

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **ADAPTATION STRATEGIES AND CHANGING BORDERSCAPES**

This chapter analyzes how the study villagers' livelihoods have changed since their resettlement, and to do so I classify them into different household classifications, these being 'well-off', 'middle-income' and 'poor' households. Based on this classification, I will assess how they have been able to adapt to their new circumstances using their own resources and their own strategies, those that have enabled them to cope with the changes that have taken place in their lives.

#### **5.1 Livelihoods before and since Resettlement**

According to my household survey, of the 130 households from Khuan village that have recently worked on the farm, in the casino and as laborers, the majority previously farmed and worked as wage laborers in the casino.

##### **5.1.1 Livelihood before Resettlement and since Resettlement**

###### **(1) Agriculture-Based Livelihoods**

Prior to becoming part of the Golden Triangle SEZ Khuan villagers relied on natural resources from the forest, land, and river for their families incomes. Most of the villagers depended on agriculture, practicing farming, and growing cash crops such as corn and selling them among the local communities, such as in Tonpheung and HouayXay. They also sustained their daily lives by going to the forest and finding forest products, which were then used for household consumption or were sold at the local markets

Located close to the Mekong River, the villagers' production and sales activities were closely linked to it, being based around fish, which were used mostly to support their home consumption activities. In addition, the village shares a border with Chiang Saen District in Thailand, so even though the village is located far from the city, the villagers could and still can cross the border to buy food, drinks, seafood, pork, chicken and also vegetables, as well as products such as clothes. Some villagers, mostly the elderly female housewives, buy vegetables in Chiang Saen, Thailand and then sell them in their own community. One housewife told me: "the vegetables I buy

from the other side of the Mekong look nice, and most consumers prefer to eat the nice looking vegetables.”. One of my interviewers who opening grocery shop in the village told me that “I can earn average 800,000 to 1,500,000 Kip per month; most of my things in this shop I buy from both in the local market in Tonphueng or Houay Xay district, and cross the border to buy from the other side of Mekong River, in Chiang Saen district.”

Farming is still the main livelihood activity in the village; however, I observed that the living conditions in the village are not fully-traditional anymore, mainly because the village shares a border with Thailand and Myanmar, which is very easy to cross in order to buy items for sale. When I first visited this village in 2010, I saw every family owns a truck (for their farming activities), a motorbike (from China), and a car (from Thailand). As a result, farming is no longer as traditional as in other parts of the country; for example, according to the village head, most households own trucks, motorbikes, cars and bicycles, plus produce sticky rice, depending on the quality of their farmland. Some of the villagers are not involved in agriculture at all; for example, those villagers who have moved into the area recently during 1997 to 1984 do not own any land, so their objective is to be an employee, meaning they can exchange money (their salaries) for the goods they need. In fact, working in construction has become the main job for the villagers since the SEZ was introduced. Another group of people who did not possess any land grew vegetables on other villagers' land, and then after the harvest shared their harvest, an arrangement referred to as *khao-kha-hua-na*. Some people who have both gardens and farmland would like to farm by themselves, as after the harvest they are able to generate a good income under the sharing agreement. Now they can only generate half the total income, after deducting expenses, such as for hiring people to help them. However, if they did not hire people, they would not be able to finish on time. Younger people in the area work at the SEZ, and so are able to earn much more when compared to before the project arrived.

The head of Khuan village told me the following in relation to the concession period (since early 2007): “...the villagers living in this village have suffered from having an insufficient livelihood and income. Before they could earn money farming,

gardening and growing crops, each month and year; villagers could earn enough for their own families. However, since 2008 they have had to deal with insufficient incomes. Although they have applied for jobs at the casino, their skill levels are low when compared to the high-tech jobs at the casino. As a result, people in our community must buy all their vegetables, meats, pork and so on". He added that the Lao villagers used to be able to stop farming when they wanted to, and then return to work later – this was no problem. In contrast, at the casino they have to follow the work schedule - all day and night. They could grow enough rice in the past to cover two or three years, and a family could grow ten tons of rice and consume only seven, leaving the rest for sale. As a result, they could earn 1,500,000 to 2,000,000 Kip a year from growing rice. The head of the village said his family grew corn over eight rai of land, and could grow two crops per year, earning between five to eight million Kip each time.

