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KOACHAKON CHINAWONG : THE IMPACT OF RETURNING MIGRANTS
ON COMMUNITY – BASED RESOURCES: A CASE STUDY OF BAN NONGMON BAN
LUANG SUB – DISTRICT, DONPHUT DISTRICT, SARABURI PROVINCE. THESIS
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The Thai economic crisis which occurred towards the end of 1996 created a great number of unemployed people, many of whom had no alternatives but to return to their home-villages in rural areas. This study is set to examine the impact of these returning migrants on the natural resources in their home communities. It is an attempt to address the currently debated issue regarding whether or not the rural society can absorb the returning, unemployed population from the city. The study employs a qualitative approach, focusing on semi-structured interviewing of 30 key informants, all of whom are returning migrants who live in the village of Nongmon, located in a Central province of Thailand.

Two types of returning migrants are identified: those who are well adapted and those facing a great deal of difficulties. The well-adapted returnees are found to have taken advantages of their new ideas and skills in managing their family resources (land, labor and capital). This has improved family-based resources. This type is found in a very small number, as compared to the group that is still struggling. The second group faces a great deal of difficulties, as they cannot find better options. Some come back with the conventional idea of exploiting the mainstream agriculture; a few of them, especially the land-less, continue seeking daily wages, and others earn income from catching fish and selling them in market.

It seems that these are the people who still hope for the country's economic recovery and thus are ready to leave the village any moment. They fail to see the need to improve the existing mainstream agriculture, considered the main cause of resource degradation and environmental problems in the rural areas. Land, water and air remain heavily contaminated with chemical fertilizers and pesticides they have used. In sum, the absorbing capacity of the rural village—whether or not the community-based resources can help solve urban unemployment, depends on the types and conditions attained by the returning migrants themselves.

Finally, two types of assistance policies are recommended. An immediate program is needed, aiming to improve basic skills to be used in understanding household incomes and expenses, and community cooperation. Knowledge of marketing systems is highly recommended. Long-term assistance should involve many of the following schemes: rebuilding the social capital at the community level, changing the way of the returnees' thinking, promoting integrated agriculture, and finally encouraging community, action research.