Ban Lao in the Northeast and Ban Chai Khao in the South. Two urban communities selected were Chumchon Nai Meuang in the Northeast and Chumchon Klai Talaad in the South. Sample sizes used for quantitative investigation varied from 40 to 250 households per community, as we decided to include all households in cases they were below 250 and limit to 250 for larger communities. The total number of core households per community differed between 9 in the Northeast and 12 in the South. Locations of these communities vary between the South and the Northeast regions. All three communities in the South are located in Songkhla province, surrounding the urban centre of Hat Yai. Locations of four communities in the Northeast extend from Khon Kaen (urban and peri-urban), Roi-Et (rural) to Mukdaharn (rural remote).

## Concepts Related to Livelihoods and Well-being

Although individuals and households may view well-being in various ways, common to them is their endeavor to achieve it. In attempting to achieve well-being, livelihood is placed centrally as it is the means which people make their living with the utmost aim to sustain it. In this sense, livelihood plays a substantial role in the pursuit of well-being of people, especially in the long term. Therefore, the link between livelihood and well-being is strong as livelihood forms a key component of process under which various resources are transformed in a complex way in order to continuously achieve well-being (see McGregor, 2007).

The term livelihood may be defined differently in existing literature. In common English usage the term livelihood is explained broadly as ‘a means of securing the necessities of life’ (New Oxford English Dictionary). This meaning is too simple and seems inadequate in its application to development studies. A more elaborative definition given by Chambers and Conway -- two leading figures in the field of development studies as follows:

“A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope and recover from stresses and shocks, maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base” (Chambers and Conway, 1992).

Different approaches of livelihoods were developed that share basic components corresponding to this definition. The most well known framework is the “Sustainable Livelihood Framework” used by the UK Department of International Development (DFID) which draws upon a strong notion of capital assets namely natural, human, financial, physical and social capital assets. According to this framework, livelihood strategies are influenced by access to various forms of assets and involve transformation and processes of these assets to produce livelihoods outcomes. Livelihood strategies can be natural resource (NR) and non-natural resource (non-NR) based as well as migration. Different levels of access to these resources together with abilities to transform these resources should determine the type of livelihood strategies adopted by different households or individuals. It is apparent in this framework that activities, either NR or non-NR based including migration, form main strategies to sustain people’s livelihoods. Among activities undertaken by households or individual members of households, occupation constitutes an undeniably important activity that contributes strongly to livelihood outcomes (Carney, 1998).

Some arguments arise about the above framework. An interesting argument is made by Messer and Townsley (2003) in which livelihood is seen as different elements that contribute or effect people’s abilities to ensure a living for them and their households. This notion evolved from Sen’s formulation of “exchange entitlement” in his masterpiece study on famine. Sen forcefully argued that the famine or extreme poverty is not necessarily caused by the failure of production by providing an example of Bangladesh in which grain production in the year of famine was higher than in normal years. He called the cause of famine in this situation as “exchange entitlement” which he referred to the problem of access among the poor to benefit from the exchange of grain which is their main staple (Sen, 1981). Following this argument, the concept of entitlement has been widely applied in the study of natural resources management and rural development (Leach, Mean and Scoones, 1999). Based on this concept, the livelihood, especially in rural contexts, denotes the idea that rural households and individuals may have “choices” broader than what can be captured by views

of “institutions” in the market framework. This is primarily due to limitation of “capital assets” rural people have at their disposal (Carney, 1998). Further observation made by McGregor (1998) suggests that people in rural areas compose their livelihoods by using variety of resources they command in various ways available to them at their best in a given time. Actions they make in composing livelihoods may sometime be seen as ‘irrational’ or not relevant to the institutional or market framework, and such actions could further erode their living in the future. Nevertheless, their actions are viewed as based on the foreseen of the “best possible outcomes”, and such outcomes could simply mean to sustain their livings at the point of time they make the decision.

It is important to note here that the above conceal discussion on livelihoods shows a strong connection between the livelihood framework and the Resource Profile Approach adopted in the WeD research. However, the point of departure of the Resource Profile Approach from the aforementioned sustainable livelihood framework can be distinguished by the Sen’s notion of “functioning capability” (Sen, 1985; Sen, 1999). Sen differentiates between “what people actually have” (which indicates potential actions they could undertake) and “what people are able manage to do and to be”. From this angle, the sustainable livelihood framework offers a robust analysis of “having”, but has little to say about what actually people can manage to do. The Resource Profile Approach applied to the WeD research allows us to deal with both “what people have” and “what people do and think” (McGregor and Kebede, 2003). The term livelihood used here therefore is not confined only to the idea of having, but also includes the idea of doing and thinking.

By conceiving livelihood from the view of Resource Profile Approach allows us to lay the premise in guiding our investigation as follows. First, resources are not in themselves the state of wellbeing, but they are critical factors that permit individuals and households to engage in the ‘process’ through which they are transformed and wellbeing outcomes are resulted. Second, it is by means of this process that individuals and households are convened to enormous possible ways to make their livings. Third, the process in which individuals and households engage becomes articulated in our analysis to explain how resources are transformed in ways that are possible to different households and individuals to achieve their aspirations which reflect their state of well-being.

## **People’s Aspirations and their Dynamics**

People’s aspirations are not necessarily static, especially when surrounding environments are dynamic. In the face of rapid changes, some aspirations of local people in Thailand appear to be mobilized following changes occurring in the wider environment. Their well connections to the market through the improvement of roads, communication networks and access to media spur their aspirations beyond what they normally have under traditional settings. Based on our field investigation in different types of communities in both Northeast and South regions of Thailand, main areas of aspirations including having a good job, consumption, education, family and place, and social status, are adapting. Some of these areas are common to all groups of people across different types of communities and regions, while others are varied among different groups of people and localities.

Having a good job forms a fundamental aspiration that individuals and households in different socio-economic status generally aim with possibly different levels. While poor people tend to limit their aspiration to survival or having a job that can provide basis for their livings, average and well-off people are more eager to have a good job. What they mean as a good job may not be explicit, but it is generally referred to any job with reasonable and secure income. Salaried jobs, especially permanent positions in civil service (*khaa*

*ratchakaan*), are generally have a high preference as they are not only secure but also endorse other benefits of accessing to good welfare for themselves as well as family members, and endow with good social status. Evidences are available from a common expression given by most core households the rich socio-economic category together with some households in the middle socio-economic category. However, there is no easy path to get a good job as it is generally required a reasonable educational qualification and sometime need additional social connection. Since people in the poor socio-economic category cannot easily meet these requirements, they are discouraged to have such a high ambition. In the face of hardship and struggling to cope with more complicated lives under conditions of rapid changes, they tend to limit their aspiration to survival or what they express in relation to job is to “have a job” rather than “a good job”. Having a job is more critically needed among the poor in urban communities as other sources of earnings are more limited than in rural communities.

Aspirations on consumption are increasingly inclined toward having modern consumer goods of various kinds. Many consumer goods, generally referred to as “convenience goods” (*sing amnuay kwaam saduak*), are seen as increasingly important for the present days living. This phenomenon is also becoming more common in other Thai communities elsewhere (see Sugunnasil, 2005; Srijantr, 2003; Sutham, 2003). Although individuals and households in different socio-economic status tend to show their different levels of aspiration on the consumption of convenience goods at the time of the study, consumption mobility is generally observed with no exception of poor households members living in rural areas. Having a good house to live, or in some cases having their own houses separated from their parents also forms an important aspiration. The latter is quite common among relatively young families who still live with their parents. This can be very critical for poor households with large number of members sheltering in houses with poor conditions and limited spaces.

Being able to provide a good education for children forms an area of aspiration common to all groups of people in all community types. However, levels of education aspired tend to differ among different socio-economic groups and localities. Regional difference is not clearly evidenced. The majority households expressed their aspiration to have their children attain good education, ultimately to hold a university degree (*parinya*). Common among household heads regardless of different socio-economic status is to have their children graduated and eventually to have a good job. Nevertheless some poor households appear to be more reluctant or diffident to keep hold of this ambition, as they have to balance with their foreseen obstacle to continually provide financial support to their children as well as to negotiate with the need for their children to help ease household burden. Examples are found in rural communities in both Northeast and South regions. A household in Ban Dong in the Northeast region expressed that their need to have their children easing household chores is more urgent than the need to have them graduated. This is due the hardship facing their household to make a living in which extra labour is needed to generate an immediate need of extra income. A member of a poor in Ban Thung Naam in the South region who are currently engaged in a low-paid factory work said that he could not aim to go beyond secondary education when he was young, as he could not see how her poor and widowed mother could support him. Different levels of aspiration are found between Buddhists and Muslims households in the South region dealing with the importance of secular education. Common to the majority Muslim households are their aspiration to have their children receiving both religious education and secular education, especially up to the secondary level. Parents with a good religious background, such as *imam* (community level Islamic leader) and *ustaz* (Islamic teacher) tend to show their clear preference on this educational path. The main purpose of religious education is to provide reasonable foundation for their children to have morally good life based on Islamic principles. The Buddhist households do not seem to see



religious education as strongly important for their children, perhaps because the overall environments do not threaten much on Buddhist life.