The company running the SEZ has compensated the villagers, but his wife added, “nowadays we stay in their village; the land is not ours”. The head of the village said that if the negotiations had not relied on the local administration unit, the villagers could have negotiated a reasonable level of compensation, but instead the government forced the villagers to sell their land. The compensation given was five million Kip for each garden, eight million Kip for each house and 125,000 Kip for each coconut tree. At first, the company only wanted to buy the farmland, not the livestock, but the villagers said if they had no farmland, how would they feed the cows? In the end, the local administration agreed with the company that it should also buy the cattle from the villagers, plus the wood in their gardens also.

## **(2) Non-Agricultural Livelihoods**

Before the SEZ came to the village, some of the villagers worked as laborers outside as transnational labor. These laborers are mostly the second or third generation living in the village, and come from the poor families that have to cross the border to earn; they have only a little education. As a result, they work as construction workers; some have got married to Thai men in Chiang Saen district and have settled there, but some returned home having fallen in love with a Lao man, then getting married and living in the study village. When compared to the laborers who work in

their own community, those who go outside do many things, such as growing rice and crops, and building houses. In the rice growing season, the families with a larger number of paddy fields hire other villagers to help grow the rice, usually for four or five days, paying 35,000 to 65,000 Kip per day to each laborer. The most interesting thing is that the housewives also join-in with the short-term temporary work now. In addition, the families which do not own land to grow rice can survive by farming other villagers' land, and then after cultivation receive rice as a payment, the amount depending on the amount of land farmed and the quantity of rice produced. Those laborers who build houses can earn 65,000 Kip per day. One housewife whose husband was a wage laborer in the village said, "We moved from another place to settle down in this village. My husband can build houses and do others tasks both inside and outside the village, earning 65,000 Kip per day. I can also do everything in the village". She added "we have two children. My first son, after graduating from technical school applied to join the army, but I told him to come back to the village, then after the casino opened he applied to work there. He has now been working at the casino for three years, earning more than three million Kip as a card dealer. However, he now has a problem with his back as he has to stand all day in his job, so the money he earns he has to spend on medical checks. Some day he may need to quit this job. My daughter is studying at the third grade of school and gets high scores in her exams; I am very proud of her. Most of our expenditure is on our children, but we have no debts, and before we were able to save about 1,300,000 Kip per month. She continued "since we moved to the new houses we have had to spend the money we saved before to fix the house. We also received only a little compensation because we did not have a large amount of land". She added that all their money has gone since moving to live in the new house; spent on repairs.

Another of my respondents said: "after farming I worked as driver, I drove from this village to HouayXay district and other districts around the Province. In the past, seven or eight years ago I could earn a lot from driving; however, in recent years most of the villagers have bought motorbikes and cars, plus the road is better than it was, so my income has declined. I was once the only driver in the village, and after the company compensated people, I bought a van for my son, but no customers came

to this casino or used our service, so I had to sell it. He mentioned for his two sons who addicted drug so there is only him become the main workforce in his family. Since his family moved to the new house his wife fell ill for a year; so he took his wife to a hospital in Chieng Khong district, Thailand. Then, after the tests he took his wife to Vientiane for an operation. Now his wife has recovered; but has to take more than ten kinds of medicine with her meals every day. He added “our compensation money is about to finish because we have used it repairing and decorating our house, plus on hospital fees.”

## **5.2 Economy of Khuan Villagers before the Arrival of the Golden Triangle SEZ**

### **5.2.1 Income and Expenses of the Khuan Village Prior to the Golden Triangle SEZ**

Over the years, subsistence agriculture has been practiced in this Khuan community. I collected data on the incomes and expenses of the Khuan villagers prior to their move to the new village, Sam-Liem-Kham. I carried out a survey of 130 households, including 147 families and 165 villagers who practiced farming; there were six traders; nine government officials; 70 students and 192 unemployed (including elders and children), making a total of 462 people.

From the interviewed, income and expenses of the Khuan villagers before relocated to the new village found that most of villagers could save their income for more than 70 percent.

Before relocating to the new village, most of the villagers sustained themselves on seasonal food, plus some of them sold items at the local markets. The main crops and vegetables they grew were *pak kard lao sung* (Chinese cabbage), sesame, cucumbers, egg plants, chilies, ginger, cassava and corn, among others; Their own rice was sold to some middlemen who came to the village and bought from their homes. After the farming season, they also grew corn and sold it to the middlemen. Those with more land planted commercial trees such as teak, or raised cows. As a result, they had much income at that time.

