

THAI LAHU CHRISTIAN CHURCHES (TLCC) BI-VOCATIONAL SCHOOL, THAILAND

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1. Project Background

Small farm resource centers (SFRCs) have played a strong role in strengthening the relevance and role of their sponsoring organizations (e.g., missions' organizations, development organizations) and were popular as an outreach and development tool from 1920 to 1980. In the late 1980s, the advent of participatory rapid appraisal (PRA) and farmer field schools (Van den Berg, 2004) emphasized the importance of farmer-led extension, causing many extension and development experts to question the role of traditional agricultural centers. Though many SFRCs are still in existence, the benefit and efficacy of SFRCs on local livelihoods have never been measured or evaluated comprehensively, perhaps because of their multifarious foci, differences in extension techniques, their secondary role to other institutional priorities, lack of understanding or interest in extension best practices, and lack of institutional vision or sustainability.

There is a need to document, evaluate and empower these existing SFRCs as a useful research-extension tool in South and Southeast Asia operating outside the formal government/ academic extension model. It is our perception that SFRCs have a continued role to reach neglected segments of populations, particularly communities on the margins. To justify their continued existence, however, important questions about their efficacy need to be answered, such as: what is their capability to engage a particular focus group on the basis of that group's felt needs; what is their extension strategy and its ability to catalyze documentable and felt changes related to sustained improved livelihood and food security; how adaptable to change are they in a rapidly developing Asia; and what can the SFRC do to amplify its extension impact?

The purpose of this research was to explore a suite of SFRCs in Southeast Asia to illustrate and classify the concept of the SFRC, evaluate their outreach efficacy and provide recommendations to amplify their extension services. Seven SFRCs were utilized to answer our set of research questions and determine if the concept of the SFRC is antiquated or

adaptable, and if the SFRC can remain relevant as a development tool (Table 1; Figure 1).

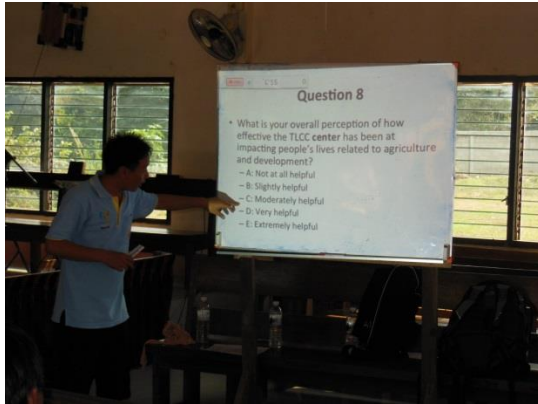
2. Methodology

The data was collected by a combination of questionnaires, surveys and PRAs. Initial data collection was conducted via questionnaires emailed to SFRC directors in December 2012. The questionnaire consisted of 47 questions on topics including the history and mission of the center, staffing, institutional affiliations, demographics of stakeholders and beneficiaries served, budget and financing mechanisms, monitoring and evaluation procedures, on-center and extension work, and long-term/exit strategies. This background information was intended to help identify and classify each SFRC's approach to extension and livelihoods improvement.

Once preliminary questionnaires were distributed and returned, we conducted a one-day assessment, including a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, brief interviews, and organizational / systems modeling with the SFRC directors and staff members. This assessment took place from January to March 2013 to understand the perceived operation and services of the SFRCs. This daylong process identified how extension happens, the form extension takes, and who is involved in extension activities on and off center.

In addition, a one- or two-day assessment was conducted with stakeholders -- which we defined as anyone who had a vested interest in the success and functioning of the center and its work (Businessdictionary.com 2012) -- to understand perceived extension effectiveness and its impact on farmers / livelihoods / food security. These assessments utilized SWOT analysis, visits, brief interviews and systems modeling of perceived extension practices.

All data was entered into Excel worksheets during and upon return from the field. Where necessary, data was coded to calculate percentages and ratios. Abram Bicksler of ECHO Asia Impact Center analyzed and interpreted the data using a combination of Excel functions and Excel macros.



ECHO facilitated an assessment with TLCC.

3. Findings

Background of Center

The Lahu ethnic group of Thailand is estimated to number between 60,000 and 100,000 (they number approximately 720,000 in China and 150,000 in Myanmar) (source?). Most Thai Lahu are located in the Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai provinces, with communities extending as far south as Tak province. Altogether, there are at least six Lahu subgroups, including the Red, Black, Yellow and Shehle.

The Lahu are primarily farmers, using shifting cultivation to grow mainly upland rice for family consumption as well as

corn to sell. Compared with lowland Thais, the upland Lahu have less access to education, health services, good roads and the electrical grid. Whereas the Thai national average annual income is 141,480 baht (\$4,716), reported average annual incomes for Lahu and neighboring hilltribe families in the Mae Yao district of Chiang Rai and the Chiang Dao district of Chiang Mai are approximately 28,229 baht (\$941) per year (Tongdee, 2011). Many Lahu have migrated from upland communities to larger cities, such as Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai, in search of employment and educational opportunities. However, a significant number still lack Thai citizenship.

