

From Hunting and Gathering to Farming Society: King Mongkut University of
Technology Thonburi and its Role in Supporting the Resettlement of the Mlabri
community

Norachat Wongwandee¹, Nipon Jeenkawkam¹, Worrasit Tantinipankul²

1 Royal Project Foundation and King's Recommended Project Supporting Center, King Mongkut's University of
Technology Thonburi

2 School of Architecture and Design, King Mongkut's University of Technology Thonburi

Abstract

The Mlabri were historically a nomadic ethnic group who lived in the forests of Nan and Phrae Provinces of Thailand. Commonly known in Thai as “Phee Thong Lueang,” the Mlabri used to relocate their settlement when the leaves of their roofs turned yellow. As a result of a hundred years of deforestation in northern Thailand and the establishment of national forests in the 1960s, the Mlabri tribes were prohibited from continuing their nomadic hunting and gathering practices. They were forced out of the forest, heavily exploited as poor farming laborers, and dehumanized by other tribes and lowland people. In 2008, because of the limited land, a group of young Mlabri relocated from Baan Huay Hom in Phrae Province, to the area set up by Phufah Phatthana Center under the Royal Patronage of Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, located in Bor Kluea District, Nan Province. King Mongkut University of Technology Thonburi (KMUTT) was asked to work with the Mlabri group to improve their quality of life. This research paper focuses on how KMUTT's faculties, students, and researchers have gradually engaged with the Mlabri to substitute their hunting and gathering practices by introducing modern cultivation with more sustainable methods. Through this project, the university has sought to create and foster: 1) a partnership with community; 2) a symbiotic relationship between human and nature; and 3) a community of life-long learning. The aim of the project is to support the Mlabri in developing their self-sufficient living conditions in a modern society while also still preserving their pride in their indigenous identities and cultural heritage.

Introduction: History of Mlabri at Phufah Phatthana Center

Historically the Mlabri were a nomadic people living in the rich natural resource area of the forests in the northern region of Thailand, bordering Chaiburi Province in the Lao PDR. They were occasionally in contact with other hilltribes resettled in the adjacent area during the 1910s through 1980s. The timber logging concession started in northern Thailand at the beginning of 1900s and changed the life of nomadic tribes

in the forest. For instance, the Hmong became laborers for logging companies and continued to practice swidden cultivation on the land around deteriorated forests after logging companies moved out. From this period onwards, the Mlabri became laborers for the Hmong, harvesting in exchange for rice, steel and clothes (Ikeya and Nakai, 2009). As the forest area reduced significantly, Mlabri began to move out of the forest and were in contact with Hmong who settled down in the area of Phrae Province. They built small temporary shelters in the vicinity of a Hmong village at Huay Hom as it was convenient to get hired as labor on Hmong farms. Research shows that one Hmong family usually employed 3-4 Mlabri laborers and each Mlabri person could have worked with 3-4 different Hmong families (Ikeya and Nakai, 2009). From the 1960s to 1970s, the Thai government attempted to settle the nomadic hilltribe populations around the forests for the purpose of national security in a Cold War political context (Walker, 1992).

From 1973 to 1984, Hmong, Lua, and Khamu tribes were the first groups to receive government allocated land along the border of national forests for settling permanently. From 1985 to 1986, government agencies began to map the roaming patterns of the Mlabri tribe in northern Thailand. The Department of Public Welfare and Forestry Department collaborated to start a housing and settlement project for the Mlabri. Firstly, state agencies conducted fieldwork, learned the Mlabri language and provided medical service. In the following years, Mlabri were also persuaded to learn how to cultivate land, raise livestock and undertake some household industries (ironsmith, basketry, and pottery). The state also hired Mlabri as laborers for government development projects in the area and built a road around the forest area where the Mlabri were roaming. In 1988, the Mlabri were also moved to a government village which provided land allocations and public facilities. By 1993, private and public organizations introduced tourism to several hilltribe villages. Moreover, the New Tribes Mission, an international evangelical group, were also involved with the government for developing the Mlabri settlement, buying land and helping to found the village at Baan Boonyuen Village, Phrae. However, a small group of Mlabri families planned to leave the settlement on the grounds that they desired to be more independent from the missionary group. This Mlabri group believed that they could live, travel and work by themselves but the missionary disagreed and felt that they were not ready to be fully independent as they were occasionally exploited by other hilltribe groups. In 1997, a preservation and development center for Mlabri was established at Baan Luang District, Nan Province. However, the establishment was opposed by local communities in the area. Another group of Mlabri in Nan forest also moved to Baan Huay Yuak, near a Hmong village which practiced cash crop cultivation in 1999. Fifteen rai of land were

