

10 Fishing in deep waters Among Karens in Thailand

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Sixty-five Karen Baptist leaders and laymen from North-west Thailand representing 29 churches and some 4,500 adult baptized believers (a community of 13,000) enthusiastically accepted a proposal to launch a concerted effort in Church Growth Evangelism called "Evangelism-in-Depth" (See Figure 1). After official vote by the Executive Committee of the Karen Baptist Convention, the effort was launched on a three year basis in May, 1972, and will run through April, 1975. In its first full year measured church growth was up 60% over the previous year of 1972 (May 71 — April 72) or a total of 560 baptized new members! This is indeed good growth and could have been much better if limitations had not been placed on the effort by missionary involvement in a "Church Development Syndrome" of administration and institutional compounds. Key factors in the future of effective Church Growth strategy among the Karens may be seen in the dynamics operating in the E.I.D. programme.

First, it is important to see the Karen Tribe in Thailand in terms of their geographical, ethnic and socio-psychological background. The Karen Tribe is of Tibeto-Burman origins both ethnically and linguistically. Traditional chants tells of a time when the Karen people had a great kingdom between two mighty rivers, probably the Mekong and Salween. Today, their sub-tribes of

FIGURE: 1
MEMBERSHIP-INCREASE KAREN BAPTIST
CONVENTION - THAILAND .