They paid for their electricity once a month, and crossed the border to buy seafood and dairy products from Chiang Saen district in Thailand, for their own

consumption. Some households paid for their children's education; buying clothes in Tonphueng or Houay Xai markets. In short, these villagers could save about 70% per month.

### **5.3 Life after Resettlement**

In this section, I will discuss in more detail the villagers' lives after their resettlement to the new Khuan village. Some now work at the casino, while others act as wage laborers and earn from other sources. I will focus on their livelihood strategies, their situation having adapted to the new place – where they practice self-sufficiency and do farming, during the transition period and since the SEZ has started to provide them with cash income, as a waged labor.

In addition, the alternative directions taken by adopting new livelihood strategies, laborers and farmers will be compared, in terms of income generation, plus I will discuss the quality of local labor at the casino, as offering local farmers permanent jobs is seen as one of the ways to overcome poverty. I will also compare the various incomes being earned and whether they will be able to sustain the local farmers' livelihoods during the SEZ era.

Since the project was launched in 2007, over a short period a remarkable change has occurred, wherein rice fields, gardens and land have been changed into entertainment and business projects, those which promised local people higher levels of development and an 'upgrade' to their lives. The project has been extended from 827 hectares at the beginning, before measurement; to an area covering 926 hectares, as extra has been added for the new village, an area which previously provided livelihoods to 130 households. At first, the company promised compensation in return for acquiring the paddy fields, other land and gardens at a minimal rate, but many locals complained about the rates. The people in the area are mainly from the Yuan ethnic group - migrants from Lamphun Province in Thailand, and Lue migrants from Sayabouly province in Lao PDR. The case of Khuan village is one of many examples of such projects in Lao PDR, whereby capitalist development has led to an influx of competitive, transnational capital into the region, including from China, Vietnam and Thailand.

### **5.3.1 Incomes from Working at King Romans in Khuan Village**

Recently, the main sources of income for Khuan villagers have been as farmers and laborers, and according to the data I collected from the villagers there are about 25 people working in the casino; mostly villagers between fifteen and 25 years of age, who work as card dealers. Most working at the casino are females and the proportion has risen rapidly since the SEZ opened in 2007. However, the rest work in the rice fields which provide them with the same amount of income, depending on the farmland they have. Most fields are harvested by the poor villagers and the more recently arrived farmers who have no land because they had insufficient capital prior to the move such as land, or cash for investment and negotiation power. Furthermore those who are poor have a lot of children at school age, plus many elders.

## **5.4 Adaptive Strategies**

### **5.4.1 Household Classification**

Households have adapted since the relocation by applying for work at the casino, continuing with their farming, and working outside the village. One additional question is: what have they done with the compensation money they received? In addition, I will look at how the non-agricultural based households have adapted.

Farmers in my study area in northern Laos have become landless due to the opening of an SEZ, and so now have to work as laborers, but also that many have been unable to adapt; leading unfamiliar lives and suffering more when compared to the past. A small number of her study villagers have been able to adapt, because the income they earn is equal to or more than their own expenses, including households which have many people of a working age, or those who still have land upon which to practice agriculture, such as rice and market gardening.

The experience of Khuan village has been a little different to that of the other six villages impacted by the project. The village was forced to change immediately, because the notice period for the project was so short, meaning they had little time to adapt. However, the resettlers knew about the project for longer than in the other villages further south.

In Khuan village, the time period can be divided into two; a first phase during the compensation period, between 2007 and 2011, when the project was being initiated. During this period the villagers received compensation for the loss of their houses, paddy fields and gardens, but did not move to the new location because the company had not finished their construction work as yet. Company policy allowed the villagers to sell food in a shelter in front of the casino, along with some Chinese people. “The company allowed us to book the shelter to sell food; we could earn 250,000 Kip to 800,000 Kip a day” said a local trader. “I wanted to sell food like them, but my husband would not allow me to do so, and now the shelter is full already. If there was space I could earn like them” said a housewife who does not sell food in front of the casino. She added, “right now I can earn money from selling vegetables grown around my house to the Burmese and Chinese laborers”. One elderly woman in the village said, “I always cross the border to Chiang Saen to buy mackerel and vegetables, and then sell these items to the Burmese workers”. She added, “At the weekends I also go to the forest with other women from the village to collect bamboo and sell it to the workers...some days I can earn 15,000 to 25,000 Kip, which I use to pay the electricity bills.”