donated to form the new Mlabri community. However, similar a pattern happened that they also were exploited and fell in debt under the control of the Hmong at Baan Huay Yuak. In 2007, Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn paid a visit to the Mlabri community at Huay Yuak. In 2008, Mlabri from Huay Hom Phrae relocated to Phu Fah Phattana Center under the Royal Patronage of Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn, in Bor Kluae Nan Province. The Royal Initiative Project started providing aid for Mlabri in 2009 and in 2012, King Mongkut's University of Technology at Thonburi (KMUTT) was asked to support the Mlabri group for developing skills in agricultural practice. Researchers from KMUTT started their involvement with the community in April of 2012, and have continued working until today. Synchronously, the Department of Forestry and Department of National Parks established a Mlabri village at Baan Huay Loo and entrusted them with 2000 rai of land.

The earlier research on Mlabri showed interest in only describing cultural, behavioral, tradition characteristic and history of Mlabri (Benezik, 1938; Boeles, 1963). This pioneer research had objectives to expand knowledge and understanding of Hunting and Gathering tribe in general terms. Surin (1982) studied about Mlabri but as a contemporary measure of the comparison between the past and present of hunting and gathering tribes through the analysis of archeological artifacts to understand the human behaviors in pre-historic period. Some researches about Mlabri lately focus on the consequences of modern development that generated impacts on Hunting and Gathering tribes in present time as a part of social and economic system (Sakkarin, 2005; Sakkarin, 2012; Shu, 2015). Most of them viewed Mlabri from the perspectives of outsiders aiming at creating ethnic data for academic purposes but lacks involvement in community.

Research Objectives

This paper investigates the working process and collaboration between KMUTT researchers and the Mlabri community at Phufah Phatthana Center over a three-year period (April 2013-April 2016) as part of the master plan for improving living conditions of the Mlabri community. KMUTT researchers helped to develop agriculture practices and adjust their everyday life activities to cope with modern Thai society while also aiming to preserve some of their unique cultural practices. The three areas of focus of this research are as follows:

- 1) Analyzing how KMUTT researchers collaborated with the Mlabri community to transform everyday life patterns and worldviews associated with hunting and gathering to be more suitable with modern agricultural practice.

2) Analyzing factors that affected the collaborative work between the KMUTT team and the Mlabri community at Phufah Phatthana Center.

3) Comparing the collaborative work with Mlabri to the Community of Lifelong Learning Model.

Research Framework and methodology

This research reflects the experience of KMUTT researchers who have collaborated with around 40 members of the Mlabri community, teachers of the Non-Formal Education Center and Phufah Phatthana Center from April 2013 to April 2016. The researchers conducted their study using in-depth interviews, observation and discussion in focus groups. For working with the Mlabri, the research team used a collaborative approach with the community by employing Participatory Action Research (PAR) and Soft System Analysis (SSA) from concept of Life-long Learning Community (Khanchit, 2011).

Participatory Action Research is a research practice and methodology that strengthens the role of the community since all members are expected to participate at all levels and dimensions of work from data collecting, factors analyzing, problem-solving, implementing and evaluating results together. Community members are the ones who brainstorm for solutions, implement them, analyze results and synthesize the work together, while the researchers act as coaches or facilitators. This method enables researchers to see the real problems in the community. The solution to problems will be generated from local wisdom, academic knowledge which is suitable, and available technology in the area. The participatory action research (PAR) is not different from other scientific researches in principle, but PAR objectives focus on solving problems in development. Moreover, these types of research continue with the contribution of the community and colleagues in terms of both the research process and longterm benefits from the research (Kamol 1997:8).

