

Towards Organic Asia (TOA)
Action-research Workshop Report

Metta Foundation's Centre for Development Workers
Bago, Myanmar

18-19 November, 2013

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Acronyms

AAN	Alternative Agriculture Network
AMC	Agriculture Machinery Centre
BH	Bhutan
CA	Cambodia
CEDAC	Center for Study and Development in Agriculture
FAOM	International Federation of Organic Agriculture Movements
GSMI	Gaia for Sustainable Management Institute
KMF	Kalayana Mitta Foundation
La	Laos
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MM	Myanmar
MPF	Multi Purpose Farm
NGO	Non Governmental Organization
NOP	National Organic Programme
PADETC	Participatory Development Training Centre
PME	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation
SPERI	Social Policy Ecology Research Institute
SRI	System of Rice Intensification
SSQ	Structured Survey Questionnaires
SWOT	Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities And Threats
TH	Thailand
TOA	Towards Organic Asia
VN	Vietnam
YOF	Young Organic Farmer

(Draft) Action-research Workshop Report

1. Introduction

The Action-research Workshop was held from 18-19 November, 2013 as part of the Toward Organic Asia (TOA) Partner Meeting at Metta Foundation's Centre for Development Workers, Bago, Myanmar.

At the meeting venue, Metta Foundation exhibited photos showing their works on the ground, farmers' field schools, publications, brochures and equipment, etc.

In the morning of 18 November, the workshop started with self-introduction by the participants and introduction of the TOA background, TOA long-term goal and current activities by Thanapol Kheolamai, TOA coordinator. It was followed by a short presentation on Action-research by Hans van Willenswaard. He provided notion of Action-research as one of the four key pillars of TOA programme to advance understanding of agroecology/organic farming in Mekong region and Bhutan in comparison with industrial agribusiness. Then, TOA Action-research coordinator, Dusita Krawanchid, presented her understanding of the action research concept and shared experience of small action- research tryout that was conducted in Bhutan during the TOA team visit to Bhutan from 24 October-2 November, 2013.

2. Country Presentations on their Action-research Experience

TOA partners presented and shared their knowledge and experience in action-research in their particular countries in alphabetic order starting from Bhutan and ending by Vietnam.

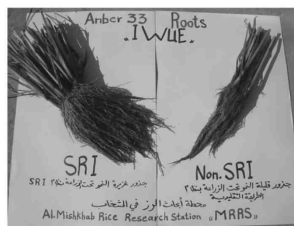
Bhutan: Kesang Tshomo, National Organic Programme (NOP) of the Ministry of Agriculture, presented developments in Bhutan. Her organization is a government agency, different from most TOA partners, but NOP works with a diversity of stakeholders and NOP coordinates the activities of various departments within the government system. Since 2004 organic agriculture policies started to be designed and a Task Force was set up. In Bhutan 80% of the surface is covered by forests and only 2.9% is arable land. Bhutan imports food from India, and exports products in high season. Diets are changing for example from buckwheat to a preference for rice. Bhutan intends to be 100% organic within 5 years. Chemicals are only available through the Plant Protection Department and need thorough analysis of the problem first. For example herbicides are permitted to a certain extent because of shortage of labour. We have to find organic solutions for the real problems, for example pests in potatoes. The organic policy is embedded in the National Development Plan, so beyond short term policy changes. The new government asked to make an assessment of the policies. Can we produce enough food if we go 100% organic? It needs a marketing plan based on farm bio-diversity. The *country assessment* will have to take into account the economic, social as well as environmental impacts.

Cambodia: Sam Vitou from Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC) presented the case of Improving the Livelihoods of Cambodian Rice Farmers through System of Rice Intensification (SRI) Techniques. He explained that CEDAC has conducted the research on SRI continuously. SRI was first introduced to farmers since 2000 and CEDAC started promoting organic SRI techniques in their projects in 2004 in Kampong Chhnang and Takeo provinces to improve organic rice production. From data and information collected in SRI project

over years, CEDAC revealed that organic farming could contribute to higher rice yields comparing with other two means of rice cultivation in project sites including conventional SRI practices and traditional rice cultivation. Farmers could increase rice yields and their incomes over years while soil conditions are improved through enrichment with organic matter. Eventually, CEDAC has launched cooperative rice mills to help farmer groups to strengthen their negotiation power with traders and seek for more market windows.

