

National Report

THAILAND

FOR

HABITAT : UNITED NATIONS CONFERENCE

ON

HUMAN SETTLEMENTS



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INTRODUCTION

Past experiences from our economic development plans showed that there were not enough emphasis on social development. The past and designing social projects were not solutions to social problems, specifically those of human settlement. Most of the projects did not have clear objectives, adequate means, or co-ordination with other relevant plans. Besides, they did not even get enough support in both budgeting and manpower from the government.

Human settlement problems in Thailand may be divided into two areas, the urban and the rural. The former is associated with the mass of people living in a high density area without adequate utilities, facilities, and services. The latter is largely caused by declining productivity of arable land and decreasing amount of land per person for agricultural production, and aggravated by other insufficient or unwise uses of natural resources due to the lack of national guidelines and policies.

The major problems of urbanization in Thailand are generated from the increase of population at a high rate, uncontrolled migration from rural to urban areas, and the lack of adequate development plans for suitable residential areas. The problems are reflected in slums, traffic congestion, housing scarcity, public utilities, public recreation areas, and so on. Pollution problems are also at critical

stage, three gravest environmental problems facing Bangkok at present are water pollution, solid waste disposal, and air pollution.

On the urban problems, this report has to make a special reference to Bangkok for it is quite a unique case in Thailand or anywhere else. The fact that Bangkok has a population 40 times, may be more, bigger than the second largest city is becoming international as reference figures illustrate the unbalanced pattern of settlement and growth. Variety of urban problems can be found, and on a larger scale, in this city. It becomes evident that Thailand has to adopt the decentralized-urbanization policy with an emphasis on rural and regional development in order to create other growth centers as alternatives to Bangkok. Other development planning are also geared to achieve more balanced settlements.

As for rural settlement, not only the amount of land per person is decreasing, but agricultural production per unit of land is also diminishing. The demand for uses of natural resources is not only ever increasing but the uses are often unwise and inefficient or even illegal. Land deterioration and forest destruction are increasing at a high rate. The impact of forest degradation can be seen through the change of temperature, rain fall, and frequent flooding. Rural housing is of poor standard both in terms of construction and materials used. The lack of public utilities create public health hazards and sanitation problems. Inadequate health

centers and schools represent a form of social deprivation. The major obstacles in providing these services adequately due to the scattered distribution of the rural settlement and insufficient resource allocation. Thus, migration from rural to urban areas happens all the time and creates more problems in providing sufficient employment and services for the migrants.

However, this report will not dwell on these problems for they are familiar and well-cited. Rather, the report will address itself on the efforts being made to alleviate the urgent problems within the national priority. The reference will be made only to the government agencies, either staff or operation, that play major roles in policy-making planning and implementation concerning human settlement.

CURRENT SOCIO-ECONOMIC SITUATION

Planned Development

At present the country is in the second half of the Third National Economic and Social Development Plan, covering the five-year period, from 1 October 1971, the beginning of 1972 fiscal year, to 30 September 1976. Planned Development started in 1961 with the First National Economic Development Plan covering a six-year period 1961 to 1966, followed by the Second Plan of five-year duration, 1967- 1971. One point should be noted that the word "social" has been added to the Third Plan. Actually, the role of social development has been recognized since the First Plan but then the country was on the take-off stage of planned development, public social role had to play minor role in order to achieve high rate of growth as planned.

The First Plan was considered to be a great success despite the country's young experience in planning. A spectacular growth rate of 8 percent a year was achieved during the second half of the plan period, which emphasized the development of economic infrastructures. The first three years of the Second Plan was also very impressive with a 9 percent growth rate a year, the emphasis being on rural development and human capital formation. Then came the turning point in 1969 when the economy began to slow down due

to various factors such as the poor performance of merchandise exports, a decline in U.S. military expenditures, and a deceleration in private investment growth. A drop in the country's foreign exchange reserves resulted in 1969 and the drawdown continued in 1970-71.

The Third Plan which was prepared during the period of unfavorable economic conditions, has adopted certain policies for immediate action directed at improving the balance of payment situation by developing strong export programs, especially the agricultural products. It also laid down policies for accelerating human capital formation, especially in the rural areas and for increasing the incomes of farming families. This is considered the best approach in response to the country's depressed condition.

