



# **REPORT**

**ON**

Learning exchange of women's indigenous people on  
artisanal handicraft and sustainable forest management

**on**

**21<sup>st</sup> March 2021**

**Suphanburi in Thailand and virtual in Lao PDR**

## 1. Project outline

**Title:** Learning exchange of women's indigenous people on artisanal handicraft and sustainable forest management

**Theme:** Indigenous women's economic empowerment through exposures to new products ideas and learning exchange for socially sustainable business initiative

**Goal:** To support the Pwo Karen women's weaving group in Huai Hin Dam village, Suphanburi province of Thailand in strengthening their livelihood base that is economically viable, culturally sensitive and environmentally sustainable

### **Specific objectives:**

- To follow up on and encourage the use of new knowledge among the indigenous women's group from Huai Hin Dam village after the visit to Luang Prabang;
- To strengthen the collaboration between TIFA and LIFA as the joint facilitator of these women beneficiaries across Thailand and Lao PDR.

**Project implementation:** 21 March 2021

### **Beneficiaries:**

Primary beneficiary: Pwo Karen women's weaving group of Huay Hin Dam village, Suphanburi province, Thailand

**Partner:** The Center for People and Forests (RECOFTC), Kasetsart University

**Sponsor:** IATSS Forum

**Project team:** The project team includes:

LIFA	TIFA	Position
Mr. Chanthanom Theangthong	Dr. Worrawan Asawakun	President
Mr. Sompathana Lakhaisy Mr. Thathsaphone Lerththavone	Ms. Ratchada Arpornsilp Mr. Hoonsadee Putangoon Mrs. Chantia Seedaket Craythorne Ms. Hathaiphath Terasarun Ms. Kanokkan Chaiyakan	Alumni members
Ms. Sisomephone Tipanya		IF secretariat in Laos

## 2. Project background

Inspired by the visit during the 9<sup>th</sup> IAM to Ock Pop Tok, TIFA has collaborated with LIFA to facilitate learning exchange of indigenous women's weaving group of Huai Hin Dam village, Suphanburi Thailand to visit and build capacities on fair trade and socially sustainable business initiative in Luang Prabang in 2019. This project therefore emphasizes the goals of women empowerment, nature-based organic production, and linkage of cultural traditions to social enterprise innovation.

Indigenous women's weaving group of Huai Hin Dam village is a loosely informal club formed initially by a small number of women leaders. In an effort to revitalize their traditional ways of producing Karen clothes, they reckon the impact is not in pieces of the product but the fabric of their identities which tightly knit to their natural environment. They encounter challenges in recollecting the customary knowledge and skills of using forest resources such as barks, leaves, wildflowers, etc. to give natural shades and color in a scientifically sustainable way that can be convincing to the Phu Toei National Park.

The women's weaving group has a shared vision to systematically improve its handicrafts supply chain and increase products' values through enhanced direct market access to conscious consumers. This 2020 project continues the support and follow-up on the use of new knowledge among the women's weaving group. However, due to travel restrictions imposed by COVID-19 protocol, the LIFA team was not able to come to Thailand and physically attend activities in Huai Hin Dam as initially planned. The presence of LIFA at the community was arranged virtually via zoom instead.

## 3. Project preparation

The project preparation entailed the following tasks and responsibilities:

Tasks	Duration
Discuss and finalize project ideas between TIFA-LIFA and external stakeholders (community members and partner)	Feb-Mar 2020
Arrange other logistics and communicate with alumni	Jan-Feb 2021
Finalize project plan and implementation	Mar 2021
Reporting and planning for next phase	Apr 2021

## 4. Agenda

Date	Time	Description
21.03.2021	9:00	Depart from Bangkok
	12:00	Arrival at Huai Hin Dam village and set up virtual preparation
	12:30	Community lunch and traditional performance by Karen youth

	14:00	Innovative weaving pattern competition
	15:00	Award ceremony and community conversation with LIFA
	16:00	Leave from Huai Hin Dam village to Bangkok

## 5. Activity and results

This year activity is a follow-up of learning from the visit of indigenous women’s representatives to Luang Prabang in 2019. Given COVID-19 precautions, the activity was organized in a way that reduced physical interactions to minimum. Therefore, the event focused on their new weaving techniques’ presentation and competition with virtual participation of LIFA via zoom.