In another case of a couple, they told me “Only two of us live here; our children moved to live in Chiang Saen. My son got married to a Thai girl, and our daughter also married a man from Bangkok, but they live in Chiang Saen. We go and visit them regularly”. She added “before moving to live in the new village, we could earn money by selling vegetables to the workers at the casino. We could earn 800,000 to 1,500,000 Kip per month.”

During the second period, the villagers had to move house, and some told me the move had not been too bad, because their old houses had been quite cramped; whereas, their new houses are well arranged and larger. However, what they have lost is the income they used to earn when living in the old location. Also, the new houses incur higher living costs, and most of the villagers have been unable to find a good job. Also, there is no area to grow plants around the new houses; they have had to bring soil from their old land just to grow house plants. Another issue is that they face greater levels of insecurity now and are not able to save money. Finally, there are



experiencing increased social problems in the new location; for example, there are a lot of single mothers, as many women have got divorced.

Some of the villagers have faced many difficulties trying to adapt to their new location; not only have they become landless and received only a little compensation, but also, the elders have not been able to find work with the company. Language is an important factor for people who wish to work for the company - they have to be able to speak another language.

For the group in the middle, they had paddy fields so received higher levels of compensation, and some of them were able to buy paddy fields in other villages and even put some money into the bank. Finally, those settlers who have adapted very well have tried to become entrepreneurs, as most of them are close to government officials and can gain access to information before things change. In addition, they received higher levels of compensation.

Another group of people which has benefited is the younger generation or those of working age, as before the project many of them did not have work, but now can work in the casino. Most of these people are women of a younger age who have been able to take advantage of the opportunities, even though their jobs are not of a high status.

In contrast, housewives have suffered a lot, as before they could go to work in the rice farms and market gardens, but now just stay home doing the housework while their husbands go out to work.

Pinkaew (2011) states that the establishment of rubber plantations in southern Laos was the signal for the opening of greater economic relations between Lao PDR and Vietnam, and in particular changed the agricultural sector, which moved from being based on traditional forms of agriculture to more modern forms, those linked to globalization. However, these changes have had socio-economic and environmental costs not considered within the investment plans. The more important impacts were that new forms of poverty were brought to the study community, with the key victims being those working in the agricultural sector.

Before land concessions were given for the SEZ, most people in Khuan village were able to produce rice and sustain their livelihoods for about a year; about 90% of

the villagers I interviewed said they grew vegetables for sale, such as corn, and also grew fruit and chopped wood. Growing corn brought an income of between eight and twelve million Kip per year. Prior to the arrival of the casino complex, these households could produce enough rice for their own consumption needs over the whole year, plus could sell cash crops.

Even though some of the paddy fields remained with the villagers under the concession arrangements, some households lost their farmland because it was located where the road was built. In this case, it was not only the Khuan villagers' farmland which was affected, but also the land belonging to those in other villages, and they received less compensation. The villagers simply had to accept this situation, because the road is deemed to belong to the whole country. In Khuan village one family lost all its paddy land because of the road construction project, and also its garden and house. However, they retained some land, so adapted by buying more land near the village, close to the casino, on which they built a guesthouse, a food and drinks shop and a karaoke bar.

Most of the villagers in Khuan village lost some land, but retained enough to grow rice, though many lost their cash crop income, because this land was handed over to the company. In such situations they have been able to subsist, while those of a younger age were able to apply for work in the casino.

The villagers have been able to use the small area of land around their new houses to grow vegetables such as chilies, tomatoes, papaya, lemon grass, onions, garlic and corn, and also keep chickens. These activities help to reduce their expenses, as they no longer have to buy these items from the Chinese market or Tonphuang district market. Instead, they buy pork and beef.

The villagers who had no land prior to the move; for example, no paddy fields, gardens or house-land, have had to adapt by utilizing their parents' rice fields instead. Most of the villagers in this group settled in the old village after 1990, and some in this group are of a younger age, which is why they have to share their land and houses with their parents.

These two groups have adapted in different ways. For those who settled after 1990, they had a house but no land on which to practice agriculture, so worked as

laborers around the village all year round. In some the heads of the families became daily wages workers, such as builders and other tradesmen.