The majority of the Black and Yellow Lahu located along the Myanmar-China border converted to Christianity in the early 1900s. Large numbers later migrated from China to Myanmar in the years following World War II, with further outflow to Thailand due to political instability beginning in the 1950s. With growing numbers of Black and Yellow Lahu Christians in Thailand since the early 1960s, the Thailand Lahu Baptist Convention (18th district) was established under the Church of Christ in Thailand (Protestant denomination) in 1992. In 1998, a split occurred within the 18th district, largely along ethnic lines between Black and Yellow Lahu churches.

As a result, remaining churches in the 18th district were predominantly Black Lahu, who retained control of the organizational infrastructure, including denominational offices, the Bible school and a number of hostels that had been set up for students from remote communities to board near good schools. The largely Yellow Lahu TLBC congregations eventually voted to retain ties with the CCT, aligning themselves under its sixth district while forming a new entity called the Thai Lahu Christian Churches (TLCC). In 2001, the TLCC established the Rural Care Foundation through which property could be purchased. That same year, a 6-rai (0.96-a or 2.35-acre) plot of land was purchased for a TLCC Bible school in the rural Doi Saket district approximately 15 km east of Chiang Mai. Between 2002 and 2003, the main educational/administration building and chapel were constructed, and the facility was dedicated in 2004.

In addition to religious instruction, students (Yellow, Black and Red Lahu) began to receive vocational training at the site, including agriculture. Another purpose of the institution's agricultural component was to provide the institution with a degree of food self-sufficiency. Initially, the agricultural component included a fish pond in addition to small flocks of turkeys and chickens as well as plots of vegetables and corn. In 2006, an additional 4 rai of land adjacent to the original plot were purchased, with another 7 rai added in 2010. Both plots provide access to paddy fields for rice production, bringing the total area of the center to 17 rai (2.72 ha or 6.72 acres).

Since the earliest years of the TLCC Bi-Vocational School, guest lecturers have taught the students agricultural topics. Students have also been involved in the production of rice at

the center's farm, which reportedly supplements the institution's annual needs. In addition to classrooms, offices and housing for students and staff members, as well as several rai of rice paddy, the center also has a rice mill, pig production facilities, numerous vegetable garden plots and fruit trees. It is estimated that 15,000,000 baht (\$428,571 U.S. at a conversion rate of 35 baht per \$1 US) has been spent on the land and the development of the facilities.

In 2009, GoEd Mekong, a U.S.-based study abroad program, located its regional facility at the TLCC Bi-Vocational School. Students and staff members stay at the TLCC Bi-Vocational School, where they also hold classes and interact with the Lahu students and staff members.



The TLCC Center in Doi Saket, Thailand.

Center Efficacy

Identification of Stakeholders and their Roles

A discussion among various stakeholders at the TLCC Bi-Vocational School was held on Feb. 12, 2013. The stakeholder representatives were the TLCC/school administration (including the founder, Marting Chaisuriya) and instructors, as well as staff members responsible for managing the agriculture components and representatives from Go-Ed. Two discussion sessions were held, the first involving the center's faculty and staff members along with two GoEd representatives (seven participating). The second session was attended by TLCC Bi-Vocational School students and one instructor (20 in attendance).

The stakeholder identification exercise indicated that the number of TLCC Bi-Vocational School stakeholders is extensive. The following groups live and work at the center:

- Students -- At the center, in addition to their studies (e.g. Bible, agriculture, computer skills, English/Lahu languages, health, leadership, church ministry, Christian education, music), students engage in farm work at the

center, enabling the institution to be largely self-sufficient in rice, organic vegetables and pork. Outreach: the students take gained knowledge and skills back to their home communities.

- Faculty and staff members – Various faculty and staff members both work and reside at the center and interact with TLCC communities across northern Thailand.
- Reach Global/Evangelical Free Churches of America – EFCA/Reach Global representatives (Dave and Gloria Callahan) maintain a working presence at the center, teaching English and serving as resource people for connecting U.S. churches with TLCC ministries. Outreach: Reach Global personnel bring other interested parties to see agricultural efforts taking place at the TLCC farm (a new aquaponics system is being created by Reach Global personnel).
- Mekong GoEd Program staff members and students – Five GoEd staff members live and work at the center along with six American students. These students conduct research projects and engage in activities such as vermiculture, seed saving, raised-bed gardening and duck production as well as independent academic study. They also gain cross-cultural experience, learning about Lahu/hilltribe/Thai lifestyles, language and culture, and interact with TLCC students (e.g., doing farm work, sharing meals, and going to church). Community outreach: GoEd students travel to villages to volunteer, teach English with the TLCC students and participate in the field-based Factors of Social Development course.
- TLCC – With offices at the TLCC Bi-Vocational School, the facility serves as a central location for Lahu church delegates to convene and coordinate overall TLCC activities, such as annual TLCC mass meetings as well as events held every four years for choosing TLCC officers. In addition, the executive committee (representing four church associations) and the women's and youth fellowships meet at the center regularly.

Various TLCC Bi-Vocational School stakeholders reside on and then go to work off campus:

- Blessing and Harvest Homes (Rural Care Foundation) – The TLCC and Rural Care Foundation support the children's homes in various ways, including assistance with food production approaches, some of which have been developed and extended from the TLCC center.
- Members of TLCC churches – Congregations send students and financial support to the center and benefit in return by receiving trained and equipped alumni back to their communities.
- Church of Christ in Thailand district 6.
- TLCC Bi-Vocational School Graduates – After living and learning at the center, the graduates take what they

have learned back to their churches, communities and elsewhere.