Thai values on family and place of origin is widely documented in literature (see for example: Puntarigvivat, 1998; Samakkarn, 1996) and observed to remain strong among members of communities under this study. Supporting evidences can be seen from the existence of regular home return of migrants during important festivals of Songkran among Thai Buddhists in general, and “*Duean Sip*” (the Tenth Month) among Buddhists or two events of *Hari Raya* (*Eidil Fitri* and *Eidil Adha*) among Muslims in South region, which are all regarded as the family festivals; transferring remittance to parents in order to support their livings as well as education of younger members; intention to care ageing parents; preference of living in the community of origin surrounding by relatives; and wishing to settle permanently at the home community at last, even among successful migrants. They are many examples in this study that confirm the strong values about family tie. It is not uncommon to find extended households with many members living together in the same houses, and in some cases a few houses of close relatives are intentionally constructed in the same piece of land like a compound. Several reasons given behind these practices include their preference of living closely to their families and relatives, their concern about livelihood hardship of families (in cases of migrants transferring remittance), their concern about ageing parents to be left alone, the feeling of “warmth” or “*ob-oon*” to be together with family members and surrounded by close relatives, and so on. A household head in rural community of Ban Tha in the Northeast told us about monetary assistance from his children who migrated to Bangkok: “Money to pay for fertilizer, tractor hiring was received from children working in Bangkok”. The majority of out-migrants interviewed expressed their wish to return home once they are able to accumulate enough money to build their own houses or to improve their old houses which are in poor conditions. It is also common to find ageing people living with one of their children who closely look after them. This is often surrounded by close relatives who also offer some helps to these ageing members occasionally. A few successful migrants were observed to have bought some lands or built houses in their preparation to return to their home communities in the near future. An interesting explanation received from a young Muslim in Ban Tung Naam in the South region, who successfully migrated to Phuket and work in tourism with his wife who are originally from Nontaburi near Bangkok: “I and my family are planning to return to this community by investing in agricultural land and rubber plantation”. He further expressed that he felt the life in a modern city like Phuket was “too complicated and risky” for their children to grow up, especially to maintain their identity as being Muslim, while the village life here “is more simple and provides them with a good social environment”.

Values of attaining as well as maintaining good social status is also important among Thais. Attempts to improve livelihoods can be partially related to the aspiration to improve social status of individual members as well as their households. Although elevating social status is important to all groups, households with different socio-economic status seem to aim differently. While the poor seem to be less concerned and more humble about elevating their social status, the medium and well-off households tend to show more anxiety about securing their own and their children social status. Expressions about social status are varied but often related to having good jobs, assets accumulation, improving occupations and living standard, abilities to make contribution to communal activities, securing income and living, and to have a good education. A few key informants in the Northeast communities expressed that migrants change their status in various ways including showing modern styles of consumption and dressing, ability to organize *phaa paa* (rope offering festival) in the home community, and having new skills for improving occupational activities. In a rural village of Ban Tha in the Northeast, a key informant expressed further about the ability of successful

migrants to bring back new ideas for community development, to accumulate highly valuable assets such as motorcycle and car, to support children to have better education, will be well respected. Similar expressions were also common in southern communities. A special values exceptionally found among Muslims in the South region is about being a religiously good person regarded as holding a good social status.

## **Ways of Adapting Livelihoods**

Livelihood adaptation is enhanced through modernization in various ways, especially through adaptation of occupations and economic activities. This adaptation may occur within the home community through adjustment of existing activities or combining different possible activities, or outside the community by engaging in new activities taken place outside the home community by means of migration and commuting.

### **Occupational Adaptation**

Rapid industrialization together with urbanization increases job opportunities in industrialized and urban areas. While in rural areas, agricultural modernization induces the change in mode of agricultural production from a subsistence mode to a more commercial mode of production in which substantial preference is given to the production of cash crops of high yielding varieties that involves the use of modern technologies. It is noteworthy to mention here that occupational mobility is likely to be a common phenomenon in the face of these changes. On one hand, the availability of a wide range of jobs with more secure incomes in urban and industrialized areas attracts people to be more flexible in their selection of jobs outside the agricultural sector. On the other hand, the change appears in mode of agricultural production to be more cash-oriented that generally involves the adoption of new agricultural technologies and practices. This form of changes can reshape patterns of agricultural production and affect organization of household labour in rural areas. At the same time there exists the increasing need for cash and change in values related to job and economic activities. These incidents form an important force on rural households and make full time farming no longer adequate for making their living sufficiently, especially those with small landholding. Pluriactivity in which members of a household engage in several agricultural activities becomes a common feature in rural areas. At the same time, dependence on agriculture is decreasing as more occupational activities outside agricultural are available to a greater extent with a possible higher return. This means that diversification of occupations and economic activities among members of a household and community is getting more common and becoming an unavoidable trend (see Rigg, 2005).

Findings from this study support the above observations. In all communities under this study, the majority households have their members engaging in diverse economic activities. At the same time, there exists generational difference in occupation and economic activities within each community. Regional difference and difference between types of communities are also evidenced as pertaining to type of activities.

### **Regional and Rural-urban Difference in Occupational Adaptation**

The difference in type of occupational activities undertaken by both household heads and members is apparent between types of communities under this study. The difference between regions also exists but not as clear as the difference between types of communities (Table 1).

The most common main occupation of household heads in both Northeast and South regions is agriculture. However, the figure shows a slightly higher proportion of household heads in

the South region than in the Northeast region undertaking agriculture as their main occupation. Nevertheless, they still represent around a half of the total household heads sampled under this study. When the data were broken down into three types of communities—rural, peri-urban and urban, it is apparent that agricultural activity is crucially important to household heads in rural communities and the degree of importance declines in peri-urban communities. While in urban communities, the most common main occupation undertaken by household heads is commercial activity. Agriculture is no longer regarded as primary activity to the majority households in urban communities, although a few households who own agricultural land outside these communities still engage in agriculture.

Table 1: Selected data related to occupation by region and community type

Items	Northeast	South	Rural	Peri-urban	Urban
Main occupation of household head (%)	Agriculture (46.5)	Agriculture (50.8)	Agriculture (75)	Agriculture (43.4)	Commercial (31.3)
Main occupation of Members					
- % in agriculture	28.3	40.9	50.7	27.7	2.2
- % in commerce	11.6	11	5.3	9.9	28
- % factory worker	5.9	5	4.3	8.8	2.8
- % professional	4.7	2.4	2.1	4	7.2

Data on main economic activities undertaken by all able members of households illustrate a clearer picture of the decreasing importance of agricultural activity as compared to other occupational activities. In both regions, the data indicate the decreasing dependence on agricultural activities among members as compared to household heads. Similar figures are evidenced in all types of communities and occupation-inclination towards non-agriculture activities is well illustrated. Although agriculture is still engaged by the highest proportion of members in rural and peri-urban area, this proportion when compared with that of household heads is apparently lower. On one hand this finding reflects a trend of generational inclination of agricultural occupation in all types of communities. On the other hand, it shows the tendency of steadily shift towards non-agricultural occupations in all communities as a response to the continuing growth of industrial and service sectors that no longer limits to urban areas but also expands to rural areas with reasonable infrastructure.

### **Pluriactivity and Diversification**

Within the agricultural type of occupations, members of a household in rural and peri-urban communities may engage in different activities. Although rice farming and rubber tapping are the most common agricultural activities undertaken by the majority rural and peri-urban households in the Northeast and the South respectively, it is often combined with other agriculturally related activities. Rice production is still practiced by a considerable proportion of households in the South, mostly for household consumption. While in the northeast, cattle rearing is not uncommon. Apart from these, fruit production, vegetable production and livestock keeping are scattered among southern rural and peri-urban households. In the Northeast, small proportions of households also grow cassava, sugar cane and rubber. The emergence that each household is involved in various agricultural activities in which members may engage differently or in various degrees makes pluriactivity become more common feature of rural and peri-urban households. At the same time diversification of economic activities is also becoming a common feature not only at the community level, but also at the household level. A combination of different types of activities both within and

outside the agricultural sectors occurs at the household level through reallocation of labour in ways suitable for them in a given condition. Generational difference appears to be common as younger generations are likely to move from agricultural to non-agricultural activities, while older generations, especially those who are 35 years old and above, still concentrate more in agricultural activities (Table 2).

Data in Table 2 illustrate the phenomenon of generational difference in occupational activities among individual members comparing between regions. Although agricultural activities remain significantly important to all age groups among members who are in labour force, their importance declines among younger age groups. And this decline is clearer in the South region than in the Northeast region. In contrast, the proportion of members engaging in other activities, especially in the non-agricultural group, which includes labouring and factory work, is higher among younger members. These differences can be clearly seen when compared between members aged 15-34 with those aged 35 and above. Similar trends are observed in both the South and Northeast regions, although the levels of differences somewhat differ along different types of activities. These data show that there is a high tendency of generational de-agrarianisation, especially in rural and peri-urban areas in which a high proportion of households still depend on agricultural activities for their livelihoods, but younger generations are less interest in taking agricultural work and related activities that are traditionally viewed as important.