I found that these groups did not apply to work with at the casino because of their ages, education levels and inability to speak other languages. Before they moved to the new village, the people in this group worked as laborers on the road constructions site; however, could not then adapt because the work stopped. One of them said, “Burmese workers and Chinese workers - they can work long hours when compared with us. When working on the farm we were able to choose when we worked, but at the casino the work starts at 7 a.m. and finishes at midnight; and the lunch break is short - there is no time to take a nap. Then, you have to start to work again at 4 p.m.” In the end, many in this group decided to quit their jobs at the casino.



**Figure 5.1;** Group Discussion re: Livelihood Changes

Another group in the village is that containing those of a younger age – most of whom are only second or third generation. These villagers have their own families but have no land on which to practice agriculture. Some of their parents share land with them, to allow them to practice agriculture, but most help their parents on agricultural activities and share the produce. A number in this group applied for work at the casino as card dealers – the only choice for those of a younger age.



**Figure 5.2:** Group Discussion among the Younger Villagers

Two of the women in my study - Mrs. Keo and Oom, are divorced and currently work in the casino. Both of them also have a child. Before the casino arrived they had no work; just helped their parents. After the casino arrived, they applied for jobs there. Mrs. Keo started to work at the casino as a card dealer three years ago, when she received about three million Kip a month if she worked full time and did not miss work. She starts work at 6:30 p.m. and finishes at 3:30 a.m. for fifteen days, then changes to work from 3:30 a.m. until 10 a.m. for another fifteen. After that she works from 10:30 a.m. to 7 p.m. for another fifteen days. She said that working like this she has no time for holidays in Laos, such as Lao New Year, or to go to weddings and others important events. The only holiday she receives is Chinese New Year, and can only have three days off at other times. After the third occasion she has to quit her job. She added that working at the casino is tiring, but when compared to the situation before, represents a good opportunity for her, because she had no work to do at that time.



Figure 5.3: A Family Discusses the Livelihood Changes that have Occurred

One couple I interviewed said “we lost all our paddy land and gardens because our land was close to the road construction site. Right now we are spending a lot of money repairing this new house”. This family cannot grow vegetables around the house, saying “Our house is too narrow; there is no space to grow vegetables - we received a second grade house, but we have seven family members living together”. They added, “Right now only our son-in law and our son work – they provide the backbone for us. My son has been working at the casino for about two years now. We needed the company to be sympathetic towards our family and compensate us for our paddy field with land, not money. We have nothing right now; we have to buy rice and have no job. My daughter just gave birth a few weeks ago.”



Figure 5.4: House Renovation since the Resettlement

The house above is Grade III, but the decorations interested me. At this time, most of the villagers who moved to settled down in the new location are focusing on

decorating and restructuring their houses and the above photos shows the level of satisfaction people have with the new homes. Most of the villagers I spoke to said the same thing about moving to the new houses; that the houses are good and only need some structural changes to meet their needs.



Figure 5.5: Ways of Life since the Resettlement

Relocated to the new village, villagers have had to spend a lot of money - more than in the previous village. Added to this, the villagers cannot grow cash crops or rice, feed their animals or plant trees, plus have to deal with a high cost of living in the new location. As a result, they try to save as much as they can. Some could grow rice, but have no market at which to sell it. As before, they can sell at home or sell it to the border traders from Chiang Saen, though the price varies with the season; however, they cannot earn much from this. Unfortunately, the Chinese and Burmese who work for the casino don't eat sticky rice, and their inability to sell sticky rice became a headline issue at the village meetings, after which the villagers sent a letter to the SEZ office asking the company to find ways to help them sell it. The question then arose; how about changing to grow normal rice? The villagers answered this by saying that it is quite hard to grow normal rice on their land - the productions levels would not be as good as they are when growing sticky rice.

For other forms of adaptation, the company provided some space for the villagers to try and grow bio-vegetables, and around twenty to 25 households joined the scheme. The company also provided seeds for them and let them try to grow the crops for free over the course of a year. The company said it would take all the produce harvested from this program, to feed its staff. However, after the produce had been harvested, nobody from the company came to buy it. Also, most of the households who joined the program said the produce was of a low quality, due to a large number of problems experienced, such as with the water supply system and due to disease. Most of the farmers did not join this scheme the next year.

The company also provided the villagers with 50 ‘tuk-tuks’ for them to use to set up a taxi service. Some households joined this scheme but they also faced problems as there were no customers for their service. They had to pay eight million Kip for one tuk-tuk, or hire it for 25,000 Kip per day. In the end, most of them returned the tuk-tuks because they could not generate an income.

