



ESRC Research Group on  
Wellbeing in Developing Countries



## **Wellbeing in Developing Countries Project**

# **Community Profile**

**Ban Lao,  
Thum Sub-district,  
Muang District,  
Khon Kaen Province**

**January 2005**

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Phirun, Asok Ponbomrung, & Buapun  
Promphakping**

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Thum Sub-district,  
Muang District,  
Khon Kaen Province**

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## Abbreviations and Glossary of Non-English Words

Amphur	district
Ban	village
Baht	unit of Thai currency
Baisrisuhkwan	a spirit ceremony to symbolize unit, involving the bidding of wrists with strings
Changwat	province
Dern	month
Isan	the northeastern region of Thailand
Khalum	Local prohibition
Khum	a small group of households within a larger community
Mor Tham Yae	midwife
Mor Tham	healers
Na pi	main paddy farming
Nai hoy	cattle merchant
Phuk kor mue	to tie one hand with sacred chord
Phay	weir
Phu Yai Ban	village headman
Rai	local unit of land measurement in Thailand (1 rai = 1,600 sq metres)
Sin-sord	bride-price
Stang	100 stang = 1 baht
Sra	a pond
Songkran	the water festival and Thai new year
Tambon	sub-district
Thumbun	making a merit
TAO	Tambon Administrative Organization
Wat	temple



## 1. General Characteristics of the Community

### 1.1 Location and Territory

*Ban Lao* is located in *Tambon Ban Thum* Administration Organization. The village is about 17 kilometres to the west of Khon Kaen on highway 12 (*Maliwan Road*). *Ban Lao* is bordered by:

<i>Ban Thum</i>	<i>Amphur Muang</i>	<i>Khon Kaen</i> to the North
<i>Ban Koke Sung</i>	<i>Amphur Muang</i>	<i>Khon Kaen</i> to the South
<i>Ban Ped</i>	<i>Amphur Muang</i>	<i>Khon Kaen</i> to the East
<i>Ban Daengnoi</i>	<i>Amphur Muang</i>	<i>Khon Kaen</i> to the West

### 1.2 Topography

In 2003 the village covered an area of about 1,734 *rai* (1 *rai* = 1,600 sq m), situated on high ground surrounded mostly by fields. The land slopes from the east to the west and from the south to the north. The Topography Map of the Royal Thai Survey Department, scale 1:50,000 states that the average elevation of this village is about 155 metres above sea level.

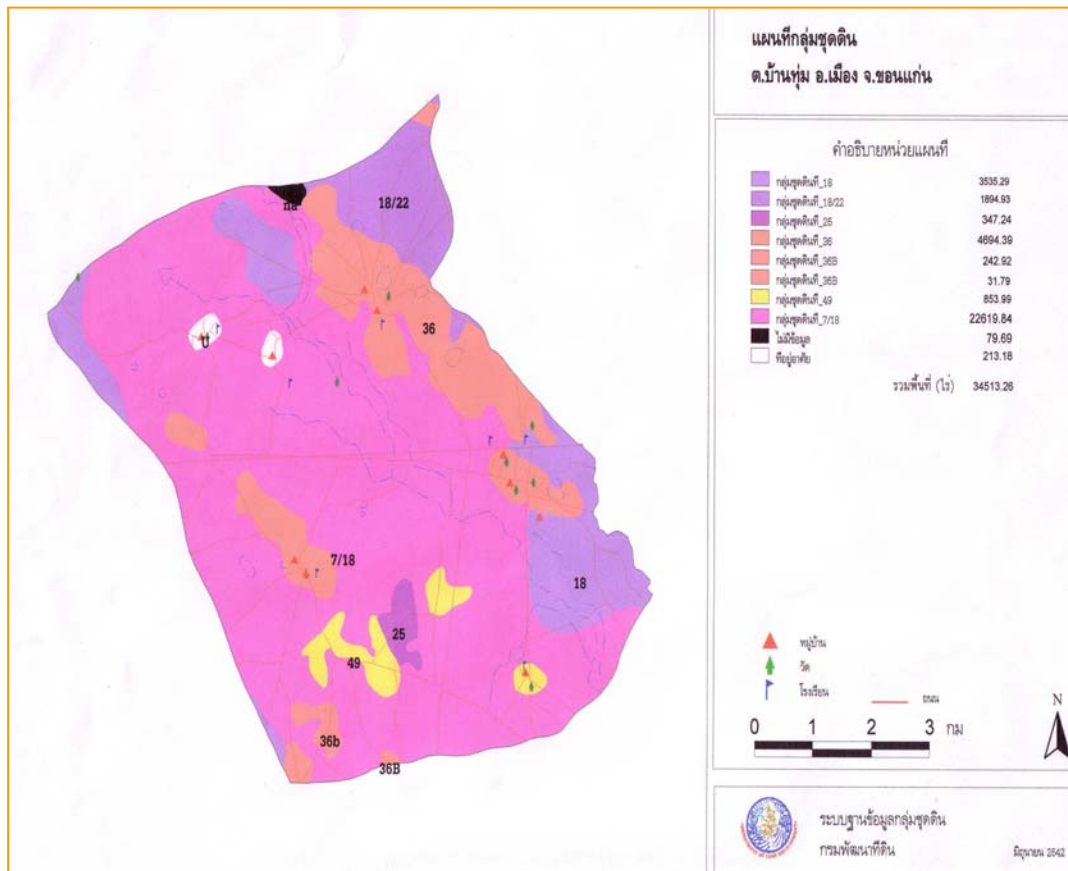
### 1.3 Climate

There are three seasons as follows:

Summer from March to April  
 Rainy from April to November  
 Cold from November to February

### 1.4 Soil Characteristics

The soil in the village is classified in *Phon phisai* series:Pp. The soil is categorized as clayey – skeletal, mixed, *Isohyperthermic Typic Plinthustults*. This soil series was created from sedimentary rock. It has been eroding. This soil is found mostly in the upper region of the Northeast. A cross section of the soil would show that it is shallow, only 50 cm deep with sandy and acid soil on the top and disintegrated clay at the bottom.