Table 2: Groups of occupational activities engaged by members in different age-range

Region	Age-Range	Occupation group(%)									Total
		Agric.	Artisanal	Non agric.*	Transport	Professional	Home worker	Commercial	Not in labour force	Other	
South	0-14	3.2		0.1	0.1		0.2	0.2	96.1		100.0
	15-24	13.4	0.7	15.9	2.0	4.6	4.3	6.3	50.9	1.8	100.0
	25-34	27.6	1.5	17.3	7.8	11.9	8.9	18.8	5.6	0.6	100.0
	35-44	42.5	3.4	12.7	6.0	6.7	8.5	17.4	1.3	1.6	100.0
	45-54	51.5	2.4	7.8	7.5	1.7	6.1	18.1	4.1	0.7	100.0
	55-64	48.2	0.5	4.7	2.6	3.1	8.4	15.7	15.7	1.0	100.0
	65 up	39.9		4.7		0.5	3.3	10.8	39.9	0.9	100.0
	<b>Total</b>		<b>24.6</b>	<b>1.1</b>	<b>9.1</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>4.1</b>	<b>4.8</b>	<b>10.1</b>	<b>42.0</b>	<b>0.9</b>
North East	0-14	5.5			0.2		18.8	1.1	73.3	1.1	100.0
	15-24	28.7	1.3	13.9	3.6	3.0	12.6	12.4	16.5	7.9	100.0
	25-34	39.1	1.0	15.7	5.2	3.9	7.6	12.9	3.4	11.0	100.0
	35-44	52.4	1.6	11.1	8.2	0.8	4.3	9.8	1.9	9.8	100.0
	45-54	48.1	3.0	10.8	3.0	1.9	10.4	10.4	1.1	11.2	100.0
	55-64	44.2	1.3	10.9	2.6	2.6	12.2	7.7	3.2	15.4	100.0
	65 up	33.6	7.0	2.8	0.7	0.7	14.0	4.2	27.3	9.8	100.0
	<b>Total</b>		<b>33.3</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>9.6</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>1.9</b>	<b>11.5</b>	<b>8.7</b>	<b>21.4</b>	<b>8.4</b>

\* This group covers all labouring activities including factory work

Data on number of occupational activities undertaken at the household level, as illustrated in Table 3, reveal that the average number of activity types higher in the Northeast region (3.2 types) than in the South region (2.2 types). It is interesting to make further observation that households engaging in 2, 3 and 4 activities have considerable proportions in both regions and in all community types, and the maximum number of activity types per household in

each community varies from 5 in urban south to 8 in rural northeast. Households engaging in only one activity represents only 17 per cent overall. All these figures reveal that diversification of occupational activities is likely to be common at the household level. Further investigation shows that undertaking of diverse occupational activities is also found among some individuals, which means that they undertake more than one activity in a certain period of time, normally in a year round. This incident of engagement in supplementary activities among rural households reflects that full-time farming is no longer the most common feature of rural households, the trend that also becomes common in other South-East Asian countries (see Rigg, 2005).

Table 3 Number of household occupational activities by region and community type

Region/ Community Type	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mode	Mean	Std. Deviation
<b>Thailand</b>	1183	0	8	2	2.7	1.3
<b>South</b>	650	0	7	2	2.2	1.1
- Rural	250	0	6	2	2.2	1.1
- Peri-urban	250	0	7	2	2.3	1.2
- Urban	150	0	5	2	2.0	1.0
<b>Northeast</b>	533	0	8	3	3.2	1.3
- Rural*	225	0	8	3	3.6	1.2
- Peri-urban	196	0	7	3	3.0	1.2
- Urban	112	0	7	2	2.6	1.2

\* This includes two communities—very remote and remote.

There appears to be two main reasons behind people's diversification of occupational activities – to reduce risk from depending on a single activity or even more than one agricultural activities and to seek other activities perceived as better than what are traditionally undertaken within each household. The first reason is more economic based as it is related to securing livelihoods of each household or individual, and even to improve living conditions by not taking so much risk of depending on a single activity or even pluriactivity within the agricultural sector which is normally subject to low monetary return and seasonality. The latter reason can be both economic and cultural based, as it is associated with the level of return or income and values regarding status of taking different activities. To reduce risk a household may allocate their members to different types of activities with different natures, or sometimes an individual member may engage in supplementary activities to cope with seasonality of agricultural activities. Better monetary returns together with the perception on non-agricultural activities as “better jobs” induce younger generation to gradually overlook household-farm activities.

Although diversification of occupational activities appears to be common to households in all socio-economic groups, types of activities combined are somewhat different and varied by types of communities and localities. In rural and peri-urban communities, households belong to the poor socio-economic group are likely to combine own farm activities with labouring activities both within and outside the agricultural sector. This combination is similar to households in the medium socio-economic group. Although a small proportion in this group may have their members engaging in other “better jobs” of commercial and professional types, this difference appears to be depending on their qualifications and job opportunities. There is no doubt that a member with a reasonable qualification is willing to enter a job or economic activity outside the agriculture which is considered to be a better or good job. Rural rich households are likely to combine own farm activities with other activities which are considered as “better activities” or “good jobs”. In urban areas which a wider range of activities can be found outside agricultural sector, commercial activities are more common

than in rural and peri-urban areas to all socio-economic groups. However, scale as well as “level” or “grade” of activities undertaken is observed to differ across different socio-economic groups. Small trading at home and in nearby markets are common among poor and medium households, possibly different in scale, while rich households are likely to operate their own businesses involving significant capital investments. Combination of different activities are related to their perceptions on particular activities in which rich households are likely to combine own business of commercial types with professional work, while medium and poor households are more likely to have a mixture of different types of activities including small-scale commercial activities, labouring work, motorcycle taxi driving. Nevertheless, small-scale commercial activities undertaken by poor households are limited by their access to financial resources, and can be regarded as “pity trading”. A small proportion of households in the medium group have their members working as professional and in the service sector. Labouring work undertaken by some members of poor households can be considered as having a very low status such as pulling trolley in nearby fresh markets, loading goods for transportation etc.

Regional comparison reveals a lot similarity in types of activities undertaken by households within each socio-economic category, with only minor exception in relation to specific kinds of activities and natural resource dependence. At the same time, occupational activities engaged by average rural households in the Northeast region cover a wider range than in the South region. While rice is the most common crop cultivated in both rural and peri-urban communities in the Northeast for both consumption and marketing purposes, it is no longer as important in all southern communities as rice is grown only for consumption purpose. Cash crops widely grown in rural and peri-urban communities in the Northeast vary from cassava, eucalyptus tree, and rubber. In contrast, the most popular cash crop grown in rural and peri-urban communities in the South is rubber. Among rural households in the Northeast, poor households tend to depend on collection of forest product more than in the South. This is clearly observed in the most remote community of Ban Dong where people still collect mushroom, wild fruit and vegetable, and firewood. In a less remote community of Ban Tha, a few kinds of non-farm activities undertaken show a strong link with urban communities, especially Bangkok. Examples of these activities are contract garment making, taxi and *tuk tuk* driving. These kinds of activities are not found being engaged by members of the rural community in the South. The only non-agricultural activity that shows a clear link with outside engaged widely by members of the rural community in the South is factory work. The difference is less apparent among urban settlers in both regions as the most common of group of activities engaged is commercial activity. However, it is interesting to note that the proportion of members of urban communities who engage in non-agricultural activities is significantly higher in the Northeast as compared to the South, and the opposite is found in the professional group of activities.

### **Migration and Commuting**

Migration, especially rural-urban migration, has been a common phenomenon in contemporary Thailand since its early development towards modernization. Regional variation of out migration has been widely discussed in literature with less developed and less prosperous regions such as the Northeast and the North regions have their population highly migrated to other regions, particularly to Bangkok and its vicinity that industrial development is far greater than other regional towns or cities (Chamrattirong et al., 1995; Goldstein and Goldstein, 1986). Reasons behind out-migration may vary individually. However, seeking better jobs with better and more secure incomes appears to be quite common. As more recent industrial development in Thailand has expanded widely to other regional towns and cities, even reached some rural areas with good potentials for industrial development, commuting

has been observed as an increasingly significant alternative for those who seek non-farm jobs. This recent change together with the change in need for more cash as response to the increasing influence of the market economy forces people to adapt their livelihood strategies to depend more on non-farm jobs that generate more stable incomes. It can be said the modernization style as experienced in Thailand has made migration and commuting become important livelihoods strategies.

Since there is trade-off of out-migration and commuting, and different groups of population seem to cope differently in their livings, it is interesting to discuss about migration and commuting occurring in communities under this study by considering them as alternative livelihood strategies. Central to the discussion in this section are out-migration and commuting situations in different regions, types of communities, and reasons behind out-migration and commuting, resources utilization and transformation related to migration and commuting.