During my field work I found that the villagers have not adapted well to the new village, but this may be due to the fact that when I visited them, they had only just moved (they moved in January 2012 and I interviewed them in March 2012). In response to my questionnaire, all 114 households answered “We don’t know what to do right now; the house is good but we have problems in terms of food.”

I found that only one household lost its paddy field and garden, this being because the paddy fields were on land required by the project. The head of this family told me, “We lost all our land, so we have no land for growing rice, we only have our house right now”. He added, “During the negotiation process, no one negotiated for us; we had to negotiate with the company directly over compensation for our agricultural land and paddy fields. We knew that if we lost our home garden we would lost everything. Now, we only have a little land on which to grow rice”. I asked how the family has dealt with this situation, to which he said, “Since we moved to the new house we have spent a lot on repairs...and only our son goes to work, he has been working at the casino for two years already.”

One of the elders in the village said, “The company provided us with space for growing organic vegetables on their land, using a one year contract, to see if it would

work. The company provided the vegetable seeds and twenty families joined this scheme. The company promised to buy the produce from these families, but when the produce was ready, no one from the company came to buy. The villagers had to try and sell the vegetables around the village, but eventually they spoiled. How can the villagers sustain their livelihoods now?”

Among the villagers in Sam Liam Kham village I have divided them into three groups: well-off households – those who had more than three hectares of land, the medium-income households – those who had around one to three hectares of land, and the poorer households – those with no land prior to the move.

I will now summarize the methods of adaptation adopted by the three groups of villagers - the well-off, the medium-income and the poor.

- **Adaptation Strategies of the Well-off Families**

The well-off families originally owned plenty of land, between three and eight hectares, so received quite a lot of compensation, plus still had land left for growing rice. In addition, most of this group had been settled in the village for a long period of time and many are close to the government; therefore, the village head was able to keep the government authorities and negotiate on their behalf.

To answer the question: how did they adapt? I found that most of them sent their children to work in the casino, while others still had land for growing rice in the village, had savings in the bank, using the interest to sustain their daily lives. They were also thinking about opening businesses such as guest houses or restaurants. When growing rice in their old village, those with plenty of land did not farm themselves, but rented-out the land to farmers with none, sharing the rice crop cultivated. As a result, prior to the arrival of the SEZ and the compensation payments, this group was able to earn a large amount of money.

Mr. Khammai (not real name) is the head of one of the well-off families, and he told me about their adaptation strategies since moving to the new house. He said “after we moved to the new house, I spent most of my compensation money repairing it or adding some new parts. I accept that the new house is more comfortable and has a good environment, but it is hotter than the previous house due to the lack of trees and flowers. My family does not grow any vegetables around the new house because



we still have some land to grow vegetables at the end of village. Also, at the initiation of the project I was the head of the village, and sat on the committee coordinating with the company, so I got quite close to the owner of the company. I also got a job in the casino - only three elite members of the village were able to do so, as general managers. Each day I worked at least eight hours per day, but felt so bored working there because there was no work to do; only walking around the casino and receiving money at the end of the month. I thought I should go and work outside, so decided to quit my job. However, I was able to send my youngest daughter to work at the tourism office of the King Romans Group; as she studied Chinese before applying for the company. However, sometimes she complained that although she could speak Chinese language very well and worked hard, her salary was lower than the Chinese workers in the same position. She also wanted to quit the job, but due to our close relations with the owner of the company, the company increased her salary. I have also put some money into the bank as savings, plus have bought some land around the district. In the near future, I am planning to open a business around the village; for example, a guesthouse to serve customers who come and gamble at the casino.”

Another well-off family I interviewed was that of Mr. Nanjai (not his real name). He is a general manager who works at the casino, and has worked there for about three years, starting with a salary of two million Kip per month, though now he earns more than three million per month. His duties in the casino include supervising the Lao workers, so that when they have a problem he can solve it. His daughter also works in the casino, and his wife stays at home as a housewife. They let others tend to their farmland and share the products after the farming season has finished.

Those families from the elite group in the village are quite well-off; mainly because they are among the first from the Yuan ethnic group to have settled in the village. As a result, they have farmland and gardens, plus have few family members. These families also tend to have good connections with the Chinese company, so are given priority when looking for work in the casino.

