

THAILAND



**BAN MAI
MOR WO KHEE,
CHIANG MAI**

**CLIMATE JUSTICE
FEMINIST
PARTICIPATORY
ACTION RESEARCH
2017-18**

COUNTRY PROFILE

Thailand is working collaboratively with other countries to stabilize global climate and has taken a number of steps to shape a policy agenda to enhance climate resilience. Ahead of the Paris Agreement of 2015, Thailand submitted its Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) plan which included a 20-25% reduction in greenhouse gas emissions by 2030. National institutions, such as the Office of the National Economic and Social Development Board (NESDB) and the Office of Natural Resources and Environment Policy and Planning (ONEP), have mainstreamed climate change into planning and budgeting functions of government. Thailand's key national policies to address climate change are:

- The Twelfth National Economic and Social Development Plan (NESDB) (2017-2021),
- Thailand's Climate Change Master Plan (2015-2050)

However, some of these policies have had negative impacts particularly on the landless, poor and indigenous communities. The Thai military government intends to increase forest cover from 31.5 percent to 40 percent over the next ten years. This policy has been throwing indigenous communities out of forests which have been their homes forever.

Building women's capacity to design and implement development and climate change adaptation plans

This FPAR was conducted by the Indigenous Women's Network of Thailand (IWNT). IWNT works with the Karen, Lisu, H'mong, Lahu, Akha, Dara'ang, Taiyai or Shan, Lua, Kachin and Mien indigenous groups of northern Thailand.

The FPAR village of Ban Mai Mor Wa Khee is a Karen (indigenous community) village in Mae Wang district of Chiang Mai province in Thailand. In this hilly village, communities have suffered water shortage due to deforestation and lack of consultative development projects. The women used their understanding of climate change and the effectiveness of collective action to turn around their situation using FPAR.

A government order in 2018 resulted in more than 1000 unfair evictions of indigenous people. As people protested, the government issued a notice to exempt poor, landless people who lived in forest areas from evictions. Similarly, the 60 days-smog free policy is applied for most Northern provinces including Chiang Mai. The policy bans burning of weeds during the months of March and April. However, weed burning during this period is part of the indigenous agricultural production process. The banning has resulted in disruption and delays in the production cycle, which in turn impacts the production itself.



CLIMATE ISSUES IN MAEWANG

The main occupation of the community, in Ban Mai Mor Wa Khee, is farming using both rotational shifting cultivation and seasonal wet paddy fields along with small orchards. Most families raise chicken and pigs with a few cattle. Extra income comes from wage working, small shops, and being tourist guides. The forest and nature dependent community has been witnessing several impacts of climate change.

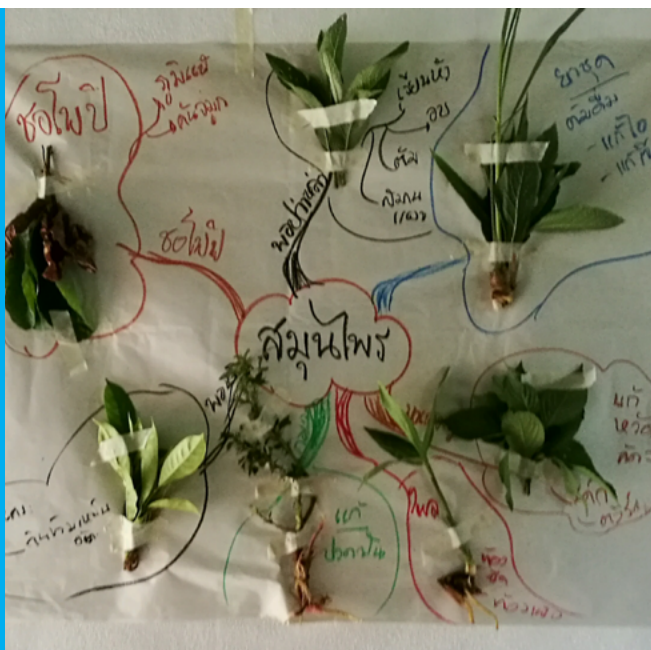
Water: The community has been facing acute water shortage particularly during the dry season. With repeated requests, the local government officials installed some water tanks in the area. However, the tanks have not been filled up and they lie empty giving little relief to the community.

Health: The area has seen an increase in temperature particularly during the dry season. Dehydration and related tiredness resulting in fainting is common. They have also noticed new diseases like skin blisters on hand, foot and body, high blood pressure, asthma, headaches, etc.

Agricultural production: The community observed that the yield from their fields are decreasing very year. Farmers have also noticed increased plants diseases, especially in rice. During the FPAR discussions, they shared that rice seedlings take a long time to grow as they do not get adequate water at the right time.



Natural resources and environment: The forests which are home to the indigenous people have been changing. The streams do not have enough water, aquatic animals are disappearing and there is an increasing number of landslides in the mountains.



WOMEN-LED ACTION

The FPAR community is facing a double-edged problem. On one hand, their lives and livelihood have been affected by climate change. On the other, the government climate change policies are taking away their land, forests, their sources of water and other sustenance from them. The communities are not consulted before a project or programme is designed. Women are affected more by these arbitrary projects as they have to work harder and face increased anger and violence at home. Moreover, women often find themselves inadequately equipped with knowledge and capacity to suggest plans to improve their conditions. Lack of leadership roles and spaces further limit their contribution to climate change adaptation strategies. The FPAR is helping women and the community in understanding climate change and its impact. It also helps them build leadership skills, identify strategies and possible allies. The community is interested in designing an adaptation plan based on their needs and local knowledge. The FPAR helped them articulate this and advocate with the government for Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) and consultations. The CJFPAR has opened up a space for women to stand up and speak for themselves and their families and



communities. It has also provided spaces for women to learn to make change strategically.

Realising the inefficiency of the solutions provided by the government, the women came forward to participate in planning, designing and implementation of these solutions. The women have written to the sub-district administration officer demanding support for building, cleaning and restoration of the wells in the village.

The initiatives taken by women to solve the water problem have made the community realise that women can take lead and make decisions for the communities. As a result, the women are now included in community discussions and decision-making processes.



DEMANDS AND FUTURE ACTION

Based on their experience of conducting the CJFPAR and learning from it, the women of Ban Mai Mor Wa Khee village demand -

Consultation with communities and marginalised people for development and climate adaptation projects: Thai local authorities, especially the sub-district administration office, should plan long-term, sustainable solutions for the water shortage of the village in coordination and consultation with the community people. This must include women, widows, youth and the poor. Development and climate adaptation policies must be designed taking into account their needs and suggestions.

Ensure equal access to basic rights: The indigenous people of the village must have the same rights as other Thai citizens and the Thai government must take steps to ensure it. This will ensure quality life, enabling communities to adapt to climate change.

Build capacities and ensure voices are heard and included: Building capacities of the community, the women and the most marginalised amongst them is key to understanding issues of climate change, impacts of policies and voice local concerns and needs. IWNT will continue to work with the CJFPAR community and take their voices to the local and national advocacy spaces.



ASIA PACIFIC FORUM ON WOMEN,
LAW AND DEVELOPMENT

INDIGENOUS WOMEN'S
NETWORK OF THAILAND