History of the TLCC Bi-Vocational School

According to the TLCC Bi-Vocational School faculty/staff and GoEd representatives, aspects of the facility that have worked well include: having established the Rural Care Foundation in 2001, giving the Bi-Vocational School the authority to accept donations directly without having to rely on another institution to channel and/or allocate funds that are needed for the site to function; and the approach of seeking out support from a broad base of donors.

When asked “What would you do differently in establishing such a center?”, responses from the same group included: build one- to two-story buildings rather than the current four-story buildings because the top floors are difficult for many to access; the center should have been placed in a more rural area (but not too remote), closer to the TLCC constituency, because it is difficult and expensive for many of the village-based stakeholders to travel to the Doi Saket location; rethink the water level management situation for the property (i.e., related to the ongoing challenge of regulating water levels in the rice paddies -- neighboring rice fields around the farm are continually being filled in for construction; acquire as much land as possible around the center for agriculture; and from the beginning, plan to have qualified agricultural personnel to help with the training, agricultural production and development outreach to help sustain the center and the Bible school and assist TLCC’s constituency.

Inputs and Outputs

Institutional inputs (Figure 2) include funding from international sources (i.e. EFCA and GoEd) and local churches, as well as local sources of rice and food. The main outputs of the TLCC Bi-Vocational Center are a growing pool of educated and equipped Lahu students who return to their communities for service and GoEd graduates who return to the United States after a cross-cultural exchange. Other outputs include strengthened missionary relations with EFCA due to cooperation at the center as well as the role of the center in demonstrating the production of rice, pigs, vegetables and fish to Lahu visitors and communities.

SWOT Analysis of the TLCC Bi-Vocational Center

SWOT analysis conducted at the center (Table 2) revealed a large number of perceived strengths:

- The property has good rice paddy land and water.
- The property’s location next to a crematorium has kept adjacent land prices low and others from crowding in too close.

- All of the instructors are committed, qualified and knowledgeable, and have at least bachelor’s degrees.
- Foreign missionary co-workers provide prayer and financial support.
- TLCC churches are involved and provide support.
- Students can learn English from native English speakers living and working at the center.
- TLCC has a clear vision for ministry and establishing churches.
- A ministerial strategic plan for the center is in place.
- TLCC has developed a constitution to guide its efforts.
- The Bible school has progressed, offering courses in English and other languages as well as computer and vocational skills.
- The institution has a clear purpose, integrating livelihoods and agricultural education with theology.
- Some graduates have returned to the school as teachers, retaining institutional knowledge.
- The institution has a strong ethnic identity, incorporating Lahu language, food (growing traditional Lahu rice varieties on the farm) and music.
- The institution has a diversified range of partners who understand its vision.
- The institution’s donors do not have onerous reporting requirements.
- Because it is registered as a foundation, the institution can directly accept donations -- funds do not need to be channeled through the CCT or other institutions.
- Local farmer knowledge is incorporated into agricultural emphases.
- GoEd students learn alongside TLCC students.
- The center is a good place for the TLCC constituency to convene.
- The institution has a dedicated and determined group of students.
- The center is self-sufficient in rice and pork.
- The institution is able to educate people from across many socioeconomic conditions.

The group pinpointed a small number of weaknesses:

- The lack of a qualified agricultural teacher/manager for the farm, which restricts the center’s efficacy.
- The TLCC is too financially dependent upon outside sources.
- Skills and expertise related to ministry for youth and women are lacking.
- There is a sense of having to meet too many expectations for the constituency and stakeholders.

The list of opportunities included:

- The facilities might offer a Lahu museum to help preserve and promote Lahu culture.
- With the inauguration of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, the open borders should facilitate the enrollment of Lahu students from Myanmar and Laos and enable the TLCC Bi-Vocational Center to become a regional hub for Lahu churches and training.
- The school should eventually include an English Bible study curriculum.
- The institution should become more self-supporting.
- The school should meet demands by the students for more programming related to agriculture, community development, and health and sanitation; employ more agricultural instructors to increase agricultural training at the center (especially organic agriculture); and increase the overall focus related to community development for improved community livelihoods and health.
- TLCC should become the 20th district of the CCT and present a very holistic ministry model, including efforts related to agriculture, Lahu culture and children's homes (for improved education opportunities, Bible training and English).

Perceived threats to the work of the TLCC Bi-Vocational Center included:

- Increasing urbanization around the property could overwhelm the institution.
- Possible denominational problems (no specifics mentioned).
- Lack of adequate numbers of students or funding.
- Becoming spread too thin because of so many stakeholders and their expectations.
- Leadership transition – what happens after Rev. Marting is no longer in leadership?
- If bachelor's degree courses are offered, more qualified lecturers will be needed.

Three Open-ended Questions

To review perceptions of the efficacy of the TLCC Bi-Vocational School, we asked three open-ended questions. The following are the responses to the first question, "What are some of the accomplishments that you are most proud of?"