- **Adaptation Strategies of the Medium-Income Family**

The medium-income group owned one to three hectares of land prior to the move, and have adapted by sending their children to work at the casino, still farming,

selling food and drink in the village, and working as laborers, earning daily wages. However, when compared to the first phase of the resettlement, when they were able to sell in the village or to Burmese and Chinese laborers, things are not so good, as these same laborers have moved to live in a new village with plenty of natural resources, such as fruits trees and land for growing houseplants, and is close to the Mekong River. As a result, one villager I spoke to complained, “There were now lots of sellers, but no customers, so I have stopped selling”.

Mr. Khammy (not real name) is one of my interviewees from the middle-income group, and he told me how his family has had to adapt since moving to the new village. He told me “before I moved to this village there was only me in the family working, so I had to feed the whole family. I have two sons, but both of them are drug addicts, so farm and work as a driver to earn for my family. After moving to this house in the new village; I bought a van for my son, hoping some of the casino customers would use the service. However, in the end I had to sell it because no customers used our service; most visitors and villagers already have motorbikes and cars. As a result, I now have to do the same as before - work as a driver, but my income is lower than before. After moving to this village for four or five months, my wife fell ill, so I took her to Chiang Saen Hospital in Thailand. At that time we had to spend a lot of money to save her. Now her condition is quite good, but she cannot do difficult jobs; only grow some vegetables for the family. Now, no members of my family go to work at the casino, and we can only spend about 25,000 Kip per day.

- **Adaptation Strategies of the Poor Family**

The poorest families are mostly in their third or fourth generation in the village, so are quite young. Some of them are divorced and are; therefore, single mothers or fathers. One cause of the women being single mothers is drugs; whereas, the single men were so poor their wives escaped to live on the other side of river in Chiang Saen Province, Thailand. Some in this group are young enough to share the same house as their parents, and if they have no land can sustain themselves farming their parents' land. They also know this land will become theirs in the future. Some in this group work in the casino or at shops in the casino, as jobs in the casino are well paid by Laotian standards. However, not many of these jobs went to local people

because they cannot speak Chinese. Instead, several thousand Chinese workers moved across the border to work in Boten's discos, brothels, casinos and hotels.

Those poor families not working at the casino sustain their lives by farming or growing vegetables in the medium-income and well-off families' fields - sharing any produce with them. Others in this group work as wage laborers in the village.

Mrs. Meekham is over 40 and a single mother (with a son) in a poor family. Her son is now in jail because of a drug addiction problem, so there is only her living in the house. Her house is in the Grade III group, and she survives by babysitting; taking care of the babies of parents who work in the casino.

In the other poor family I interviewed, Mr. Chai lives in Khuan village and is a tuk-tuk driver. Before he moved to the new village his was a farmer, but his family did not receive any compensation from the company, so had to build a new house by themselves at the end of the village. His wife also works as a farmer. Because they do not have any farmland, they have to farm other villagers' land.

As I observed, the poor families are mostly from the younger generations and do not have a network in the casino, nor any farmland. As a result, they have to work to earn enough money to subsist.

### **5.5 Summary**

In terms of the adaptations of the local villagers since losing their, I found that those families which have adapted well are families with lots of capital such as land and social capital. Social capital exists among the elite; because they have good connections with the company so can easily find a job. However, most in this elite group have a good economic status. I can differentiate three capital characteristics as follows: (1) elite families: the first to settle in this area; have land and received more compensation. In addition, they have had more opportunity to get a job than the other two groups; (2) middle-income families: received less compensation according to the land they have; therefore, use their family members as laborers. I found this group still uses its land to grow cash crops or the compensation money, as well as use the young adults to work for extra income. Importantly, they have adapted to the new environment by using the young adults to find new jobs, and (3) the poor families: do

not have any capital at all, which is why it is hard for them to adapt to the new village. They have neither money nor social capital.

Thus, these three groups with different capital have had to adapt in different ways. Those with more capital received higher levels of compensation, so were able to buy new land, save in the bank and run businesses. For the middle-income families, they received not so much compensation, so have used it all. Most have not been able to buy new land or save. In addition, they use the young family members to get new jobs.

Furthermore, I found that the collective ways they have adapted in the village include using the resources they have around the village to grow vegetables - to reduce their daily expense, and establishing *sa-ma-khom-lod* and *sa-ma-khom-huea*.