



# Catholic Commission for Ethnic Groups

*January - June 2010*

## **A Message from the Catholic Commissions for Social Development**

**The Desk for Ethnic Groups On the occasion of the Campaign Day  
for Ethnic Groups May 9, 2010**

Dear Beloved Brethren,

The Catholic Church of Thailand assigned every Sunday of the second week of May as A Campaign Day for Ethnic Groups which this year falls on May 9, 2010. The Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand, via the Catholic Commissions for Social Development and the Desk for Ethnic Groups, realizes and appreciate a the significance of the mission for ethnic brethren. Presently, an urgent responsibility is exerted to the fate of the ethnic groups who are being overwhelmed by the main trends of capitalism, tourism, consumerism, monetarism, politicalism, authoritarianism, resourcism, and global warming craze for instance.

In the past, the ethnic groups' ancestors lived on a beautiful way of life. They destined their own fate by living together in the tiny communities imbued with fraternity and a tradition of mutual respect. They carried on the culture and tradition which imply a relationship between human, nature and holy thing, a connection requiring the fraternal dependency that underlines a value system and the meaning of life as a tradition of living. There were sacred places where to everyone in such a community must give homage, for the sake of ecological balance. A sustainable livelihood was a family's life force. And paying respect to elderly people enabled to lay important life foundation. Listening to the narration permeated with wisdom and relayed by the elderly was an inspiration fulfilling the life. Looking after the communes' happiness by the virtue of wisdom and constant practice brought about to ethnic brethren an explicit self-proclamation and pride of their lives among Thai society.

However, the ethnic brethren in modern times are encountering ill fate. They have no chance to prepare for everything that floods into life, family, community and society, that causes household and communal discordance, favoritism, competition and exploitation, what disparaging the poor who is their own kindred and disrespecting to

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THE Catholic Commission for Ethnic Groups (CEG) is a Catholic Commission under the Episcopal Office for Social Action of the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand. The Catholic Church began its work with ethnic groups as early as 1933 in the dioceses of Chiangmai, Nakhonsawan and Ratchaburi, attempting to empower the people with a sense of their personal dignity, encouraging them to retain the best in their cultural traditions and value systems. With the advent of globalization impacting our communities, our ethnic brothers and sisters have become more and more marginalized in our society, and their traditional way of life is in danger of being eliminated. In an effort to assist them in their life and in their communities, the Catholic Commission for Ethnic Groups continues its mission to work for our brothers and sisters of tribal ethnicity.

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elderly people. These are the problems they must face, and which will be a legacy for their descendant if they do not hastily and knowingly reflect on the Sign of Time or all present signals.

In light of the pertaining issues, the trend of politicalism is becoming a crucial issue bringing about discordance, favoritism, renouncement, prevarication, slander, and patronage, that destroying the original value system underlining the tradition of living. On the other hand, the politicalism emphasizes on a tradition of death which praises the having not the living. The politicalism abolishes the existence of ethnic brethren. It teaches through the daily-life examples of persecution, insult, extortion, exploitation, and the uninterest in money, not human, until human dignity is neglected.

Several issues still have to be reflected upon, such as global warming craze. The developed countries of the West are pushing burden forward to the developing or underdeveloped countries. The ethnic brethren living in forest have to shoulder the burden of problem solving while the root cause is more under the ground of the industrial countries than the agrarian countries'. Accordingly, global warming originates an ethnic people exploitation process that disrespects their participation in determination. The trend of tourism is another issue depriving normal happy life. The parents and children on the hills are dragged down to the urban ethnic slums.

Pope Benedict XVI realizes and requires from us an interest in the social issues at global and local levels. As His Holiness puts "tourism can be a factor of economic development and cultural growth, but it can as well be a channel of exploitation and moral degradation...oftentimes the international tourism leans towards the pattern of consumerism and hedonism" (Papal

Encyclical, “Caritas in Veritate - Love in Truth”). The Church in Thailand keeps concerning watch on the ethnic brethren who have to face with the development and the change coming along with the propaganda tempting to think that money is the only measure of success in life. Thus, daily progress of the ethnic brethren in modern times must be carefully made and aims at self-development towards more fraternal relationship.

“Above all, the human development depends on the consent to humanity as one family”, (Papal Encyclical, “Caritas in Veritate - Love in Truth”). How will that come true if there are no turning to the realization and awareness of collaboration?