Life-long Learning Community Development is a development framework that focuses on facilitating community dialog to develop processes of critical thinking and analysis, in order to solve problems and improve their social and environmental conditions (Khanchit, 2011). Soft System Analysis (SSA) is a technical method used in the Life-long Learning Community Development concept. SSA is employed. In this method, researchers must integrate themselves to be a part of community and plan future work together with the community. SSA derives from the idea that development in the community is often stimulated by external forces outside community without consideration for the perspectives and opinions of community members. Although development projects might fulfill their stated objectives, the benefits are often only

short-term. Therefore, projects for the community must be developed based on the real needs of community. Outsiders must trust community thoughts and opinions (Thanaphan, 1997). Three core principles of SSA are as follows: 1) Every human being has dignity and identity and a right to determine the direction of his or her way of life. 2) Humans can learn, change perspectives and develop capabilities for higher social responsibility. 3) Everyone has power for innovation, leadership and creativity hidden inside and if rightly encouraged, one can develop and use this power.

SSA has a few key approaches which constitute codes of conduct. Firstly, the method to discover the real underlying problems is by talking, asking questions and learning about the concerns of the community by being part of the community. The situation can be discussed and views exchanged with mutual respect. The second step is that recommendations from the discussions on how to proceed must be reached collectively. Thirdly, community members, researchers and state agencies need to debate and discuss these recommendations and list them in order of priority. Fourth, all members discuss to determine the direction to proceed to the proposed scenario. Finally, everyone needs to develop a detailed plan, implement the plan and evaluate the result.

Royal Initiated Project and KMUTT's framework

Understanding Mlabri's World

In the original context of hunting and gathering society, Mlabri hunted wild animals and collected forest products. Moreover, Mlabri had beliefs which embedded their lives with nature. The tribal rules, everyday life and settlement patterns all were a reflection of their respect for nature. Spirits of the forest or "Phee" and tigers were also important symbols in Mlabri's relationship with nature. Their beliefs influenced the Mlabri way of building shelters and migrating pattern.

The Mlabri relocated their settlement constantly when their roof leaves turned yellow, as they believed that forest spirits would send tigers to attack and destroy their families if they settled permanently. Since they relocated regularly, Mlabri did not live in large groups as required to practice farming. Mlabri hunted and gathered food on a day to day basis, without knowledge of food preservation or planning for the future, since the tropical forest was abundant with wild food resources in the past. They usually built temporary shelters in the terrain midway between the ridge of mountain ranges and river valleys to avoid the roaming pattern of tigers that walked along the ridgeline and hunted prey in the river basin. Mlabri stayed in their shelters

at dark since tigers roamed at night. Mlabri would have to evacuate promptly when they found any evidences of tiger such as footprints, carcass of preys or if some members got attacked. Mlabri also paid great respect to the spirits of the forest as they were obligated to inform forest spirits before starting a journey. Mlabri local wisdom for collecting forest products reflects sustainable living with nature. For instance, Mlabri collect honey without destroying the entire beehive. The honeycomb is left intact and larvae can grow and reproduce honey again. Mlabri also gather wild tuber vegetables without uprooting the entire plant so they can sprout and be collected again.

Mlabri are generally peaceful. They mostly avoided conflict with others by walking away instead of confrontation or, in worst case scenarios, running away to hide in the forest. The Mlabri communal system is uniquely strong. Traditionally, Mlabri social structure was a single family living in proximity to other relatives as a community in the same area in order to watch out for any danger. The community would take turns to take care of the houses and look after children. From their folktales, Mlabri could leave their children and household with neighbors in the village at the time of hunting for food in the forest and they shared products they collected afterward. The Mlabri had strong bonds with their neighbors and relatives would say that all Mlabri in Thailand and other parts of world know one another. Lowland peoples and other tribes referred to them with the pejorative name of “Phii Tong Lueang” or “spirit of yellow leaves,” which offended the Mlabri’s feelings since the Mlabri also feared spirits or “phii” in the forest. The term “Phii Tong Lueang” also suggests that they are not human beings. Mlabri said that “Phii” means the dead., Other tribes also referred to them with pejorative names.

Working with the Mlabri in Transition

There are currently 20 households of 78 Mlabri living at the area of Phufah Phatthana Center as a new community. They relocated from Baan Huay Hom, Rong Kwang District in Phrae Province to Phufah Phatthana Center in 2008. They abandoned the ancestral practice of cyclical relocation of their houses in the forest to establish a permanent settlement. Some of them began to practice farming on the land Phufah Phatthana Center allotted for them and some also worked as paid laborers on local farmland.

