



Field Report

ESSI Thailand RTC Summer 2005 News (Rural Training Center)

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Community-based Environmental Education for Families and Sustainable Neighborhoods

The People and Faces in REEEPP

The Rural Environmental Education Enhancement Pilot Program (REEEPP) would not be possible without the direct involvement of people. ESSI uses a community-based approach. The process begins with an idea, a dream, or a vision. The next step is to find motivated people to develop and implement a plan to realize the dream.

REEEPP began with Saifon Lee visiting her home village in northern Thailand. The plan was to lay the foundation for an ESSI volunteer team to conduct Sustainable Agriculture training and to arrange for home stays with local villagers. During her visit, she met some of her former elementary school teachers. The memories of her childhood and family life in Ban Na Fa were vivid. Her rise from this little village to her university education and subsequent job as a Chief Administrator of Subdistrict Administrative Office in the Royal Thai Ministry of Interior, Community Development Department had its roots at Na Fa Elementary School. She wanted to give something back to her teachers, school, and community.

Her involvement and training with ESSI and as a National Wildlife Federation Habitat Steward resulted in her creation of a "Green School" project at Na Fa Elementary School. She met with the faculty and explained her idea to them and got an enthusiastic response.

A flurry of e-mails back to ESSI in Los Angeles followed. During these discussions, the "Green School" project expanded. A Habitat project and the NASA CERES S'COOL were added. These were presented to the Na Fa Elementary faculty and were enthusiastically embraced. The result was an almost instantaneous birth of REEEPP. The timing could not have been better. Thailand was undergoing a major education reform.

Safion met with Mr. Jamnian Suttisan, the Ban Na Fa Head Villager to discuss the ideas of ESSI program. A general agreement was reached that opened the door for the volunteers to come in summer 2005. Several village families eagerly signed up willing to be host families for the ESSI volunteers.

ESSI then began the long process of preparing an overall summer 2005 trip plan. This involved:

- curricular development for the 3 Na Fa Elementary School projects (Green School, Habitat, and S'COOL);
- group trip planning;
- volunteer recruiting;

- adapting ESSI sustainable practices training to local conditions in the Ban Na Fa area;
- ESSI orientation of Na Fa Elementary School faculty;
- recruiting ESSI-RTC Thailand volunteer staff.

Ban Na Fa

An important aspect of the ESSI summer 2005 effort was arranging for homestays in Ban Na Fa. There are no hotels or guest houses in this small farming village of 1000 people. Home stays are a practical solution to the housing issue. It also reinforces the Cultural Diversity aspect of ESSI programs for the ESSI volunteers (seeing common rural Thai village life), provides local families and students with an opportunity to speak English, and creating a local Thai village “Teach Back” team.

Students studying English in rural areas have little or no chance to use English. As a result, they tend to place little importance on the subject. REEEPP creates an opportunity to stimulate student interest in English studies in school. The home stay part of the ESSI project gives them a chance to use English at home as well. The participating host families actively participate by getting the ESSI Sustainable Agriculture training (which is correlated to the Green School and Habitat activities in school). So the families (parents and students) are learning environmental stewardship. The families will be involved in a “Teach Back” activity at Na Fa Elementary School.

The Head Villager helped coordinate the logistics of selecting and inspecting the host family homes. A village committee was formed to assist in the host family selection process. This was wholly consistent with the ESSI focus on families and communities.



Mr. Jamnian Suttisan, Ban Na Fa Head Villager

Ban Na Fa Elementary School

Na Fa Elementary School is a critical link to the future. The entire faculty and staff are dedicated to the success of REEEPP. Without their motivation and hard work, ESSI would not be able to reach the youth so effectively. Everyone at the school is actively involved in at least one of the REEEPP project: Green School, Habitat, or NASA CERES S'COOL.

The ESSI summer 2005 program creates an opportunity for closer interaction between the community and the school revolving around environmental education. Once again, the ESSI approach using families and community-based education is being applied.

