

Impact of health development on child mortality and health service utilisation among the hill tribes in Thailand

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ABSTRACT

The hill tribes in the north and northwest mountain areas of Thailand have been the target for community development since 1963. Due to constraints from natural and social environments and limited resources, comprehensive, multisectoral development which mainly included economy, education and health of fairly good coordination and continuity, was observed only during the last 20 years. The development at present covers practically all tribes in all northern provinces. The present research targeted the Karen and H'mong communities that received comprehensive development programmes not less than 15 years ago and are located in the same vicinity in 2 districts of Chiangmai Province. The samples in the target communities, consisted of 179 Karen and 144 H'mong mothers. The samples were analysed by age groups lower than 25, 25-34, 35-44 and greater than equal to 45 years, which was assumed to reflect the gradual increased years of exposure to development measures. The Karen demonstrated fairly rapid decreased age of first marriage from median of approximately 22 years in the oldest group to about 18 years in the youngest age group while the H'mong revealed no change. Number of living children ranged from mean of 2-7 children in Karen and 2-8 in H'mong mothers. Spontaneous abortion, infant and child mortality appeared to decrease with the decreasing age of mothers in both tribes. The decrease seemed more marked among the H'mong than the Karen. Utilisation of health service development was reflected in increased contraceptive use, delivery at health stations or hospitals and vaccination of offsprings. However, the extent of changes always differed between the two tribes and probably reflected differences in patterns of responses that most likely related to cultural characteristics.

Key words : Health development, Child mortality, Health service, Child care

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