

GEF Small Grants Programme Project Site Visit

Country: Thailand
Project No. / Title: THA-SGP-OP4-CORE-07-01/ Development of Integrated Farming for Environment Rehabilitation
of Visit: Friday, June 19, 2009
Location: Muang District , Uttaradit Province
Visitors: 1. Mr. Poonsin Sreesangkom, National Coordinator, GEF SGP
2. Mr. Kanchit Sukjaimitr, NSC member
Project Contact: Ms. Sureerat Pidpheng, Leader, Network for Rehabilitation of Land Slide Victims, the grantee

1. BACKGROUND OF THE PROJECT / PURPOSE OF VISIT

This OP-4 project proposes to contribute to reversing the land degradation trend caused by unsustainable agricultural practices and deforestation in a portion of transboundary watershed area of Nan River Basin, an integrated ecosystems of the South China Sea. Through building capacity and demonstrating environmental approaches of target population on sustainable water and land use, the project aimed at strengthening viable indigenous forest/woodland management systems; use of indigenous multiple use tree species to rehabilitate degraded area. Awarded US\$ 12,662.72 from GEF SGP , the project has been in operation just over half-way of its two-year duration, and has submitted two progress reports. The visit aimed to witness progress of activities and respective results, and interact with target population.

2. FINDINGS AND OBSERVATIONS

The project location is a rain-fed cultivated area of three different terrains, i.e. low flat land, flat land in a valley and hilly land belonging to a group of traditional Thai who claimed they had been dwelling in the area for hundreds of years. Receiving natural water from mountainous forested upland in its northern vicinity, the area supplied water through several rivulets, into the Nan River. The 2006 notorious flash flood still left its effect to one's eye. Now, the area is classified into three categories: safe, risky and unsafe from flash flood.

At the office of the grantee in Baan ("village") Chai Khao, Tambol Namrid, one of the four participating villages, the visiting team met with 10 project leaders who shared their experience about the incidence of the 2006 flash flood; their current approach of preparedness, and some immediate outputs of project activities under GEF SGP and their degree of satisfaction with the project. In addition, some of them were able to share their awareness of global warming's effect on climatic variance, especially on the unusual heavy rain that caused land slide in the forested upland. Simple dissemination materials through a series of photos were posted to tell a visitor of activities undertaken and some immediate observable results.

A plot of a project member in another participating village, Baan (village) Farkthung, was visited. The plot, a five-ha area, was situated in "flat land in a valley". Only one fifth of the area was a paddy field while the rest was maintained as woodland and vegetation land. A retaining pond to regulate flash water during rainy season and retain humidity in summer months was seen in place and referred to as productive.

A plot, about one ha, of another project member in Baan Farkthung was a garden of various native species. It was here that the water was harvested in a concrete tank before being released to maintain thriving landraces, many endemic to the area and well-known among an average Thai, such as durian, ipani, pineapple, litchi, etc. Other notable practice of the area appeared to be a selective trimming where non-productive trees were disposed of, then replaced by productive ones. Agro-waste was seen to be used in conditioning the soil.

The two plots directly visited and two others at a glance represented the other sixteen being maintained by the same approach of water and land use management. These 20 plots of about 25-ha cultivated area had been so far maintained by the projects. Reportedly, non-project members both from within and outside target location, paid special interest in the project approach. One major remaining activity was said to be a reforestation of landraces in the plots which the project planned to launch within a few months.



Project location is situated in an ecosystem which would be classified as Open and Fragmented Forest in the Greater Mekong Sub-region, with Lam Nam Nan National Park in the east as the only protected area in the vicinity. Land use change was estimated to be 41-60 %. The 2006 flash flood and later yearly smaller deluges caused by upland deforestation would only accelerate land degradation of the area.



To the north of the project, a mountain range looms in the background. A portion of the range was turned into teak farm. Rain water flows down the valley into several creeks, into the Nan River and the Chaophaya. The runoff from the June 2006 landslide here was seen in Bangkok within ten days, where the turbidity of raw water at a treatment plant of the Metropolitan Water Work Authority was 2,000 units which was unprecedentedly high against the highest 500 ever recorded by MWA. The plant had to reduce water supply.



In order to ensure availability of water all year round, and contribute to underground water recharge, the project pilots water harvesting by digging ponds to retain water. In addition, maintenance of marginal forest (background), reforestation of selected native species (unseen on the right) and avoidance of intensive quick cash crop were proven to be project acceptable practices. To ensure food security, each project member invested to raise fishes in the humid-retaining pond.



As the target population is made up of indigenous, landraces, several of which are endemic and well-known among the Thai (a garden or orchard like this is fairly common) approaches and practice on maintenance and sustainable use of these landrace are of



Community members exhibit their existing and increased capacity. The rain on the previous night alarmed the members to be prepared to evacuate. The pick-up truck is being loaded with valuable assets and is ready to be off should a flash flood come



A simple way of reporting to the public: the project posts pictures and captions depicting activities undertaken and some evidenced immediate results. One of the project members is giving a brief to the visiting team.