- The development of a vision statement: "To grow a church planting movement which is committed to loving Jesus Christ, each other, and reaching the world by planting other movements."
- Because of the development of the TLCC Bi-Vocational School, unity has emerged from among the partner

churches, evolving from having been a wounded faction to becoming a new fellowship with a cause.

- Two church plants in Myanmar that resulted from a ministerial partnership between the TLCC and the Lahu Baptist Convention (Myanmar).
- Through the previous year, there had been 80 graduates who are now serving as pastors and church planters as well as in vocational ministry.
- One TLCC Bi-Vocational School student went to India to study and has returned to work at the children's home in Phrao.
- TLCC church members convene at the center each year under the support of the local churches.

The following statements are in response to a second question, "What do you need most for improving your agricultural development outreach work?"

- A dedicated agricultural worker/ specialist in agriculture who can focus on agriculture teaching/programming and financial support for such a worker.
- That the center's agricultural program be developed to enable the institution to become self-supporting.

In response to the third question, "How many people have benefitted from your outreach work related to agriculture and development?", the estimated impact has been spread among:

- TLCC churches – There are approximately 37 churches in the TLCC, as well as three church plants (recently established). Among TLCC Bi-Vocational School students, there have been 80 graduates over the past 10 years, with about 60 percent serving in vocational ministry. Approximately 48 alumni are serving in church communities, although the exact number of beneficiary communities is not known. However, the estimated number of benefitting church members per congregation is generally 30 to 50 with four or five congregations having 150 to 200 members; thus, it could be estimated that a minimum of 1,200 TLCC congregants are benefitting from the work of the Bi-Vocational School.
- Reach Global/EFCA churches -- Among the Reach Global/EFCA clientele, more than 20 construction teams have traveled to Thailand to assist the institution (probably representing 30 to 40 EFCA churches) with an average of five to 10 people per team (but occasionally up to 20).
- GoEd Mekong Program - Six GoEd students participated this current year, with roughly 30 since 2009.
- Blessing Home and Harvest Home – At the student dormitories under the Rural Care Foundation, each year 50 to 60 children are in residence (currently around 30 in

the Blessing Home and 20 at the Harvest Home); about half of them are orphans.

- TLCC Bi-Vocational School faculty and staff -- The faculty consists of six full-time faculty members and four full-time office staff members as well as guest lecturers from the CCT, Payap University, etc.. Each semester, guest lecturers teach at least two subjects.

Feedback from the TLCC Bi-Vocational School Students

Most of the interviewed students were from farm families who generally make their living from producing upland rice for family consumption and corn and red beans to sell. All of them indicated that they had participated in farm work at the center, including raising pigs and producing rice in the paddy fields.

- When asked “How do the center and its outreach activities benefit you related to agriculture and livelihoods?”, responses included:
- Learning about agricultural activities at the center, both in theory and in practice.
- Staff coordination of supplemental learning activities and trainings has allowed many to be exposed to various learning opportunities related to livelihoods such as car and motorcycle repair as well as barbering and Thai massage at nearby vocational schools (these vocational training opportunities are not regular nor required).
- In-class theory and practice related to sufficiency economy approaches (e.g., natural, low input agriculture) is good, but students would like more emphasis on “learning by doing.”

When asked “What are particular resources/activities from the center/staff that have benefitted you?”, students responded:

- Learning about growing vegetables such as cilantro, morning glory and garlic.
- Learning how to raise rice, pigs and fish.
- Learning about natural pig production (raised on natural bedding such as rice husks) is very beneficial, because over time the bedding turns into compost for vegetables and fruit trees and can also be used in the rice fields.

In response to the question “Are there ways that the center/staff can better improve your agriculture and livelihoods?”, the students’ answers were:

- They would like more “learning by doing.”
- They would like to learn more about integrated farming (raising pigs, chickens, ducks and fish together) and producing fermented animal feeds (there is less odor and animals are healthier) by using microbial approaches such as indigenous microorganisms (IMOs).

Anonymous Polling to Nine Questions

A final session with the students involved anonymous polling using iClicker technology by which the students offered responses to nine questions related to livelihood benefits (agriculture, sanitation, etc.) that they received from their education at the TLCC Bi-Vocational School. For each question, the students were invited to choose one of five responses that ranged from no benefit/effect (A) to maximum benefits/effect (E).

The following are the nine questions with associated student responses:

- How much have you learned about crop production (e.g., rice, corn) because of the TLCC Bi-Vocational School and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Nothing at all - 0%; B: Just a little bit - 19%; C: Some amount - 67%; D: A lot - 14%; E: A very large amount - 0%.
- How much have you learned about animal production because of the center and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Nothing at all -- 0%; B: Just a little bit - 29%; C: Some amount - 71%; D: A lot - 0%; E: A very large amount - 0%.
- How much have you learned about household income/finances because of the center and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Nothing at all -- 10%; B: Just a little bit - 48%; C: Some amount - 33%; D: A lot - 5%; E: A very large amount - 5%.
- How much have you learned about good health because of the center and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Nothing at all -- 14%; B: Just a little bit - 33%; C: Some amount - 48%; D: A lot - 5%; E: A very large amount - 0%.
- How much have you learned about clean water because of the center and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Nothing at all -- 14%; B: Just a little bit - 33%; C: Some amount - 38%; D: A lot - 14%; E: A very large amount - 0%.
- How much have you learned about sanitation/hygiene because of the center and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Nothing at all -- 14%; B: Just a little bit - 33%; C: Some amount - 48%; D: A lot - 5%; E: A very large amount - 0%.
- What is your overall perception of how effective the TLCC Center has been at impacting you/your community’s lives related to agriculture and development? Responses: A: Nothing at all -- 5%; B: Just a little bit - 19%; C: Some amount - 33%; D: A lot - 33%; E: A very large amount - 10%.
- In the future, do agriculture/development activities at the TLCC Center need to: A: Get much smaller -- 0%; B: Get a little smaller - 10%; C: Stay the same - 19%; D: Get a little bigger - 62%; E: Get a lot bigger - 10%.

