

## **THAILAND**

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### **Description of Activity:**

PLEC activities in northern Thailand from 1999 to 2002 have been focused on two highland villages, Pah Poo Chom in Chiang Mai and Tee Cha in Mae Hong Son province. Pah Poo Chom is a Hmong village and represents a former opium growing community with traditional pioneer type of shifting cultivation that has undergone considerable change for the past more than 30 years. With long efforts in opium replacement from external assistance, the present generation in the community no longer grow opium, the production systems shifted to intensive production of cabbage and other vegetables on permanent basis. The village has been settled permanently for over 30 years. In contrast, the second site, Tee Cha, is a Karen community and the population is facing a gradual change in their traditional production systems from longer period of rotational shifting cultivation to a shorter cycle of 7 years, with decreasing trends due to limited land resource. The production is for subsistence with extensive upland rice growing on sloping land with diversity of traditional non-rice crops. In 2000, only Pah Poo Chom has reached full stage of demonstration while Tee Cha remains a field research site up till now.

Prior to demonstration, site characterization and determination of focus sites have been made on the basis of agrobiodiversity assessment, biodiversity survey and field measurements in sample plots across major land-use stage and field type in the villages. PLEC/Thailand team employs an interdisciplinary approach with researchers from different disciplines and development agencies. The approach has

strong element of local participation in all stages. In Pah Poo Chom, the number of local experts increased with the progression of PLEC work. By the time of demonstration, 10 farmers have joined the PLEC/Thailand team as local experts demonstrating agrodiversity management for biodiversity-rich systems of their plots. The plots were assessed with data collection, field measurements, monitoring and evaluation, and key informant interview with a semi-structure questionnaire. Comparisons were made with samples of non-experts to evaluate effective demonstration and farmers' training. These results are presented and discussed.

PLEC/Thailand team also works with the community to build up local capacity and strengthen community organization for the maintenance and enrichment of biodiversity. To ensure further support from government and local authorities, PLEC assisted a new Village Committee, with a mandate on forest protection and biodiversity conservation, to conduct planning for village land use and management for biodiversity-rich systems, such as conservation forests, village headwater and other managed systems with rich biodiversity. The outcomes of the exercise are quite worthwhile with positive response from local authorities and local institutions, especially the Tambon (sub-district) Administrative Organization (TAO) and local forestry office in the area.

The demonstration site is recently chosen to be a Pilot Village for a national farmer-to-farmer training programme, the Farmers' Field School project for tribal communities in northern Thailand. The likelihood of success in sustaining PLEC work in the demonstration site may be high but this depends on external supports and services from government and local authorities. Strengthening the capacity of implementing agencies, for example development and extension workers in the Farmers' Field School programme, has yet to be done. Training in PLEC idea and approach is essential to shift development paradigm to promote agrodiversity for biodiversity-rich ecosystems on larger scale.