

The purpose of this research is to study the opportunity to continue to secondary education among rural youth in the North region. The population of the studied community are composed of both native and hill-tribes (Hmong and Karen). The study focuses on the decision of the actors including parents, children and persons involved in the decision making process. The questions addressed are : how decisions as to whether a particular child continues to lower secondary education are determined; under what conditions would a child receive an opportunity to study. The micro-level approaches which employ both qualitative and quantitative methods are used for the investigation.

The research found that most rural people value education beyond the primary level. Virtually all parents hope to see their children receive good education. The value of education leads parents to have long-term plans for their children's education. The opportunity to continue studying, however, actually depends on a number of factors particularly costs of education including direct and indirect costs. The most important indirect cost is social cost. The opportunity cost appears to be less important.

The mechanisms that help to reduce the direct cost are the scholarships, supports from kinships which is evident only among the hill-tribes. The availability of secondary education in the village (extended primary

school) helps to reduce both direct and indirect costs. Additional factors contributed to children's opportunity to study are parents' reference group and information diffusion, both of which motivate parents to believe that sending children to school would help them to acquire upward social mobility. Having good education will also help their children to have comfortable lives as well as earn more stable income than doing agricultural jobs which in turn affects the economic and social well-being of parents during their old age. The study also found that children from economic well-off families tend to have greater opportunity to continue their study than those who come from economic worse-off ones.

The last factor effecting children's opportunity to study is children's ability; intelligent children are more likely to continue their studying. For Hmong families, birth order and gender of children are additional important determinants; elder and female children have less opportunity to study beyond the primary level.