- To what extent do you plan to incorporate agriculture/development work in your work/ministry in the future? A: Not at all – 0%; B: Just a little bit – 5%; C: Some amount – 33%; D: A lot – 43%; E: A very large amount – 19%.

Extension Efficacy

Approximately 37 churches in roughly as many Lahu communities in Thailand cooperate with the TLCC. These congregations work together to support religious activities at the TLCC Bi-Vocational School, in community-based congregations and beyond. Despite the agricultural and vocational activities taking place at the TLCC Bi-Vocational School, the TLCC does not yet have a dedicated curriculum to proactively promote community-based agriculture and community development efforts.

Because of related educational activities being offered at the TLCC Bi-Vocational School, the institution and survey team were interested to determine whether such center-based initiatives might have possibly spawned agriculture and community development benefits in at least one TLCC community.

On Feb. 13, 2013, 18 members of the TLCC-affiliated church of Nong Pham, a Yellow Lahu community located in the Mae Suai district of Chiang Rai province (about 100 km north of the TLCC Bi-Vocational School), were surveyed by Abram Bicksler, Boonsong Thansritong and Rick Burnette. During the survey at Nong Pham, three data collection activities were carried out: construction of a timeline of key community events over the past 50 years, an interview consisting of four open-ended questions regarding the community's perception of the TLCC Center and anonymous polling with iClickers regarding their perceptions of the effectiveness of the TLCC Bi-Vocational School agriculture and livelihoods programming in their community.

Timeline Activity

During the timeline activity, church members noted 1962 as a key year because many Lahu migrated from Burma at that time to escape growing unrest and concerns of religious persecution. It was not until 13 years later, however, that their community, originally consisting of seven households, was established at its present location along with a TLBC-affiliated church. The settled area was described as having a healthy forest environment.

Development activities sponsored by the TLBC and Compassion International (an international NGO) were conducted in the community during the 1980s and 1990s, including the development of a rudimentary community water system. However, with the schism with the TLBC in the late 1990s, the church affiliated with the newly established TLCC and the sixth district of the CCT. Between 2002 and the

present, at least four persons from the Nong Pham church have studied at the TLCC Bi-Vocational School

Since its establishment, the population of the community has swollen to 145 households with greatly diminished access to farmland and forest resources. On farmland that is available, the farm families produce upland rice for household consumption and for sale and corn (marketed at 6 to 7 Thai baht per kg) as well as local chickens, pigs and lychee fruit. Participants in the survey indicated interest in producing pigs with locally produced fermented feeds.

Four Open-ended Questions

To review perceptions of the efficacy of the TLCC Bi-Vocational School in improving agriculture and related livelihoods in the Nong Pham community, four open-ended questions were administered. In response to "How do the center and its outreach activities benefit you related to agriculture and livelihoods?", the participants responded that the Bi-Vocational School has benefitted them by demonstrating to them how to:

- Plant paddy rice.
- Raise pigs with the natural farming method; they have also received pigs from the center.
- Raise fish in ponds.
- Grow certain types of vegetables (e.g., water spinach) in beds, and they have begun to do similar gardening.

When asked "What are particular resources/activities from the center/staff that benefit you?" their response was "We have not been taught by the center via extension but are extremely interested in such." It was presumed that their answers to the question above were rooted in the ability of students who went to the center and returned to the community, sharing their experience with the community. They also added that some community members have been to the center for meetings and trainings and have seen agricultural activities and demonstrations there (e.g., rice, pigs, gardening). They are certainly interested in learning more.

In response to the question "Should TLCC only focus on spiritual issues or also development issues?", the group responded that they think that the TLCC should have three mandates:

- Education (in general) of students at the center.
- Spiritual development.
- Community development.

The group stated further that, as TLCC stakeholders, they hope that the agency listens to them about having church-based development take place in the villages. Things have changed since 30 years ago, when they were content with their livelihood circumstances. Responses to "Are there ways

that the TLCC center/staff can better improve your agriculture and livelihoods?” included:

- Providing marketing training for community members for farm products and handicrafts (to increase income).
- Helping address the local soil degradation problem that has worsened over the past few years because they are no longer able to allow hill fields to fallow.
- Having TLCC staff members come and assist in the community with trainings and extension because it is too expensive for community members to go to the TLCC center near the city for training.
- Assisting in setting up tourist home stays for income generation, perhaps using this enterprise as a chance to educate others about Lahu culture.
- Pursuing their interest in diversified farming, planting fruit trees and engaging in agroforestry.
- Receiving unbiased farming information. Participants stated that most of their farming information comes from businesses that sell farm products (e.g., seeds, fertilizer, chemicals) but all services from companies, including information, are costly -- for every 10,000 THB they earn on their farms, it is estimated that they give 5,000 THB to the companies to purchase inputs.
- Focusing on the biggest livelihood issues, which are related to rice, pig and corn production. For those with access to land, there is need to increase production while conserving the soil. For those without land, the issue is how to find access to land. After 37 years of farming the land around Nong Pham, they observe that the soil is tired and degraded.