The team of researchers from KMUTT have been collaborating for 3 years with 40 members of the Mlabri community primarily in assisting them for developing skills for working in modern society and improving their quality of life while preserving their indigenous practices with the natural forest. The Mlabri still continue to practice collecting wild honey, weaving ivy bags and gathering forest products with limited forest resources, since other local communities also gathered forest products in the area.

The social structure of the community was analyzed and categorized into 3 groups according to their ability to communicate with researchers in Thai. The first was the group comprised of those who could communicate in Thai and the local dialect of Northern Thai. This group was around 20 percent of the Mlabri community, and they were mostly leaders in the community and the village committee. The second group was comprised of those who partly understand Thai and the Lanna dialect. They were the majority, or about 60 percent of the community. The third group was about 20 percent, who were unable to communicate in Thai or northern Thai. At this stage, researchers met with a small group of leaders in the community and the village committee who could speak Thai and the northern Thai dialect, in order to introduce agricultural techniques and household resource management skills, such as food security reserves. The village committee and leaders understood and agreed to work with the assistance of researchers. Some who did not understand or were unsure walked away.

Researchers adopted the working principle of “reach-understand-develop” to work with the Mlabri. From 2008 to 2009, KMUTT researchers spent time with the community learning Mlabri language, and they sought to understand their problems and participate in village activities. For those who walked away, the KMUTT team sought out their relatives for consultation so they gradually gained their trust. To build more trust with some of Mlabri, the KMUTT team always came to work together with them on the vegetable farm. If they asked for help, KMUTT team provided 24-hour on-call support so that Mlabri could ask for emergency assistance. KMUTT team and Phufah Phatthana Center worked specially with Public Health Department of Bor Kluea District to send doctors and nurses to the community immediately in need of medical care. With tireless support, the KMUTT team gained trust from Mlabri so that most of Mlabri referred to KMUTT researchers as “Ar Thoeng” in their language which means “one of us.” More members of the community including those who walked away at the first stage gradually followed the village committee to practice and participate in the subsequent meetings with KMUTT. Finally, KMUTT researchers could organize the community meeting where the majority of members participated.

Researchers respected the opinion of the community and recognized the freedom of members to follow or or disagree with KMUTT's suggestion and assistance. The content for working with Mlabri included exercises for thinking about the cultivation process, observing, recording data and calculating for household expenditures and revenue. Moreover, researchers also tried to encourage the community members to think about the future and social security of their settlement but, for some members, they were unaccustomed to making plans for the future. The land allocated by Phufah Phatthana Center was limited and could accommodate more than 100-120 residents. Not only was adaptation to work in modern society but also planning for future growth was important for the Mlabri to learn. As of today, Mlabri population growth is increasing at the rate of 4.5 percent per year. The community could reach the limit in the next ten years--therefore Mlabri community has to not only increase their ability to produce enough food but also to consider family planning.

From 78 members of the Mlabri community, there are 33 men and 45 women. Thirty three of them are children and teenagers (age of 0-14) while the working age group (15-59) comprises 41 people. In terms of education, two-thirds of 30 members of the young working group finished at least primary school and one third completed secondary education and one-third that did not have education at all. As of 2016, most of the Mlabri's children attend school provided by a special unit of the Highland Educational Center of the Non-Formal Education Department.

For the annual household accounting record, the community received a royal subsidy from Phufah Phatthana Center for more than half of their revenue (475,200 baht out of 856,323 baht). The revenue for the sale of wild honey was 200,000 baht. Most of the expenditures were for food and half of the food expense was for meat products while about one quarter was for rice. Mlabri community members also are in debt for purchasing food and building materials at the early stage of resettlement since they no longer can collect materials from forest such as "Khor" palm leaves for roofing and bamboo for building.

The village committee agreed that they have to develop their ability to cultivate rice and raise livestock for sustaining their daily consumption and reducing expenses in order to survive without royal subsidy. They also wish to work and earn more from agriculture, tourism, services and handicrafts. Management of forest resources is also a task for them to regulate all members to share the work to process forest products such as bottling wild honey and sharing the food from hunting.