**Figure1 Soil Series Map**

## 1.5 Hydrology

At the time of the foundation report, there was a private shallow well, three public wells and a water supply that was built by Department of Underground Resources.

At present, there are many private wells while public wells are located in only three places:

*Phay Nongno* - this is the only natural water source that was dredged in 1979 and used for agriculture and the villager's consumption. This was also the cattle's water source and enabled villagers to pump water to their farms.

*Sra Nong Kae* was a small natural pond in the south of village of limited use to the villagers. In 1966, dredging took place through the *Kerkrit* budget in order to increase the pond and supply water to the community.

*Phay Srahin* built in 1980 by the Bureau of Rural Development Acceleration is now used as a water source for cattle as well as for the village water supply.

Although there are only three water sources in the village, this does not have a large impact on the villagers as they have their own ponds in addition to the water supply. There are also large ponds for fishing in the vicinity, including *Huay Boe (Ban Thum)* and *Kangnumton (Ban Sa-add)*.



*Nong No Pond*



*Sra Hin Weir*

**Figure 2 Water sources of the community**

## 1.6 Infrastructures

### 1) Artesian well

There are four wells, two of which were provided by the Department of Mineral Resources and Health Department and two by the Department of Public Works and Town. Only one of these can be used. Thus, almost all of the villagers usually utilize water for consumption in their households from the village's water supply system rather than using public wells.

### 2) Roads

The main access to the town is *Maliwan* road and is along the route to *Ban Thum*. The village's first main street was built in 1976, out of was concrete with iron. There are now five concrete streets and 2 laterite (a clay high in iron) streets in the village and one street outside. In 1997, one asphalt street was built from *Ban Thum* to *Ban Cokesung*, which made traveling and conducting business by bicycle, three-wheeled car, motorcycle, and car easier and more convenient.



**Figure 3 Road of Ban Lao**

### **3) Electricity**

In 1980, the community collected the money to fund the provision of electricity by Region Electrical Center for 120 households. 23 households could not access the service.

### **4) Water Supply**

In 1995, a water supply was provided by the Department of Public Works and Town, Interior Ministry. A source of produced water is from *Nong Kae Pond*. It is administered by the Committee of the water supply group that is headed by Mr. *Boon Khumon* (the president), with a rate of three baht per unit,



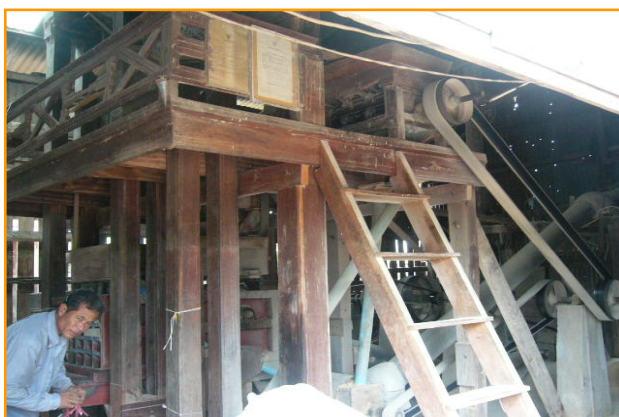
**Figure 4 Water tower**

## 5) Transportations

According to the 2003 state survey, there are seven pickups, fifty motorcycles, thirty bicycles, fourteen pushcarts (locally called *E-tag*), and five trucks. At present most of the villagers rent pushcarts at a cost of 2,000 baht/year to rent the mini pushcart and 3,000 Baht/year to rent the big pushcart.

## 6) The rice mill

In 1973, the first rice mill in the village belonged to Mrs. *Duan*, There are now 2 mills; one with 20 horse-power and one with 20-50 horse-power.



**Figure 5 Private rice mill within the village**

## 7) Broadcast Tower

This is located in the center of the village and is used for spreading news and calling meetings.

## 8) Public telephone

There is only one unworkable public telephone.

## 9) Home Telephone

There are now five households with a home telephone; Mrs. *Tiam Ninkleng* was the first user in 1996.

**10) Mobile Phone**

There are about 30 households using pre-paid mobile phones.

**11) Radio Communication**

Mr. *Mee Pimsai*, uses radio communication in the village.

**12) The Shop**

The first grocery store is *Lum Pichit*, which started in 1976, having moved from *Ban Noonmeung*. There are now 12 shops including two grocery shops, five agricultural product shops, two motor cycle fix shops, an electronic shop and two mechanical repairing shops.

**13) Temple**

There are two places in the village, *Wat Noonkham* and *Wat Dhepnimisantitham*.

**14) Sport ground**

This is located in the south of the village and is used for many purposes including football, badminton and *takraw*.

**Timeline of infrastructures constructed in the community**

1939	<i>Ban Lao</i> School established
1976	Asphalt Street from <i>Ban Thum</i> Renovated <i>Gud jig</i> swell Renovated <i>Nong Kae</i> pond The first shop opens in village.
1979	Drilling for the first underground water.
1980	Electricity connected
1981	Built <i>Nong Hin</i> well for the cattle.
1983	Established the Child Developing Center. News speaker tower built.
1987	Established <i>Sung suntitum</i> temple.
1995	Renovated <i>Nong Kae</i> pond then used for the water supply.
1996	The first home telephone connected.
1997	Concrete Street in village built.
2002	The first public telephone connected.
2003	Established the rice mill then become insolvent.