Anonymous Polling to Nine Questions

The final session with members of the Nong Pham church involved anonymous polling using iClicker technology. Participants offered responses to nine questions related to livelihood benefits (agriculture, sanitation, etc.) that they received from efforts at the TLCC Bi-Vocational School. For each question, the participants were invited to choose one of five responses that basically ranged from no benefit/effect (A) to maximum benefits/effect (E).

The nine questions with associated responses are:

- To what extent has there been change related to crop production (e.g., rice, corn) in the communities because of the TLCC Bi-Vocational School and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Much less -- 73%; B: A little less -- 9%; C: No change -- 9%; D: A little more -- 9%; E: Much more -- 0%.
- To what extent has there been change in animal production in the communities because of the center and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Much less -- 73%; B: A little less -- 18%; C: No change -- 0%; D: A little more -- 0%; E: Much more -- 9%.
- To what extent has there been change in household income because of the center and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Much less -- 73%; B: A little less -- 9%; C: No change -- 18%; D: A little more -- 0%; E: Much more -- 0%.
- To what extent has there been change in household debt because of the center and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Much less -- 0%; B: A little less -- 18%; C: No change -- 64%; D: A little more -- 18%; E: Much more -- 0%.
- To what extent has there been a change in health status because of the center and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Much worse -- 0%; B: A little worse -- 0%; C: No change -- 100%; D: A little better -- 0%; E: Much better -- 0%.
- To what extent has there been a change in water availability because of the center and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Much less -- 0%; B: A little less -- 0%; C: No change -- 91%; D: A little more -- 9%; E: Much more -- 0%.
- To what extent has there been a change in sanitation because of the center and its outreach activities? Responses: A: Much worse -- 0%; B: A little worse -- 0%; C: No change -- 91%; D: A little better -- 9%; E: Much better -- 0%.
- What is your overall perception of how effective the TLCC center has been at impacting people's life related to agriculture and development? Responses: A: Not at all helpful -- 45%; B: Slightly helpful -- 18%; C: Moderately helpful -- 18%; D: Very helpful -- 9%; E: Extremely helpful -- 9%.
- In the future, agriculture/development outreach activities of TLCC need to: Responses: A: Get much smaller -- 0%; B: Get a little smaller -- 0%; C: Stay the same -- 0%; D: Get a little bigger -- 0%; E: Get a lot bigger -- 100%.

4. Summary

Background of Center

- Following a denominational split, TLCC established the Rural Care Foundation in 2001 and purchased property for a TLCC-related Bible school in the rural Doi Saket district near Chiang Mai, with main educational buildings constructed over the next few years.
- To develop a degree of food self-sufficiency and provide rural livelihoods instruction, the agricultural component of the facilities included a fish pond as well as poultry, pig and rice production, with total property area eventually measuring 17 rai (2.72 ha or 6.72 acres).
- The TLCC Bi-Vocational School also hosts the Go-Ed Mekong program and workers from EFCA/Reach Global.

Center Efficacy

- TLCC Center has maximized partnerships with several stakeholders, including Go-Ed, EFCA/Reach Global, the students and TLCC-supporting churches.
- Stakeholder concerns about the center's location include: distance from remote partner communities, buildings having been constructed too tall, surrounding urbanization/encroachment and water level management challenges for the rice fields.
- Key outputs of the facility include educated and equipped Lahu students (80 graduates thus far) who return to their communities for service and American GoEd graduates, as well as demonstrations of various agricultural techniques for students and visitors.
- Though the center has qualified staff members and a strong, diversified base of support and is reportedly self-sufficient in rice and pork, there is a sense of it being too dependent on outside support and additional concerns about too much dependence on the fund-raising abilities of the institution's founder and current president.
- The center still lacks a qualified farm manager/instructor and needs to do more toward developing food self-sufficiency.
- Students indicated that they have learned at least moderate amounts related to crop and livestock production as well as other aspects of agriculture and community development (e.g., sanitation, clean water). They also emphasized the need for more agricultural development activities at the TLCC Bi-Vocational School because most of them intend to incorporate some degree of agriculture and community development work in their ministry communities.

Extension Efficacy

- It is estimated that at least 1,200 TLCC church members are benefiting from the current 48 graduates serving in TLCC-supported congregations.
- Although there has been no dedicated extension work from the TLCC Bi-Vocational School, members of the Nong Pham church stated that agricultural activities that they have seen at the center, including the production of rice, pigs, fish and vegetables, are of interest and possible benefit to them.
- The church members indicated that they would highly welcome community-based agriculture and community development extension activities from the TLCC Center, especially because it is difficult for community members to travel to the center.
- The Nong Pham members suggest that TLCC community outreach should be holistic -- educational, spiritual and livelihoods focused -- with the education of students at the center including both spiritual and community

development emphases so that they can better serve their communities.