Since the Mlabri group are already unique for their strong bonds with neighbors and relatives in the community, participatory methods are suitable for their social

structure and help motivate them to complete tasks. KMUTT researchers organized a meeting atmosphere that supported participation among the working groups in the Mlabri community and thus generated a working process where researchers could collaborate with community members at all levels. First, the Mlabri community learned new knowledge, interpreted data and worked together. They shared labor, knowledge and profits together at second level. They also brainstormed for new work, calculated cost-benefit and investigated errors. Finally, they were able to repeat successes and correct problems.

Five Mlabri men now can grow 6000 kilograms of rice on the 16-rai farmland and could possibly expand to another 10-rai to sustain the rice demand of the community at 10,000 kilograms. They also learnt skill for operating a tractor machine and managing rice fields. Sixteen women can operate a vegetable farm including maintaining a work schedule and packaging for sale. Three of them can calculate cost-benefit and prepare seedlings. They can raise 2000 fish in total of 200 kilogram and can increase to 3000 fish and produce 1000 kilograms in the following year of 2016. The group also can produce 138 kilograms of strawberry from 2500 plants. Community members collectively worked together to raise 50 local chickens selling 12 of them to others and maintained 50 plants in a fruit orchard. All of these working projects were documented and calculated for expense and benefit.

Research Outcome

Format of Participatory Action Research KMUTT conducted with Mlabri Community

Principles for participatory work KMUTT researchers employed are as follows;

1. Freedom of expression. In the meeting, all members of the community can express their opinions and all opinions are equally important for moving forward to improve community.
2. Consideration of hardship. The team focused on assisting those who might be facing more serious problems and need help as first priority. For instance, the family with less labor force or with more children would get more support and share of income.
3. Participation practice. The collaborative team of KMUTT and Mlabri conducted a monthly meeting after finishing the project open to reflecting on errors and solving problems together.
4. Value creation. In early stages of work, the researchers asked for Mlabri's knowledge and previous experience in a similar project. If they used to work in similar

tasks, researchers asked how they had done it. The advantage of old experience and new methods should be discussed among the group and researchers.

5. Survey and practice. Researchers assisted community members with collecting data and analyzing it, such as household accounts for expenditure and revenue, community database and data of community fresh produce.

6. Creating new knowledge. The community and researchers can synthesize old experiences and new knowledge from what they learned in theory and practice in order to generate better quality of work.

The working processes that KMUTT researchers undertook were as follows:

1. Community background information. The researcher conducted fieldwork to learn community background information such as population, culture, education, health and life patterns, using interviews and literature reviews in order to understand how Mlabri live, think, work, and practice.

2. Building relationships. The researchers established trust among community members by sharing some thoughts, engaging in conversation, participating in community rituals and agriculture work, understanding their perspective of life, and building a similar standpoint to motivate their collaboration.

3. Survey and crosschecking. The team engaged in conversation with community leaders to crosscheck information such as household accounts of expenditures and revenue, daily expenditures, and analysis of activities.

4. Action and reflection. The researchers implemented follow up activities and discussion with the community to review information, analyze performance and revise the working process after launching project.

5. Building knowledge. The researcher generated new knowledge from the action and reflection that can be used for the next phase of development.

6. Change and transition. The Mlabri group developed their ability to collect data during the working period and learned to operate environmental friendly technology for agriculture. Mlabri were able to revise and develop their work by learning from textbooks, recommendations and their past experiences with KMUTT researchers.

Researcher characteristics

1. Upholding principles. The researchers were able to provide enough knowledge and expertise to analyze situations, apply principles and justify responses during the working period they conducted activities with Mlabri community.

2. Creativity. The researchers were able to remember stories or social contexts of the Mlabri community and created various suitable methodologies for collaborating with Mlabri.

3. Understanding. The researchers can understand their Mlabri co-workers' perceptions and feelings toward work. The team adjusted the tasks and short-term goals depend upon situation in their families and community.

4. Reality. The researchers worked together with the community in the field and listened to their conversations. Therefore, the team was able to understand their everyday life situation and the origin of problems in the working process with community.