## 2. History of the village

According to villagers, the word ‘*Lao*’ meaning ‘group’ corresponds to the many kinds of trees existing together in the fertile land of the forest around the village.

The origins of the name ‘*Kwian Hak*’ lie in two legends. The first of which claims that: in the past, *Isan* people used a cart as a vehicle and during rainy periods, the merchants used the cart to travel across the village. However, due to flooding of this route this was no longer possible and the cart had to go around the village, hence the route was broken.

Alternatively, a later legend suggests that ‘*Kwian Hak*’ does not mean broken but refers to ‘*nee hak*’ which means to avoid the route that crossed the village.

Now the villagers call the village “*Ban Lao*”

People believed that villagers from *Ban Thum* came to farm, raise cattle and then settled. However, there is no indication of the identity of the first group to settle in the village. For example, many merchants took their goods to or through the village.

*Khun Arun Hukhair*, the first village headman, visited a friend in *Ban Thum* who thought that *Ban Lao* was a good site and he also tried to settle there and become the leader. In terms of the administration of the village, two lineages were important – *Wattung and Bumrungna*.

### Timeline of key events in the village

1803	Over 200 years ago, to establish the village, there were people who moved from <i>Ban thum</i>
1870	<i>Phore Kun Arun Hukhair</i> was the first village leader.
1900	<i>Lee Keawmongkol</i> was the village leader.
1922	<i>Hong Bumrungna</i> was the village leader.
1939	Established <i>Ban Lao</i> School.
1951	<i>Sung Wathung</i> was the village leader.
1959-1960	People began to settle down around public land.
1967	Expansion of the household to the public area (behind the child developing center) 1971 <i>Phong Srikolchan</i> was the village leader.
1973	<i>Someang Permsup</i> was the village leader. The first rice mill was built at <i>Lumduen's</i> .
1975	The villagers were employed in fishing net factory.
1976	Asphalt road from <i>Ban Thum</i> . Renovating <i>Gud jig</i> swell. Renovating <i>Nong Kae pond</i> then used for the water supply The first shop opens in village
1978	<i>Tao Jumpongphoe</i> was the village leader. More people came and stayed in the village.
1979	Drilling for the first underground water

1980	Electricity connected.
1981	Built <i>Nong Hin</i> well for the cattle. The villager support foundation assembled.
1983	Established the child-developing center. News speaker tower built.
1985	<i>Winit Watthum</i> was the village leader.
1986	CCF Foundation gave the scholarship for poor students
1987	Established <i>Sung thep nimit suntitum</i> temple.
1991-2005	<i>Pradit Watthum</i> was the village leader.
1992	Many villagers sold their property to the capitalists, some became rich but some became poor.
1993	The villagers belong to farmer foundation at <i>Ban Sa-add</i> with over 70 households <i>Pairpun</i> Group established in <i>Ban Lao</i> .
1995	Renovated <i>Nong Kae</i> pond then used for the water supply.
1996	The first home telephone connected. Elderly welfare introduced
1997	Concrete Street in village built. Cattle market place in <i>Ban Nong Lup</i>
1999	Established <i>KorKor Kor Jor</i> group, now with 50 participants
2000	SIF provided the funds for poor people.
2001	The first public telephone connected. (unavailable) One million baht village fund. Established village bank supported by SIF.
2002	The first rice mill established. Gold cards issued for treatment
2003	In March, <i>Mr. Thub Mongkun</i> was the last person to move to the public area.



### 3. Demographic Data

#### 3.1 The Population

According to survey data of the state office in 2004, there were 177 households in total with a population of 935, comprising 475 men and 460 women. Therefore the average population was approximately 5 persons per household and was higher than the provincial proportion of 3.7 persons per household.

Age/year	Male	Female
Under 1	9	4
1 – 4	37	23
5 – 9	39	47
10 – 14	30	35
15 – 19	29	34
20 – 24	56	40
25 – 29	50	44
30 – 34	51	36
35 – 39	39	46
40 – 44	29	28
45 – 49	30	27
50 – 54	22	22
55 – 59	14	19
60 – 64	6	15
65 – 69	7	7
70 – 74	7	10
75 – 79	6	6
80 – 84	3	3
85 +	0	2
No data	11	12
<b>Total</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>460</b>

Source: *Ban Thum* Health Station, 2004

**Table 1 Number of population of Ban Lao classified by age and gender**

#### 3.2 Ethnic Composition

Most people are *Thai-Isan* that lived in the upper *Isan*.

### 3.3 The Family

Most families in the village are extended families and the husband has the decision-making power, in particular in the village meetings. However, in some families some decisions are not just made by the husband – for example decisions concerning loans and purchases.

### 3.4 Marriage

In the past, men or women married people who lived in or near the village. Since they spent most of their working time in the fields, they could only see each other at their house or at a festival. The man would ask for the parent's permission to marry. He had to come to the woman's house when they needed to talk and the decision to marry was taken by the parents.

Now, the young—both male and female are able to work in other places and they can decide to get married by themselves, although the parents are still important people on the engagement and wedding day.

Previously, the bride's parents asked for *Sinsod*-- the money given to the bride's parents by the groom's parents at the engagement ceremony, of about 400-1,000 Baht and not to have gold ornaments. At present, *Sin-sod* is about 30,000-40,000 Baht including gold adornment. There are few of these remaining because of the amount the bride's parents have to spend for the ceremony.