### **Regional and Community Type Comparison of Out-Migration and Commuting**

An overall observation of out-migration and commuting in this study reveals that there are regional difference and difference between community types. Although the majority households in all types of communities of both regions have members currently working or used to work outside their communities, the proportions are significantly lower in the South than in the Northeast. Almost all households in Northeast communities have their members experiencing out-migration, or at least working outside the communities via commuting (Table 4). Similarly out-migration is more common among people in the Northeast than in the South, but the difference is less apparent for commuting. Nevertheless, the common feature found in both regions is the difference among community types. People in rural communities appear to migrate out more than those in peri-urban and urban communities, while commuting appears to be more common among urban and peri-urban settlers. However, we did not collect numerical data that can be used for more accurate explanation. Data on out-migration and commuting at the community and regional levels are based mainly on key informant interviews.

Table 4: Households with members currently working or used to work outside

<b>Region/Community Type</b>	<b>Percentage of Households</b>
<b>South</b>	
- Rural	73.2
- Peri-urban	76.4
- Urban	54.4
<b>Northeast</b>	
- Rural	99.6
- Peri-urban	98.7
- Urban	98.7

The majority households in the Northeast region have long been experiencing out-migration. Although Bangkok is the most common destination, migrating to other provinces in the central region is also widely observed. A few migrants in communities under this study even migrated to southern provinces such as Songkhla, Phuket and Surat Thani. Work undertaken by out-migrants are mainly of non-agricultural type, however some out-migrants are also engaged in agricultural work such as sugar cane harvesting in Kanchanburi and rubber tapping in Surat Thani. While out-migration is generally found in all types of communities in

the Northeast, commuting is only common in peri-urban and urban communities. This is probably because their locations are close to a big city of Khon Kaen where various types of wage work are available.

In contrast to the Northeast region, out-migrants from the South region is less common in all types of communities. Destinations are mainly within the region, with a few migrated to Bangkok and other places outside the region. These migrants are mainly Buddhists of which some work as civil servants. Interestingly, there are around 10 Muslims in the rural community of Ban Thung Naam migrated to Malaysia, while this practice is rarely found in peri-urban and urban communities. Commuting is more common than out-migration in all types of communities in the South -- the highest figure was found in the urban community (Chumchon Klai Talaad), and the lowest figure was found in the rural community (Ban Thung Naam). Nevertheless, commuting in the rural community has been increasing in the last decade, presumably influenced mainly by the availability of non-farm wage work in nearby areas. The variation in numbers of commuters between different types of communities in the South is clearly associated with this reason, as peri-urban and urban communities are adjacent to Hat Yai city, the commercial centre of the region, and surrounded by industrially developed areas. The recent increase of commuting in the rural community of Ban Thung Naam is associated with the growing industrial development in nearby areas, especially around the district town of Chana, occurring also in the last decade.

### **Reasons for Out-migration and Commuting**

Out-migration and commuting in the study communities occur due to three main reasons. The most common reason is to seek a job with better as well as more stable income, which is generally limited in their home communities. A migrant in Ban Dong in the Northeast region told us: "...there is no job here, so I decided to go working outside." A similar explanation gave by a female from Ban Thung Naam who migrated to Malaysia: "I decided to go there because there was no proper work here...income is higher there than doing factory work at home." Incomes generated from out-migration and commuting are not only important for migrants and commuters themselves, but also for supporting their families in various aspects such as to improve education of young members, to buy modern farm inputs and to recover from high debt.

The second reason is to prevent possible risk concerned with instability of main occupations and the increasing constraint of resources based livelihood strategies in the communities of origin. Some rural households mentioned about their risk connected to seasonality of farm work, low productivity due to poor soil conditions, uncertain return due to instability of crop price, and sometimes loss of agricultural products caused by natural disaster. Temporary out-migration is widely observed particularly in Northeast rural communities in order to fill unemployment gap due to seasonality of farm work. This practice brings about reasonable amount of income that secures their living throughout the year as well as avail them to pay back their debts and purchasing agricultural inputs.

The third reason related to mobilization of economic and social status of individual migrants or commuters as well as their households. In this sense, some migrants explained that they decided to migrate with the aim to have better lives in more developed areas, to seek valuable experience outside their home communities, or to improve living conditions of their households. The success of earlier migrants provides a good example for many of current migrants to follow in mobilizing themselves and their families. A few migrants interviewed in both Northeast and South regions show their aspirations to improve their houses, to provide better education for children, to buy more convenience goods and to accumulate some amounts of money that allow them to invest in new businesses at home.



Types of work sought among migrants and commuters are often non-agricultural, even though some agricultural activities outside the communities are also included. Since non-farm jobs with stable incomes are generally available in more developed areas, especially urban and nearby areas, out-migration and commuting are likely to occur between less developed areas to more developed areas. At the same time wage agricultural activities are often found more in the areas where commercial agriculture is widely practiced and hired labour is highly needed. Findings from this study reveal that out-migration is more common among rural settlers than peri-urban and urban settlers with the main reason given that preferred jobs are limited in rural-less developed communities. For peri-urban and urban settlers, out-migration appears to be less common but commuting is more apparent, as more non-farm activities are available within and nearby their communities.

## **Patterns of Adaptation and Resource Transformation**

The process of livelihood adaptation both at individual and household levels involves transformation of various types of available resources. Resources that form important bases for livelihood strategies may be grouped according to the Resource Profile Framework into five different types of resources – material, human, social, cultural and environmental (Long and Long, 1989). These resources have different natures that can affect people's utilization and transformation or patterns of livelihood adaptation. At the same time people are likely to utilize and transform resources available to them in complicated and dynamic manners. In this sense, understanding of the relationship between livelihoods strategies and resources is not only limited to the people's ownership of different types of resources. Rather, it is the matter of their access, their abilities to utilize and transform these resources (McGregor, 1998; McGregor and Kebede, 2003). This section will deal with people's utilization and transformation of different types of resources in making their livings as related to livelihood strategies observed in the study sites.

Access to different types of resources appears to differ among people in different types of communities under this study, and is observed to be associated with livelihood strategies they adapt either through occupational adjustment, migration, commuting or a combination of these ways. However, access and transformation of each type of resources is not always straight forwards. Rather it occurs as an interwoven relationship with other types of resources, which appears to vary among individuals and households in different socio-economic categories as well as community types. Livelihood adaptation of individual and households in different regions and community types is therefore shaped by variation in the availability of and their access to different types of resources in local contexts. It is generally observed that patterns of livelihood adaptation move from natural resource based strategies towards non-natural resource based strategies in all both regions and all types of communities, but the speed of adaptation differs between types of communities which is influenced mainly by access to type of resources important the direction of adaptation.

As mentioned earlier, agricultural production is still important for the majority households and individuals in rural and peri-urban communities to earn their livings. Nevertheless, related practices have been changed towards modernization in which cash crops are more preferred and modern technologies are increasingly adopted. In relation to these changes, types of commodities produced vary, and production purposes shift in which consumption and marketing purposes are combined. For examples, rubber (cash crop) and rice (food crop) are commonly grown in Ban Thung Naam in the South, while farmers in Ban Dong in the Northeast grow rice (food crop) and cassava (cash crop) widely with the trend of increasing

rubber cultivated area on suitable lands. Rice production itself has involved substantial changes in related practices in which small tractor, chemical fertilizer and pesticide are widely used. However, the situations in all rural and peri-urban communities under this study show that such changes have been rather slow which lead to overall agricultural development at the local level appears to be relatively stagnant when compared with the more substantial improvement in industrial and service sectors. Engagement in agricultural activities is therefore viewed by most households interviewed as necessary for maintaining their tradition of being farmers and securing household food security, except in the case of high return activities such as rubber production which is not only popular in the South but recently expanded to some areas in the northeast. Consequentially and not surprisingly, rural households nowadays tend not to depend on a single activity, and pluriactivity as well as diversification become commonly adopted as part of their livelihood adaptation in order to generate more cash income in response to their increasing aspiration to have a more modern style of living. Supporting evidences can be seen from the fact very rare households in rural communities both in the North and South depend solely on a single agricultural activity and have not experienced working outside agricultural sectors. The shift of preference towards cash-oriented activities is greater as we move from rural to peri-urban communities or even between the more remote rural community to the less remote community (as compared between Ban Dong and Ban Tha in the Northeast region), and among different generations. Important observations of core households in rural and peri-urban communities reveal that most households have their members engage not only in household farm activities, but also in non-farm activities as well as hiring labour to do non-household farm work. Non-farm activities undertaken vary between communities and regions. Working in nearby factories, running small stores, making decorated scarf, driving passenger cars, and motorcycle taxi for local transportation are found in the South. In the Northeast a range of non-farm activities are found such as making fishing nets, making clothes, working in nearby factories, weaving baskets etc. Moreover, it is commonly observed that the majority households in rural and peri-urban communities in the Northeast, except in a remote community of Ban Dong, have their members experienced out-migration to seek supplementary occupational activities. Information gathered from key informants also reveals that there is an increasing trend among young members to seek more preferred non-agricultural work which is likely to be outside their communities

In urban communities, agricultural activities are no longer important to almost all households. Although a small proportion of households in Both Chumchon Klai Talaad and Chumchon Naimuang still have agricultural lands in rural areas outside their communities, their lands are currently used marginally for their own agricultural production, and some are let or given to their relatives or former neighbours who remain in rural communities to utilize. As the majority of urban households under this studies moved in from rural and peri-urban areas, and previously engaged in agricultural activities, their livelihood strategies have shifted gradually towards non-agricultural activities of which most are urban-based, especially in commercial and service sub-sectors either as operators, labourers or workers. A combination these activities are observed among members in each household and difference scales of business are found among different socio-economic status. There is also a trend of preference on and shift towards salaried jobs among younger generations. The preference is mainly explained that salaried jobs are “comfortable (*sabai*)”, “not hard (*mai nahk*)”, “looking good (*doo dee*)”, which all reflect their views about good jobs which are highly aspired in general and regarded having a good social status.