The public development expenditure for the Third Plan will grow at 5.5 percent per annum. Total public development expenditure during the Plan period will amount to 4,820 million U.S. dollars. Expenditure on economic and social projects as a proportion of total development expenditure will be 43.3 percent and 56.7 percent respectively.

Economic Situation

Thailand's economy is overwhelmingly agricultural. In 1971, the agricultural sector contributed 29.6 percent to Gross Domestic Product. This was the largest share of any sector. The next two

highest contributions were those of industry and trade being 16.9 and 16.2 percent, respectively. The agricultural character of the economy will be reflected more by the fact that 83 percent of the employed population work in farming and/or fishing. Other important contributions to GDP include services (10.5 percent), communication and transportation (6.8 percent), and construction (6.6 percent).

Income per capita of the country is about 318 U.S. dollars. However, there is a marked difference in income distribution among the four regions. It was the highest in the Central region with 581 U.S. dollars, followed by 174 U.S. dollars in the South, 213 dollars in the North, and 143 dollars in the Northeast.

The wealth not only differs from region to region but also between the rural and urban areas. Bangkok today reflects the impact of the growth in population and wealth with a very high per capita income of 500 U.S. dollars for its four million population, while the average for the rest of the country (excluding Bangkok) is about 140 U.S. dollars. This implies that the per capita income in the rural areas must be much lower than the national average.

Social Situation

The outstanding general feature of the Third Plan is that its scope has been widened considerably over previous plans. While the

former had placed emphasis upon the building of national highways, electrification, irrigation, flood control, general agricultural development, and similar development projects, the Third Plan put great emphasis on social development allocating it with a larger share of total development expenditure (56.7 percent).

Social development is emphasized in forms of literacy and education, health, housing, water supply, sanitation and drainage, public welfare, and ecology.

Government and Administration

Thailand has had a constitutional monarchy since 1932. For most of the period after 1932 Thailand has had a service of military governments. The general uprising in mid-October, 1973 resulted in the collapse of the military regime. Thailand is presently under civilian rule.

Administrative power is now divided among 12 ministries, including the Office of the Prime Minister. They are united at the top by the Council of Ministers under the leadership of the Prime Minister. As for the system of administration of the country, there are three basic levels of administration ---the central administration, the provincial administration, and the local administration.

SETTLEMENT POLICIES AND STRATEGIES

Thailand has no settlement policies per se as of now. But that does not mean the government has not dealt with the problems for some time. The three National Development Plans which were formulated in sectorial form have chapters on infrastructure development, education, transportation, health, and lately, housing and urbanization. However, the main concerns are the growth of national income and industrialization of the economy.

The trend has been changing. The newly promulgated Constitution of 1974 recognizes the human settlement problems and clearly states the desire to deal with the problems of the country indicated in several Articles cited below:

Article 77 The State should maintain and preserve the balance of the environment and natural beauty including forests, watersheds, waterways and territorial waters.

Article 86 The State should have population policy appropriate for natural resources, economic and social conditions, and technological progress, for the purposes of economic and social developments, and for the security of the State.

Article 91 The State should encourage people in acquiring residences with sanitation, and should promote housing for low income people.

Article 93 The State should maintain and preserve the environment in a clean condition and eradicate pollutions which are harmful to the welfare and health of the people.

Within this Constitutional framework and supported by the consensus of the Seminar on Population and Human Settlement sponsored by the National Environment Board from 18 - 20 December 1975, the shaping-up of the nation's settlement policies seems to be more clear. Some recommendations are:

1. The State should try to achieve a balance between population growth and available resources which will permit high standards of living.

2. The State should give guidance to the settlement patterns in such a way that would maximize the use of local resources for the efficiency of production while maintaining the balance and the quality of the natural environment.

It is generally recognized that man will never achieve the optimum and for the balanced system of settlement, whenever, the unbalanced state creates adverse effects on man and his environment. It is the responsible of the government to keep the unbalanced situation within acceptable limits.