System of Rice Intensification

- CEDAC introduced SRI in 2000
 - Promoting organic SRI since 2004
 - Launched Cooperative Rice Mills in 2012
- Developed in early 1980s in Madagascar
- Four main principles:
 - Early, quick and healthy plant establishment
 - Reduced plant density
 - Improved soil conditions through enrichment with organic matter
 - Reduced and controlled water application



4. Income Breakdown by Group

Organic SRI group					
Classified by year	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Quantity of rice selling/HH (kg)	1,335	1,450	1,661	2,074	2,339
Amount of money from rice selling/HH (Riels)	1,506,567	1,777,147	2,291,065	2,977,043	3,589,118
Conventional SRI group					
Income from paddy/rice	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Quantity of rice selling/HH (kg)	767	899	1,015	1,249	1,198
Amount of money from rice selling/HH (Riels)	834,490	974,483	1,157,361	1,540,573	1,410,333
Traditional group					
Income from paddy/rice	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Quantity of rice selling/HH (kg)	572	458	437	532	519
Amount of money from rice selling/HH (Riels)	338,800	423,579	411,900	581,404	530,183

Some slides from CEDAC presentation

Laos: Thoungsay from Participatory Development Training Centre (PADETC) shared that they have worked with farmers to provide hand-on knowledge and skills on organic agriculture to farmers in Sekong Province. PADETC noted that farmers in the Lao PDR work so hard but are still poor which PADETC assumed that it might be the case that they used too much chemical. Their returns could not cover the cost of chemical inputs. PADETC conducted the action-research to test their assumptions and discussed the alternative farming practices with farmers.

Myanmar: The action-research presentation was the result of exchanges between four Myanmar NGOs participating in the Action-research Workshop including Empower, Kalayana Mitta Foundation (KMF), Metta Development Foundation and Gaia for Sustainable Management Institute (GSMI). Dr. Thida from EMPOWER and Miu Aung from Kalayana Mitta Foundation representing the group. Myanmar shared that the action research is extensively conducted by these four organizations to further understand and develop their work with local communities in Myanmar. From their hand-on experience, Myanmar team shared that doing action research in organic farming field could raise awareness among stakeholders especially farmers, on the complexity of factors determining the life of farmers. Action research could help them develop appropriate technology for the farmers in their project which could be scaled up to country level. Their research interests covered farmer field school, agro-ecosystem analysis, water usage in organic farming, reduction of chemicals and health impacts.

Experiences on Action Research

Foundation

- Awareness Raising
- Reducing Chemical use
- Appropriate Technology

Methodology

- Training
- Exposure trip
- Participatory Action Research (PAR)

Action Research

- Farmer Field School (FFS)
- Agro Ecosystem analysis
- Further > Water / Health / Reducing Chemical used



Farmer innovation



SRI - Drumseeder



Farmer's documentation and analysis



Some slides from Myanmar team presentation

Thailand: Supa Yaimuang from Alternative Agriculture Network (AAN) shared her experience that she works with farmer groups to develop sustainable agricultural techniques based on their local ecology and indigenous knowledge. AAN also works with Thai governmental bodies to connect the farmers' movement with government policies and to provide opportunities for farmers to access sustainable agriculture related information. AAN and other organizations in Thailand including the green market network have been working closely with Thai Health Promotion Foundation in increasing consumer concerns and promoting consumer-producer relationship to sustain organic market system.

Vietnam: Kien To Dang from Social Policy Ecology Research Institute (SPERI) presented action research for development in agro-ecology in Mekong region, a case study on Ethno-botany knowledge of indigenous communities in the Mekong region. SPERI aimed to record local (indigenous) practices/methods in using forest herbal species and preserve endangered species. SPERI negotiates with the government to allocate forestland to households and communities to contribute to conservation of endangered species. Some of many findings unveiled that the use of a species in cultural context, especially by traditional healer, could lead to the conservation of that species. The more the species were vulnerable, the more likely they were promoted for conservation both in its natural habitat (in-situ) and off-site conservation (ex-situ). Kien presented also SPERI's book entitled "Ethnobotany Book: An Approach to Biological Human Ecology Theory" and distributed the books to partners from all countries as well as TOA Secretariat.

Findings (3)

- 21 most commonly mentioned species or the species with the greatest diversity of uses.
- Each of the species had over 24 different uses and attracted on average 10.5 different conservation practices.