- Extension needs that community members would like to see TLCC assist with include: marketing training (e.g., farm products, handicrafts), income generation from home stays (hosting tourists), help with enabling farm fields to recover from degradation, diversified farming (agroforestry and planting fruit trees) and natural farming of pigs (i.e., using local fermented feeds and natural bedding that becomes compost).
- Anonymous polling of the community members indicated that agricultural and other livelihood activities being taught and/or practiced at the TLCC Bi-Vocational School have had only limited local impact thus far. However, they see great potential from extension approaches, with all persons surveyed expressing a desire for the TLCC to expand such efforts.

5. Recommendations and Future Directions

- So that accomplishments and results can be better monitored and reported among stakeholders (such as financial supporters), TLCC is encouraged to keep detailed records, including indicators that help measure impact at both the center and in partner communities. Such information will also help to identify and troubleshoot programming challenges and help to maintain and build the confidence of stakeholders and supporters.
- TLCC should conduct yearly financial audits, provide annual financial reporting, and report various tangible results to its donor partners to maintain their confidence and interest.
- Needs-based assessment among community-based stakeholders is needed for current and future development work related to improving livelihoods.
- With careful consideration, TLCC should continue to allow partners with compatible goals to use components of the Bi-Vocational School property for educational/lodging purposes as well as for experimentation, demonstration and promotion of good technologies for sustainable development. Such collaboration has already led to quality partnerships, diversified income and improved stewardship of the center facility.
- The idea of empowering students and staff members to grow organic vegetables to sell to the TLCC Bi-Vocational School kitchen is an excellent way to involve the residents in the production of safe, low-cost food and an effective way of making better use of the center's land resources.
- For improved productivity, food savings and educational purposes, more space at the center should be devoted

to the production of low-maintenance fruit, vegetables and agroforest species that yield year round (e.g., rattan shoots, fishtail palm shoots, vegetable fern, banana, guava, pomegranate, papaya).

- Small-scale approaches, such as model backyard gardens and fish production in tanks and small ponds, could be developed and demonstrated at the center to promote improved nutrition for TLCC communities and beyond.
- Organic, low-input production of paddy rice should be further evaluated (e.g., System of Rice Intensification, use of green manure/cover crops).
- The TLCC Bi-Vocational Center's advantageous location near Chiang Mai's urban population might serve as a convenient conduit for marketing products from TLCC farm communities, such as local pigs, chickens and other farm products.
- The TLCC and other stakeholders should develop an integrated, long-range plan for the development of the Bi-Vocational School facilities, including center-based agricultural components and activities that would benefit all stakeholders, current and future.
- The TLCC should consider hiring one or two persons having appropriate agricultural education, experience and other qualifications to manage the agricultural operations at the center, teach agricultural courses, facilitate and lead center-based trainings, and engage in community-based agricultural extension in TLCC communities. TLCC might fund personnel and activities through funds from international partners such as EFCA/Reach Global over a designated period of time until TLCC churches ultimately cooperatively fund the position(s) and work.
- The TLCC might initiate special church-based fund-raising events (e.g., missions' offerings for agriculture and community development) for increased grass-roots support of their work that involves congregations in assisting the poorest and most vulnerable within TLCC communities.
- To generate center-based income and equip community development partners, the TLCC should offer and/or host affordable and frequent trainings and seminars at the center for members and personnel from partner churches and organizations. Such offerings could be

related to natural farming approaches for sustainable crop, fish and livestock production, particularly focusing on approaches that are appropriate to contemporary Lahu livelihood and environmental needs, as well as those of other hilltribe groups.

- To continue to encourage holistic ministry that not only focuses on spiritual emphases, the TLCC Bi-Vocational School might expand opportunities for students to gain exposure and short-term training at the center and elsewhere related to agriculture and community development. These opportunities would ideally enable future church leaders to better identify and confront environmental, livelihood and social challenges in and around TLCC church communities. Future church leaders and congregations could work with the TLCC agricultural staff to better engage their communities with agricultural and community development initiatives as well as other income-generation approaches required for sustainable communities.

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7. Tables and Figures

Table 1. The seven small farm resource centers (SFRCs) assessed as part of this MEAS case study series.

SFRC Name	Location	Director/Contact
Ntok Ntee	Mondulkiri, Cambodia	Ken Thompson
Farm Center Indochina, FCI	Indochina	Contact Authors
Sustainable Agriculture Training Center (SATC)	Hmawbi, Myanmar	Saw Hei Moo
Aloha House	Puerto Princessa, Philippines	Keith Mikkelsen
Center for the Uplift of Hilltribes (CUHT)	Chiang Mai, Thailand	Suwan Jantarayut
Thai Lahu Christian Churches (TLCC) Center	Doi Saket, Thailand	Marting Chaisuriya
Upland Holistic Development Project (UHDP)	Mae Ai, Thailand	Bunsak Thongdi



Figure 1. Locations of six of the small farm resource centers surveyed around Southeast Asia. The location of the Farm Center Indochina (FCI) is not disclosed.