The main strategies are the decentralization and the redistribution of income, employment opportunities, welfare services, social

and political powers, technology, etc., within the integrated settlement policy and planning.

SETTLEMENT PLANNING

Territorial Planning on the National and Regional Levels

Thailand has experienced three National Economic and Social Development Plans. The First (1961-1965) and the Second (1966-1970) have two serious drawbacks:

1. They lack the spatial dimension in planning.
2. They emphasize the industrialization without a national urbanization policy.

The first deficiency deprived the Plans of half of the total planning. Both made Bangkok the dominant city to extreme as it is today.

The Third Plan (1971-1975) tries to redeem itself by shifting the emphasis to rural and agricultural sectors and signaling the beginning of regional planning in Thailand.

Three regional studies have been conducted so far for the Northeast, the North, and the South. The three studies have the following in common:

1. The goal is to minimize the regional income disparity and bring more balanced development.

2. They combine economic and locational analyses for each sector.

3. They utilize the Growth Center concept to compromise the efficiency and equity objectives of the development.

The trend indicates that the future plan would not only seek to answer the question of what to do, but also to whom, how, and where to do it.

While the National Development Plans have resulted in the steady growth of the economy, it is increasingly felt that the economic growth alone is not enough. The impacts of human actions upon the environment are more and more evident along with the public awareness on environmental issues.

As authorized by the 1975 Act, the National Environment Board would from now on take the responsibility in formulating a national environment plan, environmental impact studies, environmental policy recommendations, and guidelines for all development plans and projects. Along with this effort to minimize or avoid major environmental impacts of development, the planning itself could be expected to be more resource-oriented such as river-basin development planning and resources for the future planning. The goals and objectives will emphasize more on maintaining and/or upgrading the environmental quality, general

welfare, and the more physically and economically balanced settlement pattern.

Physical Planning at the Settlement Level: A Case Study

In response to the national policy in agricultural land reform, the National Environment Board and the Office of Agricultural Land Reform have initiated a settlement planning and development guidance project for new communities under land reform schemes. The project will utilize the settlement concept concerning land use, natural resources, housing, life-supporting services, recreation, and conservation of nature and energy.

In the first stage, the characteristics of the areas such as physical features, climate, existing land use, economic and social structures, natural resources, and living habits of the people will be surveyed and studied in depth. The following analyses and discussions will emphasize what is the desirable rural settlement in terms of efficient allocation of resources while maintaining the environmental qualities.

The main factor that would make this project more specific than other physical planning practices is the full recognition of the fact that resources are really scarce now. Attempts will be made in promoting communities' forests and grazing lands. Researches and experiments on making use of natural sources of energy such as wind

and solar energies even methods for recycling of wastes will also be given special attention.

The project will definitely not be a planning exercise by the National Environment Board but rather a joint effort by many specialists and planners from government agencies and academic institutes. At least, the project seeks to achieve efficient coordination and cooperation both in terms of planning and implementation.

The end product is envisaged at a village structure that would promote self-help and general well being of the rural people and a constitute model community in which man can live in a good environment.

At the time when public awareness on environmental issues is beginning to take shape, this kind of project is nothing less than critical to demonstrate that human settlement concept is not wishful thinking but practical as well as implementable.

Shelter Infrastructure and Services

Public Housing

The Thai government has provided public housing since 1942 when the Housing Division of the Public Welfare Department was established. The continuing problem has been that the number of housing units provided by the government have been much smaller than the estimated housing shortage.

For example, 10,690 units were built by the government between 1949 and 1973. By 1973 it was estimated that the housing shortage in Bangkok had reached 100,000 units despite construction of about 470,000 units between 1949 and 1973 by the formal housing sector (high standard homes built by commercial and individual builders.)

To meet the need to unify public housing efforts, four major housing agencies were consolidated into the National Housing Authority (NHA) in 1973. NHA's present approach offers some promising results.