Table 3. 21 SPECIES WITH THE MOST USES

Latin Name	Uses	Conservation
<i>Stemodia integrifolia</i> (L.) DC., Convolvaceae	194	30
<i>Dischisma reticulata</i> Lam., Dischismaceae	114	12
<i>Homalium roxburghii</i> (Lam.) Schlecht., Burseraceae	93	18
<i>Albizia odorata</i> (Thunb.) G. Don, Mimosaceae	44	8
<i>Andropogon squarrosus</i> (L.) Presl., Poaceae	44	6
<i>Boerhaavia diffusa</i> (L.) Link., Borehaaviaceae	44	8
<i>Centropogon neriifolius</i> (L.) Presl., Rubiaceae	42	6
<i>Albizia odorata</i>	39	6
<i>Monardella odoratissima</i> (Lam.) Spreng., Convolvaceae	39	18
<i>Pinus keteleughii</i> (Mey.) Kuntz, Pinaceae	37	8
<i>Indigofera tinctoria</i> (L.) Pers., Leguminosae	33	9
<i>Boerhaavia diffusa</i> (L.) Link., Borehaaviaceae	32	8
<i>Salweenia odorata</i> (Lam.) Spreng., Convolvaceae	32	4
<i>Albizia odorata</i> (L.) Presl., Mimosaceae	30	6
<i>Monardella odoratissima</i> (L.) Spreng., Convolvaceae	30	6
<i>Indigofera tinctoria</i> (L.) Pers., Leguminosae	30	6

Plan of action

- More follow up research is needed to make this case a robust and useful collection for (1) Ethnic minority people, and (2) conservation of forest species, herbal plants and edible vegetables (totally can fall under the agro-ecology development framework)
- Replication of the research process and methodology conducted in HEPA is already now repeated in Hanh Dich commune, Nghe An province (pass on skills, search for new forms of knowledge, contribute to the current collection of ethno-botany knowledge in Vietnam – Lao).

Some slides from SPERI presentation

3. Country Discussions and Presentations on TOA Action-research

Partners from each country discussed among themselves their action-research projects based on their interest and current activities being implemented and presented as follows:

Bhutan

Aim: New Knowledge

Research framework: Cultural adaptability

Model: Appropriate equipments for small scale farmers-policy

Objective	Approach	Methodology	Action/time	Collaborators	Indicators	M&E
► To assess the social/economic/cultural/f easibility of new technology	► Introduction, demonstration and adaptation of technology	► Introduce equipment for weeding, sowing, etc. To farmer groups to study benefits in time saving, efficiency, cost saving of labor	► Select 2 farmer groups to try equipment and be trained for use ► Adjust/modify to local need ► Compare with traditional method of weeding/sowing ► Compile results ► Report findings ► Share conclusions and recommendations ► Time ► One season (2014)	► AMC, NOP, Farmer groups	► Time saving/efficiency ► cost saving on labor ► degree of adaptability	► PME

Cambodia

Research framework: organic System of Rice Intensification (SRI); integrated farming/multi

purpose farm

Objective	Method/Approach	Action/time	Indicators	M&E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ To assess the understanding of stakeholders perception on organic agriculture with more emphasis on policy change 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Literature review ▶ Desk research ▶ review on available data ▶ Primary data and action research ▶ Identify organic SRI farmers & MPF farmers (1 year) ▶ Data recording/analysis ▶ Case study/success story ▶ Dialogue/interview with stakeholders 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Literature review: Jan 2014 ▶ Stakeholder dialogue: Jan 2014-Jan 2015 ▶ Identify farmers: Jan 2014 ▶ Data recording: Jan-Dec 2014 ▶ Data analysis/reporting: Mar 2015 ▶ Case-study: Jan 2015 ▶ Dissemination of results with stakeholders: Apr 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Economic: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Net income from organic SRI vs MPF ▶ Frequency/expense of buying goods ▶ Health: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Frequency of Clinic visit of household members ▶ Expense on medicine ▶ Environment: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Observation/interview on trend (of sound environment)/feeling of farmers/stakeholders ▶ Social/cultural: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ degree of cooperation in community (evidence-based) among farmers ▶ Political/policy: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Degree of agreement ▶ behavioral change 	▶