The wedding ceremony remains the same. They have *Baisrisuhkwan* (an offering containing a ball of rice, an egg, among other things, presented to a god in ceremony for encouraging someone) and *Phukormue* ceremony (to welcome him by putting a sanctified thread around his wrist). In the old days, the *Phukormue* was performed only in the presence of a couple's relatives in order to bless and present a gift to the couple. The present mostly included silk products comprising cloth, loincloth and *Sarong*. Currently, this ceremony has been changed, as now relatives, neighbours and friends can take part. The gift has changed from the silk products to money.

In the village, the bridegroom always becomes a member of the household and this has to be approved by the bride's parents in advance. Furthermore, if they want to separate from the parent, they have to inform them of this.

### 3.5 Heritage

The heritages are land, cows, buffalos, property and farm accessories. At present, the heritages arrangement is still performed in the same way as in the past. That is children will be provided their heritage equally but whoever takes care of the parent will get more or an agreement is reached. Gender discrimination does not affect the sharing of the inheritance. The arrangement can be reached either when the parent is alive or dead, depending on each household. Nowadays, there is no extreme conflict for the inheritance; a decision would be made on the basis of seniority or through the court.

### 3.6 Lineage

There are two large clans, *Watthum* and *Nabumrungna*. Both of the lineages will always have a village leader.

### 3.7 Education

Official data obtained in 2003 found that most of the villagers attended an elementary school, some attended lower and upper secondary school and a few achieved a bachelor's degree. The low attendance may be due to both a lack of appreciation of the importance of education, and the level of poverty. Villagers like to support their children to join the labor force in either agriculture or industry.

The two educational establishments for children in the village are as follows:

#### 1) Child developing center

This center is used to look after children aged from 3-5. It was established in 1983 in Ban Lao Na Dee. In 1985, the centre was moved to *Ban Lao* School and was then moved again to its present location. Originally, it was built with cylindrical lamperata before being rebuilt in concrete.

The center is supported by internal and external sources, including the scholarship for poor children less than 18 years old from the CCF Foundation, which has been donated since 1986 by interested foreigners. There are 50 children who get funds from the CCF. Those children will be selected by the committee of the centre and childcare assistants. In addition, Unicef also provides stationary and children's toys.

The parents have to pay 30 Baht/month and the other sources of support are as follows:

1. From *Tambon Ban Thum* Administrative Organization (TAO): school milk, lunches and stationery. Within the 2004 budget about two hundred thousand Baht has been allocated for the children's room and the canteen.



2. One parent gave an animal wall picture.
3. The provincial office paid for a childcare assistant with a salary of about 4,100 Baht/ Month
4. The villagers donated two earthen jars.
5. *Rungsrima* Company provided the playground.

At the present, the child development center is in need of a fence to enclose the area. This is in order to avoid road accidents caused by children running outside the center.

## 2) Ban Lao School

Compulsory education is set for the students of *Ban Lao*. The school was separated from its mother school (*Ban Thum Pracha Nukroh* School) to launch its own educational administration on 1st June 1939. Since its foundation, the school has been governed by seven head masters.

The *Ban Lao* School was initially founded to provide classes up to Grade 4. Before 1973, only students of grade 1-3 took final examinations at the school while fourth grade students traveled separately to take the examination held in *Ban Thum Pracha Nukroh* School. At present, the school has classes ranging from kindergarten (K.1-K.2) to sixth grade. In total, there are 104 students enrolled. It is noteworthy that every legal school age child attends school. However, graduate students from richer families are able to continue to higher education in the town, for example at *Nakhon Khon Kaen* Secondary School or vocational college. Some others might either enter the monk hood or work at home, e.g. helping their parents in agricultural activities.

However, the school still has inadequate resources. It is still in need of the following.

1. Budget for grants
2. Student trainee (s) to teach students
3. Educational materials/instructions i.e. books, computers



**Figure 7 Ban Lao's school**

### **3.8 Public Health**

As *Ban Lao* is located near main town, there is no medical provision in the village. Only simple cases attend the nearest health center in *Ban Thum*. Meanwhile severe cases receive service or treatment from hospitals in town i.e. *Sirnakarindra* Regional Hospital, *Wejprasit* Hospital and Military Hospital. This might be the result of the government campaign on *30 Baht cost for all diseases*. Every villagers named in housing registration would get a 30 Baht ID that they would submit the same time they went to hospitals. The patient will be charged at the rate of 30 Baht for each time. However, some employees might have a social security card to get service or treatment from the selected medical settings.

During 2002, four epidemic cases were observed in the village. These included Leptospirosis (1 case), cholera (1 case), and hemorrhagic fever (2 cases). However, there have been no cases reported since then.

Regarding health personnel, there were 11 community health volunteers in the village. These people would coordinate the local people to *Ban Thum's* health officers in health related activities. They became health trainers and were trained in simple clinical practices, disease surveillance, nutritious food and diet as well as aedes & larvae control against hemorrhagic fever. Moreover, the volunteers would help with spraying against mosquitoes 2-3 times/year. The annual budget of 7,500 Baht from the ministry of public health might be spent on other activities i.e. allowance for meeting or training, purchasing abate-sand and loans within the group.

Before 2002, there was a medical fund for all in *Ban Lao*. However, it was reaping no benefits and dissolved because there was no leading health volunteer to efficiently manage the fund. There is still other funding for the welfare of needy groups in village.