Under the law establishing NHA, NHA is to engage in the following: 1). provide houses and land for rent, sale, and hire-purchase, 2). provide financing and guarantees for buyers, and 3). buy and develop land and construct houses by itself or in cooperation with private business. The objective was to solve the housing shortage by 1982 by meeting a target of 170,000 units of housing. In addition, the policy included these additional aspects: 1). promote housing throughout the country, 2). cooperate with the private sector, 3). continue and maintain projects of the previous agencies, 4). Undertake plans to provide housing for the people of slums and squatter areas, and 5). promote all types of investment in housing projects.

The Five-Year Plan to meet the housing shortage in Bangkok aims to provide 120,000 units by 1980. This means that the NHA has to build at

least 24,000 units annually. To meet this production capacity, the NHA has to solve the following problems of implementation:

a. Finance

To meet the financial demand of 2,000 million baht per year, the NHA will issue bonds at 8 percent interest. The government will guarantee internal and external loans by absorbing interest in excess of 7 percent and will support the infrastructure development through the national budget.

b. Land

To reduce the land cost, NHA is looking for available land owned by various governmental agencies and by individuals interested in leasing or purchaselling their land. However, lowest cost per unit of land will not be the sole choice criteria. The location of the land in relation to job opportunities and transportation costs will get due attention.

c. Building Materials

Analyses of low cost and local building materials will be completed soon. Modular construction may be utilized in the future. At Present, the Building Materials Section of NHA is in charge of developing the efficient supply of housing materials for NHA and eventually for the entire housing sector.

d. Skilled Labor

There is a problem of sufficiently skilled labor in the housing sector. The majority of skilled labor has been trained by the private sector or is working in foreign countries for higher pay. The mobilization of skilled labor will be achieved only by the government's strong support of a labor development program. NHA will have to promote job guarantees and provide other incentives in this mobilization campaign.

In the past the housing activities in Thailand have been centered in Bangkok where housing need is most severe. However, the NHA has started housing projects in other major urban centers. Rural housing programs are now in the research and planning stages of how to use local materials and local labor to meet the demand for essential rural housing.

The slum improvement program will emphasize the basic needs of the people in the area of public utilities, education, low cost housing, and social and economic assistance programs to their social and economic conditions.

INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES

In line with the three regional studies mentioned earlier in this report, several regional growth centers have been designated. The concentrated investment in infrastructure and services will be made in those strategic areas to attract investment in industries and other modern sectors in the hope that the multiplier and induced effects will take over. Theoretically, the growth center is expected to be

1. The stimulus of overall regional economic growth.
2. The alternative destination other than primate city for the rural migrants.
3. The center that would generate growth and services to the hinterland through trickling down effects.

However, the generative and trickling-down effects of growth centers is very doubtful. In fact, the opposite may be true. Growth centers may become parasitic through backwash effects where young and educated labor, savings, and raw materials are drawn from the periphery to the center.

Thailand may be lucky in the sense that the growth center policy is still not fully implemented. The favorable effects of growth centers will contribute to the continuation of the policy but some considerations have to be made and these are:

1. The growth center policies should be integrated with rural development policies and programs so that the investment in infrastructure would yield maximum benefit to the rural sector.

2. The spread mechanisms should be installed in the integrated plan to effectuate the trickling-down effects of growth centers.

3. Rural infrastructure, feeder roads in particular, should be given high priority in the budget allocation.

4. Services should be directed to improve human quality through rural development programs.

LAND USE

Man has long realized that land is a necessity in life for living and production. It will be a long time, may be forever before man will accept land as a social resource and that unwise and selfish land use amounts to self destruction.

Almost imperceptible to the public, the forest land has been decreased from 54% to 38% of the total land area in the last 12 years. The reduction of 16% means about 23 million acres of forest has been destroyed. By any standard, the situation is critical where the country is left naked to the mere watershed areas. Without this important portion, the whole ecosystem is in jeopardy.

Forest is only one, though most important, of land use problems. Needless to cite the other problems, the conclusion is clear, Thailand

needs immediate policies and actions for control and use of land for public benefit. Several efforts have been made to deal with the problem, some notable projects are:

A. Studies

1. The Land Development Department has for several years conducted land use and land capability surveys and classifications to be used as the basis for national land use planning. The Department is also involved in soil problem and soil improvement programs.