“The collaboration for development must not focus only on an economic dimension. Collaboration is a very special opportunity for the meeting between culture and people...if poor countries widely open for all the culture without any censure and selection, they would not be able to accurately cope with the development affecting their lives...to appreciate the significance of human value from which the human is molded” (Papal Encyclical, “Caritas in Veritate - Love in Truth”).

“The collaboration must meet with the truth shared and united...needs to have the love and charity in truth which are the principle of social teaching of the Catholic Church which aims at justice and common good...justice reminds us to give the other what belongs to them...Justice is inseparable to charity and intrinsic to it. Justice is the primary way to charity”, (Papal Encyclical, “Caritas in Veritate - Love in Truth”). The Church hopes that the goodness of ethnic brethren who observe the tradition of living will prevail in Thai society and result in the peace and acceptance to the tiny ethnic groups who have great love for human life.

May our Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church, “Mirror of Justice” and “Queen of Justice”, protect and pray for the ethnic brethren on the occasion of this year Campaign Day for Ethnic Groups.

With Well Wishes



**Bishop Philip Banchong Chaiyara, C.Ss.R.**  
President  
Catholic Commission for Social Development  
Desk for Ethnic Groups

# The Ethnic Groups General Assembly 2010

## “Global Warming and the Ethnic Brethren’s Way of Life”



**T**he Desk for Ethnic Groups of The Catholic Commission for Social Development, in cooperation with the ethnic groups’ committees of Nakhonsawan, Chiangmai and Udonthani dioceses, also the social development centers of Ratchaburi and Suratthani dioceses, held the Ethnic Groups General Assembly 2010 under the theme of ‘Global Warming and the Ethnic Brethren’s Way of Life’ during March 22-24, 2010 at the Chiangmai Catholic Mission Center, Changklan sub-district, Muang district, Chiangmai province. The number of 56 participants included 5 Luas, 22 Pakakayors, 9 Phlongs, 2 Ahkhas, 1 Lahu, 2 Theins, 1 Tai Yai, 1

Khachin, 12 Thais from different parts of the country and 1 foreigner.

On this occasion, Venerable Francis Xavier Veera Apornratana celebrated an opening mass for the assembly.

On March 23, 2010 in the morning, Khun Prayong Doklumyai a lecturer and counselor of a land reform network of Thailand presented an issue as following.

“...In fact the issue of global warming involves with the politics especially at national level. The political global warming is a kind of bargaining for interests between the developed and developing worlds. Science is a tool that

justifies the countries with capital and industrial capacity who are a main cause of the greenhouse effect resulting from carbon dioxide emission. Naturally, what happening is the business bargaining between countries. The samples of consequences are; a project so called, Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Degradation (REDD), a World Bank loan that Thailand had received to solve the recessive economics leading to a pressure on the issuance of land title deeds to non-Thais, and the construction of dams that brings about business profit without respect to the resident brethren's way of life. Nevertheless, most people do not aware that the interests yield from politics behind the scene.

At last the sin becomes the ethnic brethren's. They are alleged as the cause of deforestation and global warming, flash flood, landslide, inundation, soil erosion, and even drought is caused by hill tribe's act of deforestation. The people from around 2,700 communities with a total population of 1.2 million who had lived and earned living on the land before the forest conservation announcement become illegal trespassers. They were forced to emigrate from the land; their rights to development were restricted, they were charged and imprisoned, and woods were planted on their fields.

Consequently, the no-land hill tribe people become labor. The industrial crops prevail such as corn and rubber

tree. The communities have to reduce the fields and change the life sustaining production style to the economic crop production. Food security lacks, deforestation and trespass extend.

There are two interesting lawsuits. The Forest Department arrested two Pakakayor brethren on the charge of trespass to the conserved forest. The first one is Mr. Deepaepo (with no last name), 80 years old, living in a house number 63 moo 4, Maewa subdistrict, Thasongyang district, Tak province. The prosecutor charged against him who was accused of trespassing into 26 rai\* of a conserved forest. **The damage calculation was as high as 3,181,500 Baht. The Civil Court passed the sentence of a 2.6 years imprisonment which was reduced to 1.3 years due to his confession, but no penalty delaying.** The second one is Mrs. Haymui Wiengwisha, 35 years old. The