5. Ambition. The researchers were ambitious to achieve their end goal. They also passed this ambition to their co-workers and the Mlabri community to accomplish their tasks for the improvement of their living conditions with self-reliance on food, secured income and stable environment.

6. Resilience. The researchers were not discouraged by mistakes or misunderstanding but used these as lessons to develop better work with the Mlabri. For instance, at an early stage of work, some Mlabri who did not understand or agree with the researchers walked away, but researchers sought them out and tirelessly supported them over a long period. For instance, the researchers continue to talk to the wives or husbands of those who walked away. As a result, they gradually returned to the meeting and collaborated with researchers. The number of participants grows from only 20 senior and leaders of the group in 2013 to 40 at the end of 2015.

Within a participatory framework, the Mlabri community created a working process with regulations for checking members' conditions, strengthening members' skills and improving the public benefit. The village committee regularly investigated for good quality work. The production process was recorded and analyzed together members of the community. For instance, all households in the community participated in gardening every Monday in order receive their portion of vegetables. The Mlabri community was able to develop skills and train each other to accomplish their tasks. Community members who already succeeded helped other members to work and develop similar working skills. For the public benefit, the community organized a cleaning day every Saturday so that members could work together for the community orchard, chicken coop and garden.

Factors affecting KMUTT collaborative work with Mlabri

Internal factors within the community were as follows:

1. Healthy family relationships. Mlabri have very strong bonds with extended family and the entire village is related. Traditionally, Mlabri respect the elderly and express generosity to their neighbors and share food together.

2. Strong collective leadership. The village committee has a strong ambition to develop the villages into self-sufficient communities with skills in agriculture, service and craft. The committee and members learned and practiced together to improve their skills for better quality of work.

3. Awareness and consciousness of limited resources. The Mlabri community used to run away into the deep forest when they encountered problems and disagreed with other tribes. However, with permanent settlement at the present location and strict laws on utilization of national forest, Mlabri have to employ their knowledge in working efficiently together. They must realize that they rely on limited natural resources.

4. Public benefit. In a working group for agricultural production, members must share responsibilities and work together. The result is greater benefits for all, such as cheaper and more abundant food to share with other members in the community.

External factors for the success of development are from state agencies and non-governmental organization as follows:

1. The office of H.R.H. Princess Maha Chakri Sirindhorn's Projects supported infrastructure and coordinated with other state agencies to provide the support for the settlement of Mlabri community at Phufah Phatthana Center.

2. Department of National Parks also employed the Mlabri community for reforestation, seeding and citrus gardening projects which improved skills in agricultural work for them.

3. The Center for Education of the Highland Community at Phufah Phatthana Center, Office of Non-Formal and Informal Education, provided flexible, fundamental education for the young generation of Mlabri. Moreover, the office also assisted the KMUTT research team in translation and communication with the Mlabri community.

4. Office of Public Health also provided special health care for Mlabri in case of emergency and knowledge for healthy environment.

5. Private businesses such as local shops and resorts also supported Mlabri by purchasing wild honey and vegetables from community members, so Mlabri earned enough revenue to continue their farms.

Comparing KMUTT research on Mlabri collaborative work with the Lifelong Learning Community Concept

The work that the KMUTT research team had conducted with the Mlabri is compatible with the Lifelong Learning Community Concept as researchers adopted the Soft System Analysis method to develop the capacity of the community. The Soft System Analysis method can be implemented in the community in 8 steps as follows:

1. Identifying the problem. Researchers collected fundamental data with the Mlabri by living with families and working alongside Mlabri in the community. Therefore, they learned about problems through engagement and conversations with Mlabri.

2. Understanding problems together with the community. Researchers brought data to the meetings with the community to facilitate in-depth discussion about the problems with the community.

3. Creating goals together. Community members and researchers looked at the core of their problems, such as the large expense of buying food. They then set the goal to substitute this expenditure by cultivating rice, vegetable and raising livestock.

4. Maintaining direction to work toward goals. Researchers and the Mlabri community regularly discussed and evaluated the project's progress and surveyed limited resources.

5. Agreement to determine objectives. Community members and researchers organized village meetings to facilitate working and learning together.

6. Planning to work together. The community agreed to separate into small groups and to accomplish goals accordingly.

7. Implementing the plan. The community implemented their work following the plan and monitored their progress weekly and monthly.