2. The Agricultural Economics Division has been conducting an intensive study of agricultural land use alternatives. The econometric model will cooperate 3 major policies--production and exports, labor and value added of production. The land optimization linear programming involves 390 equations and almost 1000 variables.

The major variable is the future population which will be run in 3 projections, high, medium, and low. The result will not be the end in itself, but is aimed to help the government make a right decision regarding agricultural land use most suitable for economic and social conditions.

B. Policies

1. The discussions on population policy have lately prevailed on emerging ideas that the population policy should be dictated by the national resources, land capability in particular

not vice versa. The logic is simple, why not regulate the variable rather than the invariable, or in other words, control the users not the used. If this concept becomes a national consensus, the whole planning scene will be changed. The immediate result will be an all-out campaign in family planning program.

2. Along with the degradation of forest land, the public will begin to realize that urbanization and industries have taken a large part of good agricultural land. In terms of environmental impact, the losses to agriculture are substantial. To deal with the problem, the national urbanization policy and land use guidance system are urgently needed. The National Environmental Committee on Land Management has been studying the situation and preparing the recommendations to be submitted to the government.

C. Actions

1. There are several government agencies charged with providing agricultural land for the people and involving more than 7 million acres of already degraded forest areas. The magnitude of the program and the negative impact on the environment is alarming considering the fact that there is only minimal coordination in the planning and implementation. It is urgent that these projects should be integrated, at least in concept and principles, to maximize the use of land. The settlements arising from land reform and land settlement projects should be taken care of. The effort in this direction has been mentioned earlier in the topic of physical planning at

the settlement level.

2. Urban land use is regulated by the City Planning Act of 1975 which required 12 years of drafting. The Town and County Planning Department has to work against time to effectuate the comprehensive plans already made, many of which have to be revised again before being presented for public hearing as well as other long and tiring procedures.

In the final analysis, control of land use and utilization of land as a resource would be achieved only by public support and understanding that misuses of urban lands create the urban problems as experienced today, and that misuses of agricultural land and destruction of forests are the national losses that can not be retrieved.

INSTITUTIONS AND MANAGEMENT

Three government institutions dealing directly with human settlement problems are Office of the Prime Minister, Ministry of Interior, and Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives. Agencies under the Office of the Prime Minister perform as advisory agencies while those under the Ministry of Interior and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives perform as operating agencies. Even though there are several government agencies taking part in dealing with human settlement problems there is no specific authority directly in charge. Each agency has its own area of jurisdiction to be responsible for.

OFFICE OF THE PRIME MINISTER Agencies in charge of human settlement under the Office of the Prime Minister are:

Office of the National Environment Board

The Enhancement and Conservation of National Environmental Quality Act 1975 stipulates that an office for National Environment Policy be instituted within the Office of the Prime Minister as a political bureau with a status equal to that of a government department, headed by the Secretary General of the Office. The National Environment Board consists of the Deputy Prime Minister as Chairman, Under-Secretary of State for Defense, Under-Secretary of State for Interior, Under-Secretary

of State for Industry, Under-Secretary of State for Agriculture and Co-operatives, Under-Secretary of State for Public Health, Secretary-General of the National Economic and Social Development Board, not more than five persons qualified in ecology and not more than five representatives of independent institutions or organizations or other persons appointed by the Council of Ministers as members and the Secretary General of the Office of the National Environment Board as member and Secretary.

The representatives of independent institutions or organizations or other persons appointed as members shall not be government officials, officials of a state enterprise or officials of a local government, who have held permanent positions or received salaries.

The scope of work and responsibility of the National Environment Board is to formulate policies, objectives, plans, and recommendations to the government, concerning environmental quality.

The National Environment Board has appointed 6 special Environmental Committees on Land-Use Water, Air and Noise, Conservation and Preservation of Nature and Arts, Education Promotion and Mass Communication, and Population and Human Settlement.

Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board

The National Economic and Social Development Board Act of 1969 stipulates that an office for National Economic and Social Development

Board be instituted within the Office of the Prime Minister as a political bureau with a status equal to that of a government department, headed by the Secretary General of the Office. The Board consists of the Prime Minister as Chairman, the Deputy Prime Minister as Deputy Chairman, and other members appointed by the Council of Ministers, and the Secretary General as ex officio member and Secretary of the Board. The Cabinet Ministers shall act as the Board's advisers.

The duties of the Board are concerned with development as assigned by the Council of Ministers and to consider proposals made by the Secretariat of the Board in accordance with the Act and to make recommendations thereon to the Council of Ministers with respect to economic and social development to the Prime Minister of requested.

There is an Executive Committee comprising the Secretary-General and not more than nine other members appointed by the Council of Ministers, with the power and duty as assigned by the NESDB and to supervise work undertaken by the Office of NESDB,

The Prime Minister is in charge of the execution of the NESDB Act.

MINISTRY OF INTERIOR Agencies in charge of human settlement under the Ministry of Interior are:

National Housing Authority

The Government's first step in regard to housing problems was the establishment of the Public Welfare in the Ministry of Interior in the year 1940. Two years later, the Housing Bureau was established under the Ministry of Interior to take care of the budget and the administration of the housing projects. In 1952, the Housing Welfare Bank was established under the Ministry of Finance to provide hire-purchase land and houses, and loans to build or repair houses. In 1960, the Slum Clearance Office was established in the Bangkok Municipality to improve slum areas and to relocate the slum dwellers.

Although there were four government units dealing with housing problems, there was no co-ordination and overall program. There was no clear housing policy, and no surveys of housing needs to improve housing projects in accordance with the prevailing situation.

A movement towards unification and overall planning began when the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) took a major step to improve housing policy by setting up the Housing Sub-Committee in 1963 to study the public housing projects for Bangkok.

This led to the establishment of the National Housing Authority in the year 1972. Its main objective is to complete the solution to the housing shortage in the Metropolitan Area.

Department of Public Welfare

The department was established in 1940. Its main purpose was to assist the people regarding their problems on housing, employment, profession, highland people and other resulted problems. The department, however, concentrates its effort in self-help land settlement and highland people development and welfare in the provinces up around the country. This is mainly purported to provide land for people who possess no land or insufficient land for earning their livelihood. In addition, the Department has launched the integrated zonal development programmes for the highland people who practice slash and burn agriculture in order to improve the quality of life of the highland people.

Three major policies of Public Welfare Department are comprehensive approach projects, including occupational development, agriculture and home industry, road building, small scale irrigation, education, health and social welfare, proceeding side by side,

Office of Town and Country Planning

The Town Planning Act of 1975 stipulates that the responsibilities set out by this Act are vested with the Minister of Interior and he is empowered to issue ministerial regulations necessary for the operation under this Act. The Act also stipulates that the Town and Country Planning Committee is in charge of the functional responsibilities of establishing policies, measures, regulations and rules pertaining to town and country planning operations of the Office of Town and Country Planning. The Town and Country Planning Committee consists of Under-Secretary of State for Interior as Chairman, Under - Secretaries of the

Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, the Ministry of Transportation, the Ministry of Industry, Director-General of the Office of Budgeting, Secretary General of the Office of National Economic and Social Development Board, not more than seven persons qualified in town and city planning, not more than seven representatives of independent institutions or organizations or other persons appointed by the Council of Ministers as members, and the Director General of the Office of Town and Country Planning as member and secretary. The representatives of independent institutions or organizations or other persons appointed as members must not be government officials, officials of a state enterprise or officials of a local government, who have held permanent positions or received salaries.

There will be at least two public hearings before any plan (no matter if they are comprehensive or special project plans) can be approved and put into operation.

MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND COOPERATIVES Agencies in charge of human settlement under the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives are:

The Royal Forest Department

Its duty is to manage, control, and conserve the country's forest resources. The department, besides its Administrative Division, situated in Bangkok; maintains 21 Forest Division Offices all over the country. Provincial Forest Officers serve in close liaison with Provincial Governors, the appointed heads of provinces. The Department manages several

Forest Ranger Units, at divergent sites and localities, which function under direct supervision and control of its respective Divisional Forest Officers. The Royal Forest Department was established in 1895.