The above patterns of livelihood adaptation are undoubtedly related to access and ability to transform resources available to them which tend to differ in types of resources and among different socio-economic groups. The common shift towards non-agricultural activities in all

community types in both regions means that attempts to transform resources move in the direction that gives preference to non-agricultural work and good jobs. This shift leads to the change in household's view about importance of different types of resources and makes resource transformation becomes more complicated in which some types are more important than others. In this sense, resources transformation as related to livelihood adaptation tend to shift in order to respond to both adaptive aspirations and preferred livelihood strategies.

### **Roles of Human, Social and Cultural Resources**

Understanding of resource utilization and transformation in the face of co-adaptation in aspirations and livelihood strategies under conditions of rapid changes in contemporary Thailand needs to be analyzed not only the availability of and access to various types of resources but also the dynamic importance of these resources. Rapid changes bring about increasing pressure on access to some kinds of resources especially land and environmental resources under common property arrangements. This pressure emerges as a consequence of the continuing population growth and increasing competition over various types resources between users with conflicting interests. At the same time, some kinds of resources are also depleted due to careless use of the resources and overall poor environmental management. The pressure dealing with increasing limitation in amount and quality of land and natural resources should affect the view of local people towards the current roles of these resources as compared to other types of resources.

Land, which is a form of material resources, remains substantially important for livelihood in rural and peri-urban communities under this study. Most poor households in rural and peri-urban communities show their need to have more land for crop cultivation. This is because most agricultural related activities are still relatively labour intensive with low levels of technological employment – the form of production that cannot be extended easily without increasing size of land use. However, the importance of other resources is also increasing as the amount of land available per household is decreasing due to population growth and the partial transfer of agricultural land from farmers to non-farmers and industrial investors. This change brings about pressure on agricultural land which consequently leads to the tendency of more capital investment, technical improvement and skill development observed as part of farmers' effort to improve agricultural production, technological improvement and skill development. Increase in capital investment occurs in association with the increasing use of mechanical and mechanical technologies which replace traditional technologies following the adoption of modern agricultural practices. Both technical and skill improvements require human resource development in their fulfilment. Most key informants and core farm households in rural areas mentioned about the importance of improving knowledge through education and training related to agricultural development. They see that present days agriculture can hardly survive if farmers and their children do not improve related knowledge, and the ability to access to this knowledge is perceived to be better among those with a good educational background. Even if they do not follow the mainstream practices, successful adoption of alternative practices such as organic farming and mixed farming also require appropriate knowledge about the practices.

Ineffective adaptation in agricultural practices combined with the decreasing availability of land in both rural and peri-urban communities make agricultural work discouraging, especially to young members, that leads to the increasing trend of preference to engage in non-agricultural work or even hiring labour in larger-scale agricultural production. Following this trend, it is observed that human resources development together with access to social resources are crucially important in acquiring non-agricultural work and wage agricultural work, especially if commuting and migration are involved.

Those who engage in non-agricultural activities taking place in rural and peri-urban communities (e.g. construction, trading, crafting), related skills appear to be increasingly important. In the past, acquiring skills needed in undertaking each of these activities was generally through traditional learning and practice. Nowadays some skills are acquired through formal trainings often provided often by state related agencies. Although development of these skills seems to be opened to all socio-economic groups, some types of skills are difficult for members of poor households to acquire and developed. A good example is found in the case of a male member of a very poor household in the rural community of Ban Thung Naam in the South who have been working in a few low-paid non-farm activities and currently work in a rubber processing factory on a daily arrangement in stead of being a shared rubber tapper in the community due to his inability to acquire the proper tapping skill. He simply explained that none of rubber plantation owners allowed him to try tapping rubber in their plantations as it involves risk of destroying rubber trees. Being unable to develop this skill is also observed to reduce the opportunity of a few other poor members to be employed as shared rubber tappers, the activity which can be found quite easily in many rural communities in the South with a considerably good return. Since the number of labour available is generally high in overall, rubber plantation owners do not face labour shortage problem.

The importance of education in association with livelihood adaptation is also increasing, as educational qualification links to type of occupational activities engaged. The linkage between type of occupational activities and educational qualification is clearly observed among migrants and commuters. Educational qualification is found to be influential on adaptation and mobility of migrants and commuters once they decided to migrate out or commute. Migrants and commuters with reasonable educational qualifications are likely to engage in good jobs with stable positions and incomes in both government and private sectors. While those with no education and low educational attainment are generally unable to get good jobs, thus end up with taking labouring jobs or other low paid activities including agricultural activities. These jobs and activities are not only low paid, but also insecure as they are often under informal arrangements. Most agricultural activities such as sugar cane harvesting and cassava cultivation found among temporary migrants from the Northeast region come under informal arrangements, and those who engage in these activities are generally uneducated or lowly educated. Similar situations are found among commuters who engage in shared rubber tapping in the South region. Migrants as well as commuters engaging in non-agricultural labouring activities such as construction work are also mostly uneducated or lowly educated. Factory work requires at least primary educational qualification with the tendency to accept workers with secondary educational qualification. Further more, migrants and commuters with reasonable educational qualifications are likely to have better chances of promoting to higher positions even if they begin their work at lower positions. This group of migrants are also more mobilized in their styles of living which are often regarded as good or modern. For those who undertake their own businesses, better-educated migrants seem to be able to improve their businesses and even moving to more profitable businesses. A case of young Muslim couple who run a tourist business in Phuket informed that the husband used to work as a mechanic in a small company, while the wife was a tour guide before they set their own tourist business based on connections built by the wife. Their business generates very good income with low risk, although it involves seasonal variation. Under given situations of growing and expanding industrialization alongside the decline of the traditional sector, the tendency of increasing participation in non-agricultural occupations and activities is incontestable in the near future. This tendency makes the role of education on livelihood adaptation is undoubtedly increasing. Local people appear to realize about this tendency, as effort to provide good education for their children is observed to be

increasing in preparation to improve their lives in the foreseen future. They commonly view that unless they provide their children with good or at least reasonable education, their children will face with uneasy lives. Most core household leaders interviewed told that they are trying their best to support their children to pursue good education even to work hard outside the communities to generate more income in order to cover a high educational cost generally involved. Some migrants were told to send their remittance mainly to support younger members of their households to pursue good education. Although we cannot say strongly here that educational contribution to livelihoods of local people in Thailand is great, as the majority individuals involved in this study do not have good education and still manage to survive in various ways, they commonly agree that education is a good investment for the future of their children.

Social resources are important in acquiring and altering non-agricultural work as well as easing hardship facing while struggling in the process of livelihood adaptation. Non-agricultural work undertaken by members of rural and peri-urban communities is often under informal arrangements. Social connection becomes important in this type of arrangements, as there is generally no clear regulation in recruiting workers. Seeking jobs outside communities makes this connection even more important, as proper trust is needed. Common practices under informal arrangements are persuasion by those who are already working in the same places and recommendation by trustful, or sometime powerful, persons. Networks of relatives and friends from the same areas form social resources that contribute much to migration and commuting. The availability of these networks often induces migrants from both regions to migrate in a group to the same areas, and sometimes to the same working places, through persuasion of earlier migrants. Earlier migrants who have already settled there are often influential in bringing new migrants to the places or even to undertake the same jobs. This phenomenon is commonly observed in the Northeast where out-migration is widely evidenced. A few out-migrants in the South also follow a similar route. Undertaking factory as well as service work often requires social connections and links with influential persons as well as earlier workers who are able to recommend or at least pass on related information to them in their acquisition of jobs. All Muslim out-migrants who work in Malaysia mentioned that they first travelling to Malaysia because their relatives brought them and recommended to the working places. These networks also help ease new migrants to move conveniently to and settle in the new places with warmth and secure feeling. Although the use of social networks are common to all groups of migrants irrespective of socio-economic status, good networks seem to be more limited among the poor and affect their opportunities to get better jobs. Moreover, availability of good relatives and friends in the communities of origin does help also in acquiring material resources to invest in the cause migration. In cases which out-migrants are not ready to allow children to accompany to the new places, these children are often left in their communities of origin under the care of grandparents or close elder relatives. In the absence of this traditional practice, it is rather difficult for some couples to migrate out temporarily since the place at the destination and working conditions are often not suitable for a family life.