The Na Fa Elementary School faculty and staff are all seasoned educators. There is little or no “young blood” in their ranks. The recent education reforms placed

an enormous challenge to them. They embraced REEEPP as a means to successfully acquire new lessons and methods to implement the new education reforms.

		<p>Na Fa Elementary School Ban Na Fa, Jompra, Thawangpha City Nan Province, Thailand 19.07586° N, 100.8637° E, ~257 m amsl GMT +7 hrs</p>			
					
<p>Mr. "Sydney" Chuchart Promwangkuwa Director Overall REEEPP Coordinator</p>	<p>Mr. "Wit" Wittaya Mahanil Asst Director NASA S'COOL Project Leader</p>	<p>Mrs. "Anna" Karuna Takaew Teacher Grade 6 NASA S,COOL Team Leader</p>	<p>Mr. "Sara" Chalerm Intana Teacher Grade 5 Green School Project Leader Habitat Team Leader</p>	<p>Mr. "Wat" Tanawat Supha Teacher Grade 4 NASA S'COOL Team Leader</p>	
					
<p>Mrs. "Donna" Duangnapha Karunaduangkit Teacher Grade 3 Habitat Project Leader</p>	<p>Mrs. "Mary" Matinee Lhuawkawee Teacher Grade 2 Habitat Team Leader</p>	<p>Mrs. "Cindy" Thanomsri Nanchai Teacher Grade 1 Green School Team Leader</p>	<p>Mrs. "Sonia" Sengwan Tawong Teacher K2 Green School Team Leader</p>	<p>Mrs. "Emily" Mookda Tayot Teacher K1 Green School Team Leader</p>	
<p>Community-based environmental education for families and sustainable neighborhoods</p>  <p>Direct action for tangible results</p>	<p>Na Fa Elementary School is the site of the ESSI- RTC Thailand REEEPP (Rural Environmental Education Enhancement Pilot Program) consisting of Green School, Habitat, and the NASA CERES S'COOL projects. REEEPP is not funded by any government or outside organization.</p>				
		<p>Mrs. Umpin Supha Cook Green School and Habitat Project Support</p>	<p>Mrs. Supharp Petchkhong Cook Green School and Habitat Project Support</p>	<p>Mr. Somchai Suyata Custodian Overall REEEPP Support</p>	

The ESSI-RTC Thailand

When Greg Lee first launched a sustainable agriculture training project as a volunteer effort in summer 1999, he also had a vision to create a Rural Training Center. Education in rural areas of many countries is an “iffy” affair. The need for agricultural workers puts pressure on many rural families to get more hands into the fields. Schooling, though important, doesn’t solve the more immediate need for labor. As a result, many rural Thai villagers get a limited education. Estimates range from about 4th grade (for the older generation) to about 6th or 8th grade for most of the current generation. The levels are improving over time. But the need for sustainable agricultural methods and practices exceeds the availability of teachers.

The Ban Na Fa situation made it ripe to consider launching the ESSI-RTC Thailand. Launching REEEPP with Na Fa Elementary School lays a foundation to introduce environmental awareness and environmental stewardship to the youth. This connects directly with the original plan to conduct sustainable agricultural training in Ban Na Fa. Everything is consistent with the ESSI Y.E.S. (Youth, Environment, Sustainability) concepts.

Discussions with the Head Villager revealed that water pollution due to agricultural chemicals is a major local problem. While no hard scientific data is available, the local villagers are aware of the problem. Fish caught in local rivers and streams have cuts and sores on them causing people to not eat the fish. They notice the number (both in variety and quantity) of fish have declined over the years. They are afraid to drink water from the rivers and streams. Today, all of the villagers carry bottled water to the fields to drink. Even when going high in the mountains or deep into the forest, they always carry bottled drinking water.

Saifon was able to recruit a core team of dedicated ESSI-RTC Thailand volunteers. They are responsible for coordinating and supporting the ESSI American volunteers. This ranges from the basic logistics (transportation, meals, housing) in the village to facilitating the movement of the volunteers to and from Bangkok (the main port of entry / exit). After the volunteers leave, this team will be the driving force to continue the work started this summer.