The Forest Industry Organization (FIO)

FIO, a government enterprise under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Agriculture and Co-operatives, was set up on the 1st of January, 1947 and then was recognized by a Royal Decree under the Government Organization Establishment Law of 1953 afterwards.

Both agencies are responsible for the establishment of community forests (forest villages) in suitable areas. The forest village system is introduced with the objective to thwart the rural or tribal inhabitants subsisting on shifting cultivation from further destruction of forests. The system has a triple aim to achieve forestry, agricultural, and social betterment or improvement at the same time in a single operation.

Agricultural Land Reform Office

Land Reform Act 1975 stipulates that the responsibilities set out by this act is vested with the Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives and the Minister of Interior, and by which they are empowered to appoint official as well as to issue ministerial regulations necessary

for the operations under this Act. The Act also stipulates that an office for Agricultural Land Reform be instituted within the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives as a political bureau with a status equal to that of a governmental department, headed by the Secretary General of the Office. The Agriculture Land Reform Committee comprises eighteen members. The Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives assumes the role of Committee Chairman and is assisted by the four Under-Secretaries of the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, the Ministry of Commerce, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Industry. The four Director-Generals of the Department of Land Development, Department of Agricultural Extension, Department of Local Administration, the Land Department, and the Manager of Bank for Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives serve as Committee members. Seven other members appointed by the Cabinet comprising four qualified personnel plus three farmers' representatives. The Secretary-General of the Office of Agricultural Land Reform acts as member and secretary of the Committee.

The Agricultural Land Reform Committee is in charge of the functional responsibilities of establishing policies, measures, regulations and rules pertaining to land-reform operations of the Office of Agricultural Land Reform.

PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

Public participation in government's settlement programs in the past may well have been considered as on "a very small scale". Only recently, the concepts of human settlement have been introduced and discussed among progressive social scholars and planners. However, public participation in the real sense in terms of getting people involved in planning and decision making processes is still sadly lacking.

Urban Settlements

In the past decade, even when the housing resources were available under efficient private management, the shortage of housing in metropolitan area was still a major crisis. One of the causes of housing shortages frequently mentioned is the rapid increase of population in urban areas. It is estimated that by the year 1980 there will be a shortage of 170,000 housing units.

Although the government has launched the plans to solve the problem through the National Housing Authority (NHA), it was expected that the proposed new scheme has little chance of success. Land acquisition and financial support remain the obvious major obstacles to any change in the present state of housing industry. Few people in the industry participated in the government's projects. The housing

scarcity remained the same as before. There is no move to decentralize or reduce the urban growth of Bangkok by creating job opportunities in rural areas. Popular participation can be witnessed only in the private sector. The middle-class people tend to participate in private sectors program in form of renting or buying the houses provided by more than 40 land development companies while the poor remain in their slums waiting for the low cost housing provided for them by the government.

However, an attempt has been made to attain greater general public participation in the government settlement programs. This can be seen through various measures introduced by the government. The Town Planning Act of 1975 makes it mandatory that in the process of effectuating land use plan and zoning, the Department of Town and Country Planning should have at least two public hearings so that people effected by the plan can voice their opinions, needs, and take part in choosing their own future.

Rural Settlements

Since it is widely accepted that the pattern of "extreme urban primacy" can no longer provide any gain for national development, the concept of human settlement is now being realized.

The Land Reform Act, first in history, had been promulgated in 1975. The goals of this program aimed at the reformation of physical and human conditon of the farm land. Even though the Office of Agricul-

tural Land Reform is empowered to exercise Eminent Domain on land that is not appropriately used by the owner, it is surprising how many big land owners are willing to join the government land reform program. Some of them even donate their land for the reformation after the King has done so by donating his own land to support the program.

Public participation in the rural settlement seems to be increasing. It is still a debatable issue for the public at present and both mass media and government agencies can sense this pressure. There has been a ~~growing sense of~~ growing sense of mass participation and interest concerning human settlement policies of the government. This participation can be seen through all kinds of peaceful demonstrations and the government must listen since it is the voice of the public.