The importance of social resources for acquiring occupation and economic activities is strong in urban communities, as the majority households and members depend highly on off-farm jobs which are mainly also under informal arrangements. Seeking jobs outside communities makes social connections even more important, as proper trust (through recommendation) is often needed. A key informant in Chumchon Naimuang, the Northeast urban community, pointed out: "To get work in restaurants (as a waiters or waitress), if you do not know anyone, forget about it....Having a connection (*sen sai*) is necessary. Even labouring work...without friends leading you, it is impossible." Nevertheless, this importance becomes less for those

with proper qualifications in seeking jobs under formal arrangements, even though a proper recommendation is preferable. Comparing between urban communities in the South and the Northeast regions, the importance of social connection in relation to occupations and economic activities is stronger in Chumchon Nai Muang than in Chumchon Klai Talaad. The wider practice of working outside the community among members of Chumchon Naimuang makes them to depend more on social connection than in Chumchon Klai Talaad. However, this does not mean that other aspects of social resources are not important and follow the same trend. Borrowing money to invest in economic activities is still practiced among relatives in both communities, but in a lower degree as compared to rural communities and peri-urban communities, since members of urban communities do not normally have a strong kinship relation.

The role of cultural resources as related to livelihood adaptation appears to be associated with values about morality and social status which are influenced by religious as well as traditional belief. These values matter in shaping ways of livelihood adaptation, especially in dealing with type of work to be undertaken and place to migrate or commute. Such values appears to be relatively strong among Muslims in the South region who are generally restricted to engage in certain economic activities considered as morally unacceptable. For example working in entertaining business is rarely found among Muslims even in the urban community. Sexual differentiation of role also exists among Muslims since women are discouraged from active participation outside domestic sphere according to Islamic principles. Religious education is generally given a higher priority than secular education. The influence of these values is reflected among Muslims in the study communities. For examples: activities undertaken are rarely related with entertainment or morally unacceptable business; females working outside the communities often travel in a group of neighbours and their working places are not far away; out-migrants preferred to work in Muslim dominated areas where surrounding social environment is comfortable for them to live; pursuing religious education, at least at the primary level, is widely viewed as crucially important in maintaining their way of living as Muslims. However, these practices appears to be less strong among urban settlers as their lives are more integrated into a wider urban life and influenced more by modernity. The existence of such values and their influences are not as apparent among Buddhists both in the South and the Northeast.

Nevertheless, maintaining and improving social status and ties with family and place of origin appear to be commonly shared. Buddhists and Muslims in both regions view social status as important, and therefore improving or maintaining it is part of their aspirations. Attempting to get a good job does not only aim at improving economic conditions, but also enabling to improve social status. A good job with a recognized position, especially in civil service, is often regarded having a good social status and highly respected. Therefore most households who are affordable to support their children to pursue high education often aspire their children to work in civil service. Such aspiration and effort are observed to common among households in rich socio-economic group, while other groups appear to be more negotiating with improving economic conditions. Once economic conditions are reasonably improved, more emphasis is given to effort that contributing to the improvement of social status. Playing a leading role in organizing *phaapaa* or rope offering festival among successful migrants in the Northeast provides a good supporting evidence of such effort. A similar practice is also observed among Muslims, as successful migrants tend to provide a good donation to community mosques or religious schools. An exception is given to those who hold religious positions which are more common among Muslims, such as *tok khru* (religious guru, often the head of religious school), *imam* (community religious leader) and *ustaz* (religious teacher) who sometimes put a relatively higher priority on maintaining their already good social status before improving their economic conditions. Holding this values is

similar to Buddhist monks as they feel as part of their duties to maintain moral society and ways of life, but the practices of Muslim religious leaders happen alongside with their worldly duties indifferent from laymen.

The influences of values on ties with family are also evidenced by the common practice of remittance transfer among migrants to help family members to improve living conditions, support education for young members and agricultural investment, as well as help pay family debt. The influences of values related to ties with place of origin tend to discourage permanent out-migration, especially among members of rural and peri-urban households whose view about the place of origin is rather an idyll (See Rigg and Ritchie, 2002.). Expression such as “*mai mee tee nhai meuan baan rao*” (no other places like our community) is frequently heard from current and ex-migrants when asking about their live at destination places. Common practices among migrants in response to such values observed in rural and peri-urban communities appear in their preparation to return and live in their home communities after accumulating reasonable assets and experiences that can support their good life. A few successful migrants in all rural and peri-urban communities under this study are observed to build new houses or improve old houses in preparation to return and live permanently in the future. It is also commonly told that these migrants attempts to invest in more farm land as part of this preparation. A few ex-migrants in the northeast rural and urban communities are observed to bring some industrial work such as garment making back to undertake in their home communities under a contract arrangement, while others set their own business in their home communities based on experiences accumulated from previous work as migrants.

### **Differences in Forms of Livelihood Adaptation**

Differences in forms of livelihood adaptation observed in the communities under this study can be determined based on the availability of and household access to different resources in local contexts. Although overall livelihood adaptation tends to follow the same trend which is strongly influenced by modernization in the sense that agricultural activities are more cash-oriented but facing inclining popularity among younger generations, while non-agricultural activities are increasingly popular. The pace and forms of change appear to differ between regions, community types and socio-economic groups subject to disparities in their access to different resources that effect the change or adaptation of livelihood strategies.

#### **Regional Comparison**

Regional differences are observed in relation to the extent to which the adaptation takes place and type of activities currently undertaken. An overall observation reveals that livelihood adaptation of households in the Northeast region tends to move slightly ahead towards modernization as compared to those in the South region. This is demonstrated by the extent to which different occupational activities are combined, either in forms of pluriactivity and diversification which is more common in the Northeast than in the South. As illustrated earlier in this paper, the proportion of households that have their members currently working outside their home communities is significantly higher in the Northeast than in the South. This is similar to the figure on number of activities undertaken by each household. Migration is also widely observed in the Northeast with a longer history and much more common than in the South. Interestingly, agricultural activities remain strongly important to livelihoods of rural and peri-urban households in both regions, but types of commodities that are widely produced are somewhat different. In an era which cash income is increasing important, this difference reflects the way people perceived about the economic contribution of different crops. Rice is widely cultivated by households in the Northeast provides lower monetary return as compared to rubber which is predominantly found in the South. Although the

majority households in the South no longer cultivate rice, and the rest do it just for household consumption, their involvement in non-agricultural activities is less than those in the Northeast. Having easy access to a considerably profitable agricultural activity such as rubber tapping enables the higher proportion of members of rural and peri-urban households in the South to remain within the agricultural sector with no great difficulties. The remaining popularity of rice cultivation irrespective of its low monetary return in the Northeast is mainly due to the quality of most agricultural land in this region that is unsuitable for cultivating more profitable crops similar to rubber, although amount of land they have access to appear to be higher. This limitation makes livelihood adaptation of households in the Northeast is more inclined towards non-farm activities than those in the South. As the availability of this type of activities is generally limited in home communities in the Northeast, migration seems an unavoidable choice in most cases.

### **Community Type Comparison**

Forms of livelihood adaptation found in different types of community (i.e. rural, peri-urban and urban) can also be explained based on the availability of different types of resources and members' access to these resources. In rural communities, both in the Northeast and the South, land and environmental resources (both are under the natural resource category) are still widely available. These resources form a good base of livelihoods for members of these communities in the ways with which there are familiar. Not surprisingly that almost all households in rural communities are observed to engage in agricultural activities, although variations may be found in the extent to which they depend on these activities and technologies employed. Environmental resources, which are common properties, are still used by a considerable proportion of households. The more remote the community is (as the case of Ban Dong in the Northeast) the higher their dependence on these resources. Livelihood adaptation in rural communities generally occurs around the utilization of land and common property resources, which are natural based, with the increasing influence of the market economy that shapes the ways they utilize the resources. The influence of the market economy is increasing not only in the production or resource utilization side, but also appears in the consumption side which is stronger. The change in consumption patterns occurring alongside the change in life style put pressure on the ways they utilize these resources to be more cash-oriented with some technical adjustments. However, the pace of change in the production side is slower than consumption side. This imbalance of changes causes most rural households to adapt their livelihood strategies both through pluriactivity and diversification -- the first form is common overall, while the latter is increasing among young members. A similar form is observed in peri-urban communities in both regions, but the extent to which members engage in non-agricultural activities is observed to be higher than in rural communities. The decreasing availability of and limiting access to agricultural lands (as an effect of urbanization in which land use is competitive for different purposes and land ownership is partially transferred to outsiders) force peri-urban households to adapt their livelihood strategies in the direction that reducing their degree of dependence on agricultural activities. The proximity of two peri-urban communities under this study to commercial centers (Khon Kaen in the Northeast and Hat Yai in the South) provide better opportunities for households and individuals in these communities than those in rural communities to seek, initiate as well as develop non-agricultural activities, both within their own communities and in nearby towns and cities. The situations in urban communities are far different from those in rural and peri-urban communities. On one hand lands and environmental resources are very limited. In fact there is almost none agricultural lands available within the communities. Those who have access to agricultural lands are very few and do not engage actively in agriculture, as their lands are located in other communities, often far away. On the other hand, urban environments overall provide opportunities for members of urban communities to participate in several non-agricultural activities available or to initiate these activities by



themselves. As some non-agricultural activities, especially salaried work, require skills differ from agricultural activities of which specific trainings are generally necessary and mainly through formal education, participation in these activities are limited to those with reasonable educational qualifications. The rests are likely to engage in labouring work, low paid factory work, independent commercial work and alike. Therefore, forms of livelihood adaptation in urban communities are observed to be more complicated than those in rural and peri-urban communities. However, activities undertaken occurring mainly within urban areas, and educational qualification matters in making their choices as most of them consider salaried work as having a high preference. Commercial activities are also popular, but they are often limited by access to financial resources and involve high risk. In such conditions, the trend of livelihood adaptation is more individual decision which is moving from labouring work to low paid factory work, commercial activities and salaried work. At the household level adaptation is unclear in its direction, but increasing diversification is observed as different choices are available to different members and the decision is likely to be made individually.