Table 2. SWOT Analysis for TLCC Bi-Vocational School. Answers in regular type were given by the interviewees; answers in bold are the opinions of the evaluators.

Strengths (Present)	Opportunities (Future)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The property has good rice paddy land and water. – The property's location next to a crematorium has kept adjacent land prices low and others from crowding in too close. – All of the instructors are committed, qualified and knowledgeable, having a minimum of B.S. degrees. – Foreign missionary co-workers provide prayer, financial support – TLCC churches are involved, providing support. – Students can learn English from native English speakers living and working at the center. – TLCC has a clear vision for ministry and church planting. – A ministerial strategic plan for the center is in place. – TLCC has developed a constitution to guide its efforts. – The Bible school has progressed, offering courses in English and other languages as well as computer and vocational skills. – The institution has a clear purpose, integrating livelihoods and agriculture education with theology. – Some graduates have returned to the school as teachers. – The institution has a strong ethnic identity, incorporating Lahu language, food (growing traditional Lahu rice varieties on the farm) and music. – The institution has a diversified range of partners who understand its vision. – The institution's donors do not have onerous reporting requirements. – Being registered as a foundation means the institution can directly accept donations – funds do not need to be channeled through the CCT or other institutions. – The institution is able to educate people from across many socioeconomic conditions. – Local farmer knowledge is incorporated into the center's agricultural emphases. – GoEd students learn alongside TLCC students. – The center is a good place for the TLCC constituency to convene. – The institution has a dedicated, determined group of students. – The center is self-sufficient in rice and pork. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The facilities might offer a Lahu museum to help preserve and promote Lahu culture. – With the inauguration of the ASEAN Economic Community in 2015, the open borders should facilitate the enrollment of Lahu students from Myanmar and Laos and enable the TLCC Bi-Vocational Center to become a regional center for Lahu churches. – The school should eventually include an English Bible study curriculum. – The institution should become more self-supporting. – TLCC should become the 20th district of the CCT and present a very holistic ministry model including efforts related to agriculture, Lahu culture and children's homes (for improved education opportunities, Bible training and English). – The school should meet demands by the students for more programming related to agriculture, community development, health and sanitation; employ more agricultural instructors to increase agricultural training at the center (especially organic agriculture); and increase the overall focus related to community development for improved community livelihoods and health.
Weaknesses (Present)	Threats (Future)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – A qualified agricultural teacher/manager for the farm is lacking. – The TLCC is too financially dependent on outside sources. – Skills and expertise related to ministry for youth and women are lacking. – There is a sense of having to meet too many expectations for the constituency and stakeholders. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Leadership transition – what happens after Rev. Marting is no longer in leadership? – Increasing urbanization around the property could overwhelm the institution. – Possible denominational problems. – Lack of adequate numbers of students or funding. – Becoming spread too thin because of so many stakeholders and their expectations. – If B.A. courses are to be offered, more qualified lecturers will be needed.

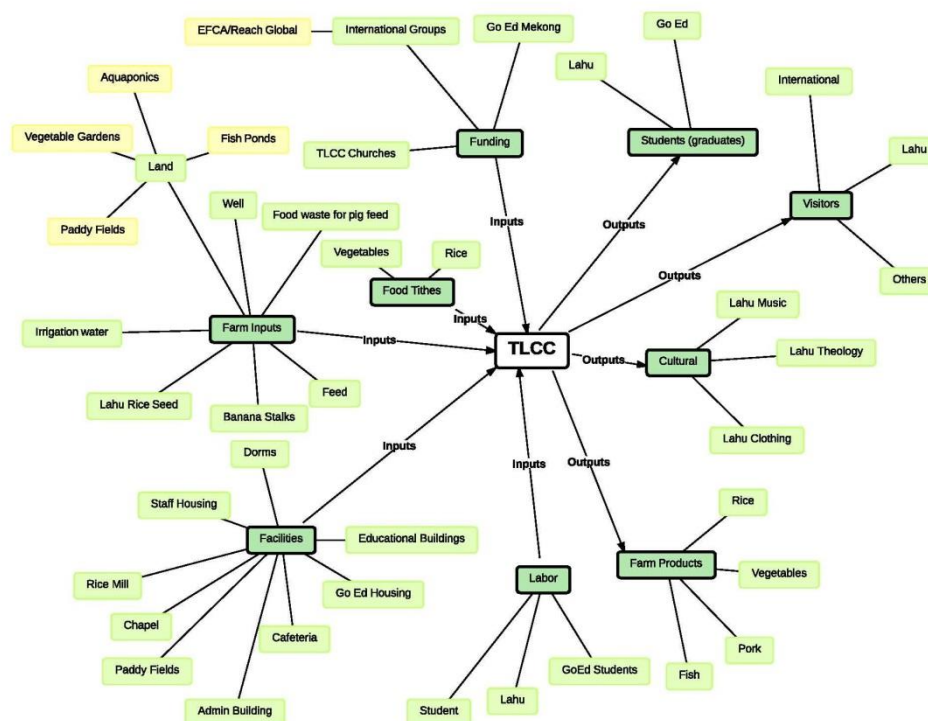


Figure 2. A sample of inputs and outputs of TLCC Bi-Vocational School in both center and outreach activities.

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