*Elderly Welfare:* The *Khon Kaen* Provincial Social Welfare Office has generated funding of 10,000 Baht/year to support living conditions of the aged people in village since 1996. Following the decentralization scheme, the fund was managed under the local administration itself (*Tambon Ban Thum* Administration Organization). Moreover, the fund might occasionally be supplemented by local contribution i.e. fund raising from the Buddhist fellows during *Tod Pha Pa* (Buddhism ceremony to offer the yellow robes to monks). Presently, there are 4 elderly people receiving support from the fund. It was noted that funding task is beyond the initial.

At present, other villagers might get a loan from the fund. The borrower will be charged at the interest rate of 4% per month for the total amount of loan.

*Welfare for the Disabled, Orphans and Handicapped Children:* This has been funded by the SIF Project since 2002.



**Figure 8 Health Station of the tambon**

### **3.9 Drug & Addict**

Before the contribution of the Eighth Company of the *Sriharajdechochai* Army Base, drug use and addiction used to be major social problems in village. The military tasks included leading the villagers and addicts to take an oath that they will not to get involved in drugs any longer.

### **3.10 The Status of Women**

Previously, it was difficult for women to participate in administrative or developmental activities. Now, with more education, women are more accepted. The women can take part in the village's activities including the committee of the village, the community health volunteers and there are many groups established by woman such as *Pair Pun* Group (weaving) and Herb Shampoo Group.

The role of women is increasing because the Government and Non government organisations (NGOs) supported them. Among those who had this important role was Redd Barna—Save the Children of Norway. They improved women's knowledge concerning handicraft products, women's rights as well as social movements. Accordingly, those activities have enhanced women's role and status. However, some do not rely on their knowledge and ability.

## 4. Natural Resources and Utilization

### 4.1 Biological Features

There is no outstanding biological diversity in the area due to a lack of significant natural resources around the village and to the proximity of Khon Kaen city.

### 4.2 Forest Resource Utilization

In the past, the village had a dense forest from which the villagers could collect non-timber products, especially mushrooms, for their consumption. Furthermore, this area was used for cremation.

The forest has been in continuous decline. At present, the forested area of the village is about 6 *rai*.

### 4.3 Soil Resource Utilization

#### 1) Public Land

There is about 30-40 *rai* of public land, excluding the graveyard area of about 6 *rai*. Most of the public area is used for cattle with the exception of about 10 *rai*, which was reserved by the villagers.

In 1959-1960, people began to move their households to *Ban Noi* near the village headman's house. There was little realization of, or concern over the public nature of the land hence there was no limit on how much anyone could acquire. The extension of the villagers' households continued until 1967, after which they needed permission from the leader before moving to the south of village, *Mr. Thub Mongkun*, was the head of the last household that moved to there in late March.



**Figure 9 Housing located in public land**



At present there are 60 households on public land. Almost all households in the east have their own address and electricity; but there is nothing for people in the south. However, as a result of government policy, they are expecting electricity and address numbers during 2004. The village committee will not allow further expansion of households over the area.

## 2) Agricultural Area

In 2003, a government survey reported that 1,200 *rai* was used for farming. Out of a total of 100 households, there were 30 households that used an area not more than 5 *rai*, 40 households using 6-10 *rai* and 30 households on land between 11 and 20 *rai*. Most of the villagers have held a title deed, totally around 1,734 *rai*.



**Figure 10 Paddy field**

## 3) The cattle area

There is a public grazing area of about 12 *rai* that is used for breeding cow and buffalo for sale. Breeding will increase its role to the villagers in the future. About 25 households have cows and 30 households have buffalos, on a total agricultural area of approximately 1,601 *rai*.



**Figure 11 The public grazing area**

#### **4.4 Water Resource Utilization**

As well as the water supply, the villagers use rainwater for consumption. 177 households have a water supply, 152 households have clean water and about 171 households have got water stocks for the entire year.

There is also ground surface water (*Srahin*) for agricultural use and some households' rice fields are irrigated using water from *Phai nong noo*.

## 5. Community Economy

### 5.1 The Farm Economy

The farming activities of the village can be divided up as follows:

#### 1) Agriculture

Agriculture is still significant to the villagers and the main crop is rice. Data collected in 2546 B.E. by official sources found that in the village, there were 100 households that planted this kind of crop on 1,200 *rai* or about 69.2 % of the total surface area of the village. Most of them cultivated glutinous rice; its name is *Kor Kor 6*. All of those farms depend upon rainfall and few households that locate nearby the public pond can use water from this source for cultivation. The aim of production is to be stored for subsistence in their households.

The way of producing has changed when compared to the past. Previously, the villagers used the cattle for the preparation of the soil and they often bartered a labor force to use in both planting and harvesting. But currently, a tractor is used rather than the cattle therefore replacing the labor barter system.

#### 2) Livestock

Livestock that play a significant role in the economic lives of the villagers are cattle, particularly cows. Their role has changed from in the past. At that time, the villagers used the cattle only for agricultural activities, for instance plowing and harrowing before planting rice, and pulling a cart. Also, the villagers usually herded buffalos and any purchased cattle were buffalos that can work harder and longer than cows. Each village of *Isan* had the cattle merchant, or locally called *Nai Hoy* who went around neighboring villages to buy cattle, which he then sold to other villagers in the nearby villages.

From the year 1997 until now, the cattle purchasing pattern has changed. This is because the cows are in high demand in the market and have been supported by the state authority., As a result, the cattle market was established in *Ban Nong Lub*, about 4 km away from the village. Villagers occasionally take their cattle here and sell them by themselves. The market is available on Monday and Tuesday.