### **Socio-economic Group Comparison**

Coping under conditions of rapid changes appears to vary among members of different socio-economic groups as they generally differ in their resource profiles. Since resource transformation that influences strongly on livelihood process occurs in dynamic and complex manners, shortage of some types of resources can lead to obstacles in getting access to others, and vice versa. Evidences from the study communities show the differences in coping among households in different socio-economic groups.

Households belonging to the poor socio-economic group appear to be more struggling in their coping. In rural and peri-urban communities these households generally own a small amount of agricultural land and are even landless in some cases. Shortage of agricultural lands substantially can weaken their ability to live sufficiently if they depend solely on household farm activities. Furthermore, their poverty also reduces their opportunities to accumulate savings, to build a good relationship with others, and to pursue high education. For example they tend to be apprehensive in seeking helps from their better-off neighbours or to join saving groups existing in their communities due to their anxiety of being indebted and unable to make regular deposits regulated by the groups. Young members of households in these groups generally have low educational attainment which is insufficient for getting a good job. Most frequently members of poor households in rural communities are likely to engage in wage farm work, either in their own communities and neighbouring communities. Some of them migrate out or commute to work as low paid labour in the industrial sector. A few are observed to be struggling in balancing the need to help their household farm work and the eagerness to migrate out. The situations are observed to be slightly better in peri-urban communities due to the better availability of non-farm work in nearby towns. In the Northeast there exist also some groups of the poor organized loosely to migrate out seasonally to work in large farms, especially in sugar cane plantations in Kanchanaburi province in the West region. The urban poor also face limitations in their access to different resources and even more severe in relation to land for housing, as most are landless and live in poor rental houses. They mostly earn their livings by means of engaging in non-farm activities such as small-trading, labouring work in nearby towns and driving motorcycle taxi etc.

Households belonging to the middle socio-economic group are generally better off in their access to different types of resources which are useful for making their livings. In rural and peri-urban communities, the majority households in this group have better access to land than those in the poor group, as their landholdings are generally larger. Educational attainment is

also slightly better among young members of this group than those of the poor. Their participation in collective actions, especially in saving groups, appears to be higher than those in the poor category. They also appear to have a stronger relationship with their relative and neighbours than the poor. In urban communities members of households in this group tend to have better experiences in both training and working. Their better access to various resources enables them to adapt better than those in the poor category. In rural and peri-urban communities, some households allocate their lands for more profitable activities such as rubber cultivation in the South, and animal husbandry and aquaculture in the Northeast. This is done alongside with putting more investment to improve these activities. Out migration and commuting are more common among members in this category. However, activities undertaken are somewhat different from those from the poor category, as they are more determined in making decision to migrate and commute. A few households in rural and peri-urban communities engage in commercial activities such as running small groceries, selling food and drink. These activities are more common among urban households in this socio-economic category.

Rich households generally own and have good accesses to various kinds of resources. More importantly the resources they own and have accesses to can be transformed easily to financial resources that enable them to improve their livelihoods strategies. Forms of livelihood adaptation are likely to move from engaging actively in agricultural activities to non-agricultural activities of which commercial is predominant, followed by professional. However, a combination both agricultural activities and non-agricultural activities are also widely observed, especially among households in rural and peri-urban areas. Nevertheless, agricultural production undertaken by these households is considerably large in scale employing hired labour as well as modern inputs and technologies. Diversification of activities within a household is also observed in order to expand their livelihood bases. The majority urban households in this category have their own businesses which are mainly of commercial type. Provision good education to their children is highly prioritized with the aim to improve their social status as well as to help improve their businesses. In fact, households in this category are more concerned about improving their social status than others. This is mainly pursued by means of improving educational qualification of their children.

### **Capability and Negotiation in Fulfilling Well-being Aspirations**

Earlier in this paper, we discussed about common aspirations of people in contemporary Thai society with special emphasis on communities under this study. In the discussion we also pointed out that some common aspirations might not be easily fulfilled by some individuals and households due to their limited capabilities. Evidently, field observation suggests that people may adjust some aspirations that are unlikely to be fulfilled easily to a lower level. This means that although in general local people's aspirations appear to follow the same trends influenced strongly by modernization, they involve some kinds of consideration to weight according to their capabilities under a given situation. Living in the era of rapid changes makes individuals and households in local communities faced with a complex situation that forces them to mobilize their consumption and living standard in order not to be left far behind their neighbours. Coping in this situation appears to be different between members of different socio-economic groups, as they differ in their resource profiles. Since resource transformation that determines livelihood strategies and processes occurs in dynamic and complex manners, negotiations are often involved in the process of resource in order properly allocate different resources and to balance between overestimated aspirations and capable aspirations.

In dealing with aspirations to have a good job, which are fundamental of having a good life, people in the poor socio-economic group tend to concern more about being able to get a job than having a good job. Even though some members of this group may set their initial aspirations higher than what they are actually capable to fulfil, they are generally sympathetic with some degrees of negotiation in order not to be so vulnerable in the process of making their livings. Eventually most members of the poor socio-economic group expressed their satisfaction with “having a job” even if the job they have is among a perceived good job in their communities. Having a job to do is generally not so difficult in rural and peri-urban areas in most communities under this study as access to land and environmental resources is possible under various arrangements. Even in urban areas, several economic activities are opened for poor people to work in order to survive, of which mostly are labouring. People in the medium socio-economic group seem to be sometime more struggling, especially among the young generation who tend to have a strong aspiration to have a good job and ignore traditional activities available in their communities, while only some of them can achieve. Although negotiations do involve in the process of making a living among members of this group, they seem to be less patient in their coping and lowering their initial aspiration. Struggling is not common among members of the rich socio-economic group as they are often capable of fulfilling this dimension of aspiration through transforming their abundant resources in different ways. Their rich resources profiles enable them not only to improve their qualification for a good job, but also to create an appropriate job for themselves.

Material aspirations, especially as related to consumption, seem to be growing sharply following their increasing connections the modern market. Most households, regardless of different socio-economic status, are eager to consume modern goods extensively available in local markets even in small district towns. Common to households in poor and medium socio-economic groups are their aspiration to have more and more convenience goods and proper houses with the purposes to ease their lives and to raise their social positions. Rich households aspire more to invest in valuable properties as most of other material aspirations are already fulfilled. Although the majority households in poor and medium socio-economic groups are able to own several kinds of convenience goods (television, refrigerator and bicycle are widely owned), regional difference is observed. Owning motorcycle and gas stove is far more common among households in the South than those in the Northeast. Moreover, very poor households are unlikely to own a motorcycle easily as well as to have a proper house to live, while a few medium households own more than one motorcycle. Households in the middle socio-economic group generally have reasonable houses to live but still want to have proper furniture. Both groups are struggling at different levels and seem to have a clear gap in their achievements when compared to rich households. In the midst of rapid change, it is quite hard for them to escapes from material aspirations even though most households already own almost all materials to fulfil their basic needs. Many of them owe some debt in order to have a motorcycle or other high valued materials. They seem to be influenced strongly by modern market and media that arouse them to changes their values towards more materialistic consumption and modern style of living.

Fulfilling an aspiration to provide a good education for children that is apparent in all socio-economic groups and community types in both regions is not always easy to be fulfilled. Although the state policy on education provides better opportunities for improving education among young members in a form of “free education” up to the lower secondary level and makes educational loan available for pursuing higher levels of education until completing the first degree of the tertiary education, many children from poor households still face various obstacles. Financial and caring problems in combination with anxieties of parents about their abilities to secure livelihoods in the short run and to continually provide financial support of children education cause many young members of poor households to stop their education

halfway. A few poor households in rural communities, especially in the Northeast region mentioned about the necessity for some of their children to work at a quite early age to ease their household economic burden as an important reason they considered in their decision not to send their children beyond the compulsory level. Similarly, some young members of poor households in the rural community in the South region expressed the mixture of anxiety about the ability of their parents to support and their concern about family hardship. Although financial shortcoming does not seem to be significant for households in the medium socio-economic group, but some of them are likely to face with their children's lack of intention to pursue a higher education. This phenomenon is more common in rural communities than in peri-urban and urban communities where social environment is not highly inspiring for having a good education. Eventually rich households seem to be in a much better position to encourage their children in pursuing a good education by putting more investments to seek special tutors as well as sending to expensive private schools. An interesting point found among Muslim households in the South region, especially in rural and peri-urban communities, is the proportion of Muslim children pursuing high education is much less when compared to their Buddhist neighbours. The main reason behind this decision is the ambiguity of their parents in strongly supporting their children to pursue secular education. This is influenced strongly by cultural values of emphasizing religious education above secular education among Muslims in this region.