LIFA committee and alumni members joined the event virtually.

TIFA was welcomed to the community with traditional dance performed by the youth group. Apparently, Huai Hin Dam products and village are recognized as OTOP Innovation by the Community Development Department under the Ministry of Interior. The 4 representatives of the women’s weaving group who attended the learning exchange in Luang Prabang were present but only 2 of them participated in the competition.



**Above:** Product display of Huai Hin Dam women’s weaving group recognized as OTOP Innovation village  
**Below:** The 5 contenders’ product preparation for the competition





Presentation to LIFA committee



Of all the 5 contenders, 3 would be awarded based on the adoption of new techniques which could be innovative patterns, colors or product design. This process can be helpful for the Huai Hin Dam weaving women to adapt more to changing market needs so that their products can generate sustainable income for the present and next generations.

Finally, the first award went to Mrs. Latdawan Panya, one of the participants to Luang Prabang in 2019. She adopted the use of inner layer textile to support and strengthen the structure of her weaved Karen side bag. This requires the skill to operate the sewing machine which is uncommon to them. The second award was granted to the daughter of Mrs. Suda Kongkae, another participant to Luang Prabang in 2019. She mentioned the art of new design and color dyeing techniques were co-created with her mother. Mrs. Hen Samlang was the third award receiver for her adaption of both modern and traditional patterns in the hand-woven scarf. She has taken up this idea from conversation with other women's members.

The decision of award was made jointly among TIFA and LIFA committees, together with an alumni participant from IIFA (Yuri Pratama Widiyana, batch 54<sup>th</sup>). It was a tough decision but we congratulated all contenders for their efforts. Huai Hin Dam women's weaving group cordially invites IF alumni to visit their village again when future opportunities arise.

## 6. Project budgeting

Item	Unit	TIFA Budget		
		Unit	USD	Thai Baht
<b>Transportation</b>				
Van rental (plus driver) from Bangkok to Suphanburi	day	1	77.00	2,300.00
COVID van disinfection and cleaning	lumpsum	1	23.00	700.00
Petrol	day	1	47.00	1,400.00
Expressway fee	day	1	4.00	120.00
<b>Meals</b>				
Lunch, including lunch in community			90.00	2,716.00
<b>Costs for activities at community</b>				
Contribution to cultural performance for youth group in Huai Hin Dam community in Suphanburi province	lumpsum	1	100.00	3,000.00
Textile pattern competition awards to Huai Hin Dam community	3 awards	3	200.00	6,000.00
Internet wifi package for zoom	lumpsum	1	7.00	200.00
Contribution to the construction of dyeing and weaving learning space	lumpsum	1	500.00	15,000.00
COVID gel alcohol and mask	lumpsum	1	9.00	270.00
<b>Total spending</b>			<b>1,057.00</b>	<b>31,706.00</b>
<b>IF funding (2019 budget and 2018 outstanding balance)</b>			2,302.00	
<b>TIFA Outstanding balance to be carried over for 2020-21</b>			<b>1,245.00</b>	
Exchange rate varies.				

## 7. Conclusion (key lessons learned and possible outlook)

- The project provided opportunity for TIFA and LIFA to collaborate in a joint effort and involve the external stakeholders and partners.
- The learning outcomes for community participants from Luang Prabang visit are:
  - 1) some new technical knowledge and methods on dyeing and weaving;
  - 2) product design adjustment and the use of story to describe the products;
  - 3) sharing experiences and ideas with other members.
- Future project development was discussed among TIFA-LIFA project team on how the collaboration can be finalized.
  - 1) In light of COVID conditions, it may be a challenge to bring community members across the border. We therefore need to change our approach.
  - 2) Planning for next collaborative projects, TIFA and LIFA consider meeting by the border of Vientiane of Lao PDR and Nong Khai of Thailand. Both sides will identify the activities and community sites that are relevant to the IF's themes and visions.



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