According to official information obtained in 2003, there were 160 cows and 10 buffalos. Within the village they can provide a public grazing area large enough for the whole herd of cattle. Besides the cattle, they feed pigs and chickens too.

## 5.2 Off-farm Income Activities

The activities are listed as follows:

### 1) Wage labour

Most villagers employed in wage labour are teenagers who work in fishing net factories in *Khon Kaen* city. The data obtained in 2003 found that there were 30 households that had members working in the factories. They mostly earned 15,000 baht a year in each household.

### 2) Employed

Employed to tie lead to fishing nets, villagers in almost the whole village have been hired to do this kind of work from 1975 to the present. Two times a week the factories have workers distribute the nets to the villagers. Wage varies according to the size of the net — the smallest earns 14 baht each, medium size earns 22 baht and 29 baht is paid for the biggest. But these prices will be lower if arranged by merchants.



**Figure 12 Villagers tie lead to fishing nets**

### 3) Commercial and service sectors

Both occupations have the lowest number of employees from the village. There are 3 stores that sell products for consumption in everyday life.

### 4) Migration

The migration in the village can be divided into 2 forms: permanent and temporary. The temporary migrants always return to the village when planting and harvesting season arrives. Destinations of migration consist of big cities like *Bangkok*, *Chonburi*, *Rayong*, and the perimeter provinces. Regarding the permanent ones, they often visit their parents and relatives for important festival as New Year and the *Song Kran*.

Previously, most migrants were teenagers. But now those are who have married since those teenagers have altered to work in the factories within *Khon Kaen* City.

The two main types of work that the villages still migrate to do are;

1) Waged labor in a sugarcane field, this kind of work has been a long standing occupation of the community. In 2521 B.E., numerous villagers worked in this occupation in *Kanchanaburi* province. Every year they will migrate from December till April and the employers will provide a big truck to pick the laborers up in the village.

2) Waged labor in an orchard where the villagers are employed to collect fruits. The destination is *Chuntaburi* province. The duration of migration is from May to June.

### **5.3 Wealth Ranking in the Community**

The wealth ranking criterion can be categorized as follows:

1) Poorest group—of about 40 households, the features of the group are that they work for a living day-to-day, they have no occupation, no farming land or less than 1 *rai*, and they have no one to take care of them.

2) Medium income group, this is the largest group in the community or around 70 % of the total households. The standards for ranking of the group are they have little more farming land than the poorest group; they have a permanent occupation but this does not produce much income.

3) Richest group called *Mung Kung*, these are households that own a large amount of farming land and assets such as a car, rice mill and so on. They can also earn a high income.

As mentioned above, the economic status of the villagers was calculated not only through considering their assets. The ranking also included farming land size, features of occupation and the relationships within those households.

## 6. Way of Life, Culture, Traditions and Beliefs

### 6.1 Beliefs

#### a. Shrines of the community

The traditional belief of the villagers is centred red on monastery (*Wat*). Here there are two temples: *Wat Non Kham* and *Wat Dhebnimitsuntithum*. The *wat non kham* is the temple in which the villagers regularly make a merit and offer foods for monks on a daily basis or on holy days, while the *wat dhepnimitsuntithum* is used as a crematorium.

In addition, the villagers pay respect to a spirit house in two places. The first called “*Ta Poo Chao Ban Shrine*” is located in the north and on a villager’s land which was sold to a local politician. The area is being developed yet the villagers are afraid of destroying the shrine. Therefore the villagers are negotiating to leave the shrine untouched. The other is called “*Chao Phoo Nong Kae Shrine*” and is situated beside the *Nong Kae Pond* in the south. The whole community will hold a ceremony to pay respect to both the shrines and offer local liquor, boiled chicken and sweets.

#### b. Prohibitions

Even though the community is adjacent to the city, the villagers still hold traditional beliefs, locally called “*Khalum*”. Details are as follows:

1) Birth. Forty years ago, when someone gave a birth, the villagers always took the placenta to tie the cradle for the child until it dried. They believed that those children were easy to bring up. In addition, their parents always put children on a winnowing basket and they then winnowed 3 times, believing those children would be healthy.

For those women who gave birth, during the healing process they were confined to lie near an open fire for warmth as well as sanitation, and they were forbidden to eat other foods but rice with salt.

2) There are some taboos relating to a death in the village. Some of those are when any members of the village die, the other villagers are prohibited to wash their hair, clean clothes or collect wood fuel into their households. They believe that if they do like this, more villagers will pass away. In addition to, during a funeral, each household always places firewood in front of their homes and afterwards the dead person’s relatives will collect that firewood for the cremation. The villagers believe that it is a means of respecting the dead person. Seventy percent of the villagers are still faithful in these beliefs.

## 6.2 The Regular Traditions over 12 Months (*Dern*)

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

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

***Dern Sam (March)*** *Bun Khum Khaw*, *Bun Khaw Jii* and *Bun Audta* (in *Khun 9 Kham Dern 3* in the Thai old calendar). For this ceremony villagers bring rice and offer it to the temple (they carry two loads suspended from the ends of a pole across the shoulder). The quantity offered by each villager depends on the impact of flooding during that year. After villagers collect the rice, they sell it and give money to the temple. In the evening the priests and villagers must take part in ceremonies and priests must pray. In the morning villagers prepare *Kaw Jii* (rice anointed with egg and laid on the fire) and make offerings to the priests.