As is the situation in Los Angeles, the ESSI-RTC Thailand staff is all volunteers. No one receives a salary. Self-selection based on personal motivation and enthusiasm and a keen interest to learn and share are primary requisites for joining the staff. Levels of formal education vary from little to graduate college degrees. Everyone shares their knowledge and skills freely. This helps people “bootstrap” themselves and improve.

A key philosophy of ESSI revolves around financial economy and creativity. The critical solution to a problem is not money. Education, understanding, and application of knowledge and skills to effectively and efficiently utilize available resources and materials are the critical solution. Many ESSI trainees and volunteers are amazed at the learning process involved when they make the tools they learn to use in the field applications for composting, soil erosion control, and non-toxic pest controls. In many instances, these are direct applications of the Green School principles of “reduce, re-use, recycle.” ESSI is remarkably consistent in its message of integrating knowledge, skills, and practice.

	<p align="center">Earth Systems Science, Inc. Rural Training Center – Thailand 84 Moo 2, Ban Na Fa, Jompra, Thawangpha City Nan Province, Thailand 55410 Phone: (66) 054 705404 19.07467° N, 100.86634° E, ~254m amsl, GMT +7 Hrs</p>			
<p align="center">Community-based Environmental Education for Families and Sustainable Neighborhoods</p>				
<p>The ESSI-RTC-Thailand is in its infancy. It is an all volunteer effort to provide a model for small rural family farms to regain self-sufficiency, reaffirm family relations, and restore small rural farm communities. Program participants are self-selected and promise to teach back to others.</p>				
				
<p>Mrs. Umporn Suttisan General Advisor</p>	<p>Mrs. Aoiprai Promwangkha Operations</p>	<p>Mrs. Sunisa Spiller Administration</p>	<p>Mr. Wanchai Promwangkha Transportation</p>	
				
<p align="center"><i>Future site of the ESSI RTC-Thailand demonstration farm and training site for sustainable agriculture.</i></p>				
				
<p>Mr. Mong Rajseow Environmental</p>	<p>Mrs. Srinuan Rajseow Steward / Technician</p>	<p>Mr. Tu Rajseow Trainees</p>	<p>Mr. Lao Rajseow Mascot</p>	

The ESSI RTC-Thailand environmental steward trainees will be working to create demonstration facilities for composting, rain water catchments, alternate energy, and

soil erosion control at a local farm. Other ESSI RTC-Thailand research projects and activities are planned for the same site.

The long range goal is to conduct more formal group training at the RTC. This would go a long way to replicating the REEEPP and RTC model to other communities. Even without a proven track record, individuals from Cambodia and Cameroon have expressed keen interest in the ESSI-RTC-Thailand model. These individuals have begun a basic ESSI orientation and training program in Los Angeles.

			
<i>Photo Roster</i>			
<h1>Thailand Summer 2005 Volunteers</h1>			
A 501 (c)(3) non-profit educational organization		Po Box 8042, Van Nuys, CA 91409-8042 www.earthsystemsscience.org	Phone: (818) 343-2363 E-mail: earthsystemsscience@yahoo.com
Community-based Environmental Education for Families and Sustainable Neighborhoods			
<i>Rural Environmental Education Enhancement Pilot Project Volunteers</i>			
	REEEPP began in summer 2004 initiating Green School, Habitat, and the NASA CERES S'COOL projects in Na Fa Elementary School. The Summer 2005 program continues that effort and added a home stay component and sustainable agriculture methods training to REEEPP. The overall ESSI goal is to develop an innovative model of community-based environmental education to restore self-sufficiency to small rural family farms. REEEPP is a volunteer program and receives no government funding. It uses a people-to-people approach combined with education to empower residents to solve problems using local resources effectively.		
L-1A			L-1B
Gregory Lee			Saifon Lee
			Thailand – RTC (Rural Training Center) 84 Moo 2 Ban Na Fa, Jompra, Thawangpha City, Nan Province 55410 Phone 66- 054-705404 Earth Systems Science, Inc. PO Box 8042 Van Nuys, CA 91409-8042 Phone 1-818-343-2363
L-2A	L-2B	L-2C	
Erika Rodriguez	Andrew Arboleda	Robert Rodriguez	
			