Aspirations related to ties with family and place of origin are still remain high among households in rural and peri-urban communities, but not much so in urban communities. Attempts to fulfill these aspirations are widely observed in both regions. To maintain their strong ties with family members and close relatives, efforts appear in forms of attempting to build houses closed to their parents and close relatives (often in the same compound when possible), providing financial assistance (especially remittance among migrants), caring their ageing parents, and caring for young members while parents are away in searching of work outside. An expression of "*yaat pee nawng tawng ma kawn*" which means relatives must come first is often heard in dealing with helping others' problems. In some cases, unused land is given free to close relatives for cultivation. These special treats among close relatives which often reside in the same villages help in making up rural environments as an ideal place to live. In relation this, many migrants are likely to return and live permanently in the place of origin after a long migration. However, such aspirations are not always easy to fulfil in a rapid changing environment, as they are imposed by some shortcomings such as limited opportunities of getting good jobs, land shortage, limited savings etc., especially among households in poor and medium socio-economic groups. Many young couples have to migrate out or commuting while their young children are left with their elderly parents. For poor households, this practice may be unavoidable given that no better alternatives available in their communities. Although most of them are expecting highly and eventually able to return home, they are struggling along their ways to fulfil these aspirations. Such struggle is not apparent among members of rich households as separation from families and close relatives happens as a matter of choices rather than forces.

The aspiration to mobilize ones social status does not hasten much in a situation that several other aspirations are competing, especially among poor members whose first priority should be given on having reasonable job to make their livings. Even members of the medium socio-economic group their aspiration in this dimension does not seem to be directly focused. In corresponding to this, attempts to fulfil this aspiration are less expressive; rather they seem to be concerned with accumulating financial resources, and their ability to provide good education for their children which is seen as foundations for mobilizing their social status in the future. Nevertheless, only a small proportion of people in both poor and medium socio-economic groups can successfully mobilize their social status in the short term.

Unsurprisingly most heads and members of core households interviewed rarely mentioned about this dimension of aspiration, although some of them point out the association between having a good education as well as a good job and gaining a good social status. Rich households tend to be concerned about maintaining their already good social status in most cases by trying to prioritize their investment on their children's education and skill development. In general, members of the rich socio-economic group do not have much trouble in maintaining their social status as long as their wealth and good relationship with their neighbours is reasonably maintained.

The discussion we made so far in this section illustrates that the relationship between livelihood strategies and wellbeing outcomes under conditions of rapid changes in Thailand does not confront with severe obstacles even among poor households which are most disadvantaged. However, given different resource profiles they have, people in different socio-economic groups seem to differ in their coping. Because of this trend, rich households tend to be the most advantaged. Nevertheless, poor households do not seem to be highly neglected as the remaining rich social and cultural resources contribute significantly in easing some of their hardship and in reconsidering some aspirations through negotiations and sympathy. The state of wellbeing at both household and individual levels is therefore not only influenced by aspirations which are increasingly material-oriented, but also their abilities to transform resources available to them and negotiations they make in the process of livelihood adaptation. Being able to negotiate well between initial aspirations and abilities to fulfil such aspirations makes the state of wellbeing among Thai households, as observed in the study communities, is generally acceptable to them, even though poor households are relatively more struggling as compared to other two categories.

## **Conclusions**

Thailand's development following the Modernization Model has resulted in rapid changes in many aspects, especially dramatic economic growth that have been apparent in the last few decades together with the wide expansion of the market economy. Effects of these rapid changes can be seen in the livelihood adaptation and dynamic aspirations of people, which are evidenced at the local level as illustrated in this study that covers different types of communities in the Northeast and South regions. The expansion of the market economy that reaches local communities is influential both on people's aspirations and livelihood strategies. This leads to co-adaptations of aspirations and livelihood strategies which appear to be inclined towards the same direction in both regions. Nevertheless the extent to which these co-adaptations transpire seems to differ among community types and socio-economic groups of people. The differences can be explained according to the resources profile framework and sustainable livelihood concepts as related differences in the availability of different types of resources (which appear to differ between communities) and the ability of households as well as individual members to transform these resources in their coping.

In rural and peri-urban communities where traditional farming used to be widely practiced on a fulltime basis, more cash-oriented production are presently adopted in order to generate more cash income to meet their needs and fulfil their increasing aspirations. As aspirations also change in response to the overall rapid changes (for examples aspirations to have a good job, good education and to consume convenience goods), more and more cash income is needed. Livelihood strategies appear to be changing not just because they cannot generate adequate income to meet their present needs but also to invest in the future, especially for their children to have a good education that will lead to a good job, and possibly a good social status. When traditional agricultural activities and other available occupational activities in each community are not sufficient for generating reasonable cash income,

modern agricultural practices together with pluriactivity and diversification are likely to be adopted with some members of households engage in activities outside their homes. This makes commuting and out-migration become increasingly popular, especially among young members. Diversification of occupational activities is more common in peri-urban than in rural communities are associated with their different access to alternative livelihood strategies outside the agricultural sector. The trend of change in occupational activities that is inclined towards non-agricultural activities is also shaped by the changing values related to life style that higher preference is given on modern than traditional life style, especially among younger generation. In urban communities, livelihood adaptations occur amidst the dynamics of the non-agricultural sector. Although commercial related activities are widely engaged by members of urban communities, salaried work, especially in civil service is much preferred. A wide range of commercial related activities alongside others urban-based activities allow members with different backgrounds to participate in order to make their livings. Most members can survive reasonably in such conditions, even though some households are struggling time to time in searching proper activities that can generate reasonable incomes as well as culturally acceptable.

By using the resource profile framework to analyze local phenomena of livelihood strategies and their adaptation, our findings reveal that people in different socio-economic groups vary in their household resource profiles, and this variation effects their abilities to aspire and adapt livelihoods strategies. Material resources are substantially beneficial for transformation into other types of resources, including social and cultural resources, as people with good access to material resources (either of land or financial kinds) are likely to better adapt their livelihood strategies in order to improve their living standards and to fulfil other aspirations. These resources can be easily transformed into other resources that are seen more effective in the present or in the foreseeable future; such as investing in modern agriculture, providing good education for children, improving business, building good relationship with others, joining social groups and attaining a good social status. Differences in access to material resources undoubtedly matter in shaping livelihood adaptation among members of different socio-economic groups, and the poor are likely to be more struggling due to their shortage of these two kinds of resources. Nevertheless the general richness of social and cultural resources in Thai society is helpful in reducing hardship. This can explain why those who are shortage of material resources (i.e. individuals and households in the poor socio-economic group) do not seem to face severe obstacles in their living because they often receive helps from relatives and neighbours in some ways and also make use of existing environmental resources to reduce their hardship. However, shortage of material resources seem to lead members of the poor socio-economic group to realize about their limited ability to aspire, as they often negotiate in the process of adaptation by reducing some high aspirations to a level that is not so difficult for them to fulfil. Although peoples in other socio-economic groups also face a similar situation which makes negotiation is sometime necessary, the degree of lowering their actual aspirations tend to be lower than the poor. Since some kinds of material resources, especially land for farming or for simple land-based development (such building houses for rent) are increasingly limited, people tend to seek other alternative livelihood strategies which are skill-based as well as more secure. To successfully attain such alternative strategies requires proper skill development or training as well as social connections. The importance of social connections is more noticeable in dealing with seeking jobs or occupational activities under informal arrangements. And such arrangements are likely to be less common in the foreseen future. In this sense human resources, especially those with proper educational qualification and working skills are increasingly important, since material resources, especially land, can no longer be obtained easily through inheritance and purchasing without competition because its increasing scarcity. The increasing importance of education is clear and realized by people in all socio-economic categories in both regions, but

their ability to provide proper education for their children again despaired due to the differences in their resource profiles, especially material resources.

Findings from this study with respect to livelihood strategies and adaptation illustrate the contribution as well as interactions of various types of resources, both material and non-material, in the construction of wellbeing in the contemporary Thai society. While material resources, especially land, remain significantly important in rural and peri-urban communities since agricultural activities are still predominantly practiced, the importance of non-material resources is increasing. Even among material resources, the dependency on financial resource is increasing in response to the increasing aspirations on modern consumption and production. Among non-material resources, the rising needs to improve education of children, to take advantage of social connections, and to attain as well as maintain social status are evidenced in all type of communities in both regions. They also prove that resources transformation occur in a complex manner and is substantial for livelihood adaptation as a consequence of rapid changes that effect their aspirations.

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