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

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

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

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

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

***Dern Kaw (September):*** *Bun Khaw Pra Dub Din* in *Khun 15 Kham* (the full moon). Villagers make *Khaw Tum* (rice wrapped in banana leaves and boiled). These may consist

of steamed rice, fish, chili, salt, fish produce, black rice, red rice and piper beetle. In the morning these offerings are brought to the temple and priests pray in dedication to the spirits of the village. After that the villagers who brought the offerings surround the temple to pray to the spirits of their ancestors.

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

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

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

Activity / Month	Dec	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	July	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov
1. Bun Aud Ta	←→											
2. Bun Pee Mai		←→										
3. Bun Khum Khaw, Bun Khaw Jii and Bun Aud Ta			←→									
4. Bun Ban				←→								
5. Bun Pa Wate, Bun MaHachat and Bun Pa Pa					←→							
6. Bun Leang Jao Pu and Jao Ta						←→						
7. Bun Kao Pun Sa							←→					
8. Bun Khaw Pra Dub Din								←→				
9. Bun Khaw Sak									←→			
10. Bun Ook Pun Sa										←→		
11. Bun Kra Tin and competition Soung Jao Ta											←→	←→

**Table 2 Schedule of Tradition in the village**



## 7. Institution, Role and Participation of the Community

### 7.1 The Role of TAO in the Village

*Ban Lao* is located in *Tambon Ban Thum* Administrative Organization, which plays an important role in developing the village. The development projects which have been allocated in the TAO's budget have changed from infrastructures projects to those focusing on occupational activities. These are the Cooperative Group, Cattle Group, Herb Group and Fishing Net Group.

Nowadays, there are two villagers who are representatives of the TAO of the village, *Mr. Vichian Siti* (Member of the Parliament) and *Mr. Siha Wattung* (Member of the TAO Parliament).

### 7.2 Local Administration

At the present time, the village was divided into 5 groups (*Khum*), consisting of *Khum Phaisritong*, *Khum Ban Lao*, *Khum Nong Kae*, *Khum Wat Non Kham* and *Khum Ban Noi*. The following is list of the village headmen of *Ban Lao* over the past 135 years.

1. Aran	Hukhair	1870-1900
2. Lert	Kammong	1900-1922
3. Tong	Nabumrung	1922-1945
4. Song	Watthum	1945-1971
People began to move to the village (Located behind the child-developing center).		
5. Damrong	Srisan	1971-1973
6. Samai	Permsub	1973-1978
7. Than	Nongpoo	1978-1985
8. Winit	Watthum	1985-1991
9. Pradit	Watthum	1991- 2005
10. Boon	Watthum	2005- present

### 7.3 The Relationship with Wider Society

The patterns of relationships between the village and wider society are categorized as follows:

#### 1) Relationship with the private sector

This relationship was formed in 1992, when investors came into the village and bought the villagers' land in order to allocate it for house construction and sale. Yet the projects were given up due to the economic crisis in 2540 B.E. The area totaled 330 *rai*. The effect of this kind of relationship to the village was that the villagers lost their farming land on which they depended for a living and became poor.

## **2) The relationship with the market**

The village is located adjacent to the city, so the villagers are easily linked to the market, the effects of which flow into the community through their activities. One aspect of this is that they will have to sell their products including cattle, rice and handmade products to the market and provide the labor force for both industrial and service sectors. The other aspect is that the villagers need to buy necessary materials for consumption in their everyday life from the market.

### **7.4 The Fund Supported by the Government into the Village**

#### **1) Social Investment Fund Project or SIF**

The Social Investment Fund Project aims at poverty alleviation by addressing the demands of the poor for priority infrastructure and services, and support for productive activities. The village was supported as the project menu 5 which consisted of 5 activities. Firstly, a scholarship of 1,000 baht each, which was allocated by a wealth ranking, was given to 5 students. Secondly, a scholarship for a youth group was created, dedicated to 3 people and given 2 times. The first time was a free fund for occupation training of 5,000 baht each and the next time was a revolving fund of 5,000 baht each that was given when they finished the course so as to invest in their careers. Thirdly, there was a free fund distributed to 6 orphan children of 1,200 baht each, a total of 4,800 baht. Fourthly, 4 disabled villagers were supported 1200 baht each. Fifthly, the fund helped 4 elderly villagers with 1,200 baht each. Lastly, the SIF group's committee considered the poor. This was done through a revolving fund whereby 17 households benefited in the first year with a loan of 10,000 baht per household in order to buy cattle. Each of the villagers had to refund 2,500 baht a year as well as 2 % interest.

Criteria of the committee are income of household, occupation, land occupation and number of household members.

#### **2) The Village Fund**

The objective of the fund is to support villagers to invest in their occupations following the policy of Dr Taksin Shinnawatra's government. In 2001, *Ban Lao* was allocated one million baht and the fund has been managed by the village fund's committee selected by the villagers. The borrowers have to repay to the group with interest. Problems of this activity are that the villagers do not understand its objective; moreover, borrowers default.

#### **3) The Poverty Solution Project**

The project was started in Prime Minister Chaun Lakepai's regime and has been controlled by the Community Development Department. The state provided 280,000 baht to the village then the village's committee will distribute the fund to each villager. The purpose of the project is to support the villagers who want to invest in any occupation for the

purpose of solving poverty. Problems are the villagers do not refund in time, and do not spend the money in line with the objectives of the project.

#### 4) The village assistance centre

Each year, the state agency will provide a budget to the village of 10,000 baht, which is separated from the elderly-welfare budget. The village's committee will arrange for the money to be loaned to villagers in need of assistance with a 3-baht interest rate. At present (2004), the centre has a total of 18,000 baht and the chair is Mrs. Sukhon Narin.