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\* 1 rai = a unit of area equal to 1,600 square metres



prosecutor charged against her who was accused of trespassing into 13 rai of conserved forest. **The damage calculation was 1,963,500 Baht. The Civil Court passed the sentence of a 2 years imprisonment which was reduced to 1 year due to her confession but no penalty delaying.** The National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation Department calculated 7 kinds of the aspect of damage caused by such trespassing. One of them costs **45,453.45 Baht per rai per year for hotter climate.**

Another issue that must be mentioned is carbon credit. The developed world emits high rate of carbon and has to reduce it as assigned by Tokyo Protocol. But doing so within the countries themselves would be highly expensive and might have an impact on economics (carbon reduction cost is around 50-90 dollars per ton of carbon). Therefore, the developed countries ask the developing world to launch gas

reduction projects (power sector) and then buy the amount of reduction at a price of about 10-15 dollars per ton of carbon. The developed ask the developing to embark on the carbon sequestration projects (forest sector) and buy the amount at the price of about 2-5 dollars per ton of carbon. For instance, English needs to reduce 800 tons of carbon but could only reduce 200 tons within the country; so the remaining amount required is 600 tons. Therefore, England and Thailand are agreed and cooperate in the gas reduction and sequestration. Thailand can reduce as much as 10 ton per year and sell at a price of 10 dollars per ton =  $10 \times 10 = 1,000$  \$ or 35,000 bht./year, and plant woods to absorb 200 tons of gas/year =  $200 \times 5 = 1,000$  \$ or 35,000 bht./year. This way, England acquires  $100 + 200 = 300$  tons and still needs another 300 tons.

In the afternoon, a workshop was arranged under the theme of **Diocesan Network of Ethnic Groups**. The objective is to share and analyze the local problematic situation of global warming and other issues. There is a review of the network formation, work policy, network's needs and suggestions to the working of involving workers.

Lastly, the workshop participants reached a collective agreement as following. we, the ethnic groups network of 5 dioceses namely Chiangmai, Nakhonsawan, Udonthani, Ratchaburi and Suratthani, as an organization of mission working with the ethnic groups and the Catholic Committee for Ethnic

Groups under the Catholic Bishops' Conference of Thailand, on the occasion of 18<sup>th</sup> General Assembly of Ethnic Groups held at the Catholic Mission Center, Muang district, Chiangmai province during March 22-24, 2010 reach an unanimity collective agreement as following.

1. We will promote and revive the ethnic groups' nice life culture and tradition,

2. We will support child and youth to discover themselves and have faith in their ancestor's way of life,

3. We will study, follow and share information of the situation affecting the

ethnic brethren, such as global warming and etc.,

4. We will enhance the strength and sustainability of the ethnic brethren's network,

5. We will integrate the collaboration at all levels with respect to the human dignity of the natural communes,

6. We will propagate to the public and the communities, the information about the ethnic groups, and push agenda in the Catholic Church.



## An Example of Global Warming Lawsuits

**T**hailand was one of the countries with an abundant of forest land. Deforestation has begun since decades ago by the hands of the exploiters gaining from the thing they do not created, forest.

So far, the ethnic brethren are socially alleged for the mentioned issue due to their way of life involved with forest. Various organizations spend an effort to make clear to vast society in regard to the fact of the brethren's way of life; how they involve with nature, especially forest, the rotation farming and systematic resources management for instance, that originates the sustainable economy by a simple way of life and sufficiency.

Nevertheless, the majority of people still maintain a bias citing that the brethren destroy forest. The prejudice is even stronger when the issue is raised as one of Thai social main issues. There are many international negotiations making the ethnic brethren and the forest dependant communities, whose way of life is the most intimated to nature, are possibly affected by the policy and measure responding to the international global warming resolution. A main point is put into a proposition to the undeveloped countries, so called REDD or Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation. But it is done without making clearly known to the public that the global warming can be as much caused, as happened before, by another activity especially of the urban life style and the developed countries in the industrialized world.

The following two lawsuits are an interesting example on this issue. The

Department of Forestry arrested two Pakakayor brethren as the trespassers into some preserved forest. The first one is Mr. Deepaepho (with no last name), 80 years old, living in the house number 63 moo 4, Tambon Maewaluang, Thasongyang District, Tak Province. The prosecutor prosecuted him for the trespassing into 26 rai of preserved forest where the calculated **cost of damage was**



**3,181,500 Baht.** The Court of First Instance sentenced him to 2 years and 6 months in jail. The imprisonment was reduced to 1 year and 3 months due to confession, but no penalty suspension.