R-1A	R-1B	R-2A	R-2B
Connie Beck Crusha	Elaine Davis	Tuyen La	Dominic Varona

BAN NA FA HOME STAY SUMMER 2005 HOSTS

The Charin Suttisan Family (054) 705444; (01) 7062742 hosting Connie Beck



Charin



Lit



Chamnan



Klomkrew



Noi



Members: Mr. Charin Suttisan, Lit (wife), Chamnan (oldest son), Klomkrew (wife of second son), Noi (a relative).

The Jamnian Suttisan Family (054) 705388; (09) 5611165 hosting Elaine Davis



Jamnian



Puan



New

Members: Mr. Jamnian Suttisan, (an Na Fa Head Villager), Puan (wife), New (daughter)



19.08721 N, 100.86601 E, 266m amsl

The Niwast Suttisan Family (054) 705432; (06) 1988979 hosting Erika Rodriguez and Andrew Arboleda



Niwast



Lan



Gao



Gib

Members: Mr. Niwast Suttisan, Lan (wife), Gao, Gib (daughters)



19.08721 N, 100.86601 E, 266m amsl

The Somkid Suttisan Family (09) 2617457; (06) 1849822 hosting Tuyen La



Somkid



Mun



Jeuw

Members: Mr. Somkid Suttisan, Mun (wife), Jeuw (daughter)



19.07599 N, 100.86473 E, 314m amsl

The Kam Oupta Family (09) 2647407 hosting Robert Rodriguez



Pai



Kam



Pang



Lek



Gi



Art



Earn



19.07694 N, 100.86757 E, 269m amsl

Members: Grandpa, Mr. Kam, Pang (wife), Lek (son), Gi (Lek's wife), Art and Earn (children of Lek and Gi).

The Tah Suttisan Family (054) 705403 hosting Dominic Varona



Tah



Kom



Tonfon

Members: Mr. Tah Suttisan, Kom(wife), Tonfon (grand daughter)



4 VOLUNTEERS TO STAY BEHIND

This summer, 4 ESSI volunteers from Los Angeles (Erika Rodriguez, Andy Arboleda, Robert Rodriguez, and Dominic Varona) have chosen to stay for the rest of the summer to help launch the ESSI RTC demonstration units at a local farm. The decision of these volunteers gives some insight to the ESSI operating principles of mutual respect / mutual benefit, self-selection, and cultural diversity.

MUTUAL RESPECT / MUTUAL BENEFIT: Although these volunteers are college students, ESSI fully accepts them as valuable volunteers worthy of the investment of time and energy to train them as community-based environmental education teachers. The volunteers benefit by getting valuable training, practical job skills and work experience while traveling and learning about different cultures. As volunteers, they are not treated as “employees.” ESSI regards them more as “family” members. The volunteers also exchange their time and labor as payment for their training. Both ESSI and the volunteers benefit from this arrangement.

SELF-SELECTION: A volunteer has “self-selected” to participate. This takes personal motivation. This is one of the most critical ingredients for success. ESSI takes this ingredient and builds on it by providing academic and technical training, guidance in personal and career development, and provides opportunities to get practical job experience. All of these factors further enhance individual performance and success. These are some of the reasons why ESSI volunteers tend to stick with the organization.

CULTURAL DIVERSITY: Look at the ranks of the ESSI volunteers and the other participants in ESSI programs, projects, and activities, and you see the world in the faces of people from many cultures and countries. In a world full of harshness, ESSI strives to soften the rough edges by helping to educate and train more “good, decent human beings.” In addition to the basic characteristics of honesty and integrity, ESSI promotes caring and sharing for others across cultural boundaries through mutual respect / mutual benefit.