### 7.5 The Local Organization

- **Community Bank** – started in 2001, run by committee with no external funding. The bank was started by one individual and the committee was elected by the villagers. Members must save with the bank in order to receive a loan that can be repaid over any period with an interest rate of 3% per month. Loan amounts tend to be quite small – maximum of about 5,000b. There are 140 members at present and loans can be used for any purpose. Members receive a proportion of the loan interest profit at the end of each year based on the amount of savings they have in the bank. During my survey, the ease with which people can obtain a loan from the bank was emphasised. The flexible repayment period was also emphasised with some respondents only repaying the interest on the loans as they were unable to start repaying the actual loan amount.
- **Million Baht fund** – scheme of *Thai Rak Thai* government hence it started in 2001. The revolving fund must remain in the village and loan allocation is organised by a villager elected committee. Maximum loan is 20,000baht and must be repaid within 1 year. Interest rate was 3% per month and has just been increased to 5%. Unclear what the penalties are for non-repayment – villagers are supposed to form groups to act as security on each loan so the members of the group are responsible for repayment if one of their group defaults. Villagers have to apply for each loan and it should be used for career development. Members can buy shares and receive money back each year according to the number of shares they own. From my survey, the main reasons for obtaining a loan were to buy livestock or to pay for general household expenses. People also used the loan to pay for other loans obtained from moneylenders in the village and in Khon Kaen.
- **Women's (Shampoo) group** – Originally an agricultural cooperative, the shampoo group was a sub-group of this that started about 6 years ago. The group make products to order with locally-sourced ingredients and these are sold in various locations in Khon Kaen. The group is linked with the One Tambon One Product government scheme having been product champion in Khon Kaen province. The group has applied and received a loan from the tambon of 25,000baht and this has been loaned out to members to use for any purpose. Members can save with the

group and apply for loans. A small core of members make the products and receive a percentage of the profits. The other members receive a share of the loan interest profits at the end of the year as well as gaining new skills and knowledge – for example learning how to make shampoo.

- **Fishing net group** – formed in 2001 from villagers who work at home making fishing nets for factories and shops in Khon Kaen. The group is linked with Isan Women’s Network who provide advice and training on safe working practices and methods of negotiating with factories about workers’ rights and pay. This network is also working to pressure the government to pass legislation concerning the rights of subcontracted workers. The group has also received the 25,000baht loan from the tambon and intends to join a national Credit Union Cooperative when they have 50 members and a certain level of group capital. Members must save 50baht per month and as a result of the tambon loan money, have now received loans from the group.
- **Women’s (balm) group** – formed in 2002 from members of the shampoo group. The group has received funding in the form of grants from the government agricultural cooperative and a loan from the tambon. As with the shampoo group, a small core of members make the products while the other members use the group as a saving and loan facility.
- **Preapun** – traditional weaving group that is the longest running group in the village, with the network operating for over 10 years. Only 5 active weavers in the group but it is part of a network of 7 villages that own an outlet in Khon Kaen. The network is also linked to the Isan Women’s Network and is part of the Credit Union Cooperative. The Preapun network gives 300baht per year for elderly members – a significant reason why some of the older members who can no longer weave are still in the group.
- **Cattle group** – Started in 2001. Has only ten members, members save within the group and apply for loans which are sourced from the tambon. Information dissemination role of the group as well as increasing individuals’ bargaining power when selling and/or purchasing farm supplies/livestock.
- **Volunteers group** – members voted for/invited into group that is funded by govt and carries out govt directed projects.
- **Savings group** – started in 1999 with funding from the Miyazawa fund, ran for 3 years and collapsed 3 years ago. Complaints from the committee that they had no incentive to run the group and complaints from members that there was no interest on savings. There was argument from group leader that members did not repay their loans and used them for unsuitable purposes.

There is considerable overlap of membership particularly in the product groups. The product groups are also dominated by members that are related to each other. There appears to be two kinds of groups in Ban Lao – product groups that are dominated by older women and that offer small-scale savings and credit facilities, and the million baht fund and community bank whose membership is less biased and offer larger loans and higher interest on savings due to higher interest on loans.

## Appendix

### SWOT

#### Strengths

1. Public Utilities
  - 1.1 There are concrete streets in the village and asphalt streets between villages.
  - 1.2 water supplies.
  - 1.3 electricity.
2. The amount of cooperation
3. There are many groups to support and develop the village.
4. The market place for agriculture products.
5. The fight against drugs.
6. High ability seniority
7. Good village plan

#### Weaknesses

1. Incapable leader
2. No unity
3. There is no educational support
  - 3.1 only primary schools in the village.
  - 3.2 teachers, budget, and school accessories needed.
  - 3.3 place to do activities such as a sports ground.
4. *Ban Thum* public health
  - 4.1 There is no building to serve as a health center.
  - 4.2 No drug store
5. There is no electricity along the road.
6. There are many dilapidated houses.
7. Communications
  - 7.1 There is only one non-functioning telephone box.
  - 7.2 Speaker Tower
8. The land cannot be used for planting.

#### Opportunities

1. The village fund, Village bank, Private funds.
2. Vocational education training, such as sewing, making sweets.
3. Good communication so the villagers have a chance to get jobs.
4. Housewife Assembly.
5. Market place support
6. The fight against drugs or narcotics
7. Water resources
8. The elders are able to give advice and support.

### **Treats**

1. Shortage of manpower to develop the village.
2. Most villagers have low education levels
3. Very difficult to communicate news.
4. Lack of public utilities such as street lamps, telephone boxes.
5. The villagers do not have money to run businesses
6. Some households do not have land for planting.
7. They just plant rice for consumption, not for retail.