The second one is Mrs. Norhaymui Wiengvissha, 35 years old. The prosecutor prosecuted her for the trespassing into 13 rai of preserved forest where the calculated cost of damage was 1,963,500 Baht. The Court of First Instance sentenced her to 2 years in jail. The imprisonment was reduced to 1 year due to confession, but no penalty suspension. The Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation calculated the cost of 7 kinds of damages caused by the trespassing and deforestation. One of them is the 45,453.45 Baht per rai per year as a result of climate warmer.



A suspicion about the calculation method was brought to the Department. The following is a sample document which was sent to Pattalung Public Prosecutor Office by the Department. The detail involved the method of calculation as following.

### **To Pattalung Public Prosecutor Office,**

In response to a telephone call from an inquiry official preparing the case file to charge Mrs. Kumjai Chaithong for the trespass into 8-2-85 rai of Kaopoo-Kaoya National Park, where the damage cost is 1,306,875 Baht, requesting for a detail of the calculation principle for the cost of damage occurred to the river source area;

The Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation calculates the cost of damage as following.

1. The value of the loss of nutrient = 4,064.15 Baht per rai per year.
2. The increase of non-absorbent soil = 600 Baht per rai per year.
3. The loss of water by the emission of sun's ray = 52,800 Baht per rai per year.
4. The loss of soil = 1,800 Baht per rai per year.
5. **The increase of warmer climate = 45,453.45 Baht per rai per year.**
6. The reduction of rain fall = 5,400 Baht per rai per year.
7. The direct damage to three kinds of forest:-
  - 7.1 Tropical rain forest = 61,263.36 Baht per rai per year.
  - 7.2 Mixed forest = 42,577.75 Baht per rai per year.
  - 7.3 Dry-dipterocarp forest = 18,634.19 Baht.

Therefore, adding the average cost of 40,820.10 per rai per year calculated from the direct damage occurred to the three kinds of forest (7.1, 7.2 and 7.3) to the value of damage cost to other surroundings (1-6) which is 110,117.60 Baht per rai per year of; the total damage cost per rai per year is appeared to be at least 150,942.70 Baht. Anyhow, The Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation charged for 150,000 Baht.

**For your information.**

**The Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation**

*(Source: A correspondence from The Department of National Park, Wildlife and Plant Conservation to Pattalung Public Prosecutor Office, dated 6 September 2005)*



This is the only one among several cases the ethnic brethren are accused and unjustly punished. It might be happened because their way depends on woods while they have to face with the law and policy negatively affected the way of life. Furthermore, in many areas, even though their ancestor made a living for over hundred years, but later on when the government sector enacted a law, or promulgated a law on national park, the communities have to accept and surrender just because it is a law. Anyhow, some of big trees are left in the

country and must be claimed and tended, supposedly the government can do better job than the ethnic brethren originally dwelling in the communities do.

Porlung Jorni Odochao, a wise leader and sage of the Pakakayor brethren mentioned the alteration of Thai agricultural society having to turn more and more towards commercial produce that definitely affect global change.

“Thai people have high hope for science. In the north, when the climate is hot they do not regret. In my homeland there are earthquakes more severe than Tsunami. The community has to make a safeguard plan at village level, must understand and learn their local nature and develop the knowledge into a local curriculum framework. Nature can tell. This winter will be long and fruit will be like this and that. This year will be very hot. Today it is going to rain. The climate will be too warm. Wildlife can tell. Their sound and behavior can tell.

**“...must study nature. We lack cultural rehabilitation. Even when it rains on daily basis, landslide could**



**happen. But nowadays we violate the earth, hammering it down and down, making it tight and tight, so how would it not happen? At my home, I have engaged for over twenty years in non-chemical farming. The commercial farming makes people poorer, could not pull through and be in debt. The relationship at a village level is lost. We must reconcile with nature. When the only one who has is us, another people will seize from us. But when we have and share with them, everyone will have and abundantly have whether budget or knowledge. You, all the masters with knowledge, must disseminate the knowledge, share it. We must maintain the spirit. We must be proud of the nature belonging to us.”**

Lastly, every human being must realize our role and the responsibility to look after this only one world. Do some self-reflection as to whether or not you are the one among the people making the earth ill. It might not sound good to put the blame on some groups of people, especially the brethren known as the one cohabiting with nature from birth until death like the ethnic group.



## **Catholic commission for Ethnic Groups (Thailand)**

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