8. Evaluating results. Researchers and the community regularly held meetings with the heads of project activities to evaluate the outcome and consequences of work.

By working with the community according to the SSA method, the KMUTT research team were able to establish a clear workplan with the full support of the Mlabri community. The community was able to contribute savings from their revenue to establish a village fund with a savings account of 50,000 baht. Community members also learned to make environmentally friendly food products such as rice, strawberries, and vegetables and earned income to continue to invest in small businesses. Some also were trained to work with tourism businesses and handicrafts. Moreover, the establishment of a village committee helped organize more fruitful activities and suitable education in the community.

Conclusion

The working process of the KMUTT team involved capacity-building for transitioning a hunting and gathering community to agricultural production. All in all, the project was a success due to the following factors:

1. The working process between KMUTT researchers and the Mlabri community emphasized participatory action research with a longterm objective of community self-reliance and sustainability.
2. Internally, the community had strong bonds among family and relatives within the community, as well as resilient group leaders with an awareness and consciousness of the need to support activities for collective benefit. Externally, state agencies, NGOs and networks of private businesses both in and outside Nan province also provided support for the Mlabri to strengthen their capacity for self-reliance.
3. When comparing KMUTT's work with the Lifelong Learning Community Development concept and its procedures, researchers found that KMUTT had embraced eight steps of SSA, which indicate the possibility that the Mlabri community at Phufah Phatthana Center could achieve the goal of being a self-reliable and sustainable community. From this study, the KMUTT team's working process helped to build capacity for the Mlabri to transition from hunting and gathering to successful agricultural practice. The Mlabri community at Phufah Phatthana Center could soon be economically independent if the members continue to work in this direction and it could be model for Mlabri communities in other areas of Nan and Phrae provinces.

References:

- Bernatzik, Hugo Adolf. (2005) *The Spirits of the Yellow Leaves*. Bangkok: White Lotus Press (originally published in 1938 as ,Die Geister der gelben Blätter'), pp. 1-178.
- Boeles, J.J. (1963) "Second Expedition to the Mlabri of North Thailand (Khon Pa)" in *Journal of the Siam Society*. Vol. LI part 2, pp.133 – 160.
- Kamol Sudprasert. (2007) *Kan Wichai Patibatkan Baab mee Suan Ruam khong Phupatibatkan (Research for Participation Workshop)*. Bangkok: Office of Human Resource Development Project, Ministry of Education.
- Kazunobu, Ikeya and Shinsuke Nakai. (2009) "Historical and Contemporary Relations between Mlabri and Hmong in Northern Thailand in Interactions between Hunter-Gatherers and Farmers: from Prehistory to Present" in *SENRI ETHNOLOGICAL STUDIES* 73: 247-261.
- Khanchit Phutthakosa. (2011) *Manual for Developing Life-long Learning Community: Completed Version*. Bangkok: National Research Council of Thailand.
- Nimonjiya, Shu. (2015) "From Interacting to Accessing: On Relationship between the Mlabri and the Forest" in *Social Science Research Journal (วารสารวิจัยสังคม)*. 38, No. 1 (Jan-June.2015), 137-170.
- Sakkarind Na Nan. (2005) "Mlabri kub kan chuang ching Sapphayakorn nai Baribot khong Kan Phatthana doi Rat, MA Thesis, Human and Environmental Management, Graduate School, Chiang Mai University.
- Sakkarind Na Nan. (2012) *Mlabri bon Sen Thang kan Phatthana*. Chiang Mai : Center for ethnography and Development, Faculty of Sociology, Chiang Mai University. 95-119.
- Surin Phukhachon. (1988) *Phon Wikro Klum Sangkhom la ha sat: Chon Klum noi phao Phee Tong Lueang nai Prathet Thai*. Bangkok: Fine Art Department.
- Thanaphan Thani. (1997) *Kan Sueksa Chumchon*. Khonkaen: Department of Social Development, Faculty of Social Science, Khonkaen University.

13TH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THAI STUDIES
GLOBALIZED THAILAND? CONNECTIVITY, CONFLICT AND CONUNDRUMS OF THAI STUDIES
15-18 JULY 2017, CHIANG MAI, THAILAND