Laos

Research Theme: Community Organic Farming

Objective	Approach/Methodology	Action/time M&E
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ To raise awareness of communities in organic farming ▶ To support farmer in transition to organic farming 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ SWOT analysis ▶ Identifying the best practice models ▶ Scaling up the best practice models 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ 1 month: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Data collection ▶ 1 month: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Design of working process ▶ Development of action plan ▶ 1 year: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Implementation ▶ MonitoringEvaluation

Objective	Approach/Methodology	Action/time M&E
	<p>The diagram illustrates the Laos Action-research Plan as a continuous cycle. It begins with 'Design of working process' (1 month), followed by 'Development of action plan' (1 month), 'Implementation' (1 month), 'Monitoring' (1 year), 'Evaluation', 'Analysis', 'Redesign of working process' (1 month), and 'Data collection' (1 month), which then loops back to 'Design of working process'. The central text is 'Laos Action-research Plan'.</p>	<p>► Analysis</p> <p>► 1 month:</p> <p>► Redesign of working process</p>

Myanmar

Research Plan

Action	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
1. Planning meeting	*											
2. Network building	*											
3. Multi-stakeholder workshop for Structured Survey Questionnaires (SSQ) development		*										
4. SSQ Field test and finalize		*	*									
5. Field – Region1				*	*	*						
Region 2				*	*	*						
Region 3				*	*	*						
6. Analysis-Interpretation							*					
7. Multi-stakeholder debriefing workshop								*				
8. Launching of publication								*	*			
9. Comparison on organic vs chemical					*	*	*	*	*	*	*	
10. Process M&E												
11. Reporting												*

Thailand

Research framework: Country assessment and consumer-farmer relationship model

Objective	Action-research area	Methodology	Activity/time	Collaboration	Criteria/Indicator	M&E
1. To assess country status and dynamics between agroecology and agribusiness 2. To explore models for sustainability of food and agriculture 3. To campaign for multi-stakeholders participation in implementing models	1. Country assessment on ▶ Chemical agriculture vs organic agriculture ▶ Small scale farmers vs (multi-national) agribusiness	▶ Literature review (NGOs, government and academic research) ▶ Interview of multi-stakeholders: individual/group (policy makers, producers, traders, consumers) ▶ Farming system supply chain analysis (rice, vegetables, livestock and fruits) ▶ Exchange forums with multi-stakeholders ▶ Data analysis	▶ Definition of terms ▶ Literature review ▶ Chemical vs organic ▶ Small scale sustainable farming ▶ Agricultural policy ▶ advocacy network ▶ ▶ <i>Time: 1 year (2014)</i>	▶ Action-research coordinator ▶ Sustainable Agriculture Foundation ▶ Maejo University ▶ Thai TOA partners ▶ YOF	▶ Wellbeing impact (politics/justice, education, social/communities, cultures/spiritual, environment/ecology, economic, health)	▶ Every four months
	2. Consumer-farmer relationship	▶ Social networking (media and two-way communication) ▶ Active workshop ▶ Exchange forum ▶ Summary	▶ Interviews ▶ Group interviews ▶ Analysis of farming systems and supply chain ▶ ▶ <i>Time: 1 year (2014)</i>	▶ Suan Nguen Mee Ma coordinator ▶ Mr. Nakorn Limpakubthavorn ▶ YOF		

Vietnam

Action research area: Towards Strengthening young farmers

Concerned issues	Approach	Action/time	Output indicators
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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ access to education (alternative education) ▶ young indigenous (rights, maintain with farm/culture) ▶ loss of local wisdom, practices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Farmer field school (10 students/18 weeks) ▶ Individual (small scale) farm host/farm stay (1-2 youths/2-3 weeks-1 month) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Dec 2013-Mar 2014: preparation procedures for farm stay setup; recruit new students ▶ Mar 2014-Aug 2014: FFS courses for students (organic farm specific skills/techniques) ▶ Sep 2014-Nov 2014: evaluation (exam), reporting ▶ Dec 2014: issuance of certificates, mark release best example, further expression of interest, meetings, forum for summary 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ Wellbeing impact ▶ education: 7-10 certificates issued/knowledge of specific eco-farm skills ▶ Local wisdom practice: 1 publication ▶ Farm produce (some) for home consumption ▶ One advertisement for farm stay
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4. Overview of TOA Action-research

Research Topic	BH	CA	LA	MM	TH	VN
<u>Country-based action-research</u>						
Country assessment	/	(/)		/	/	
Policy proposal		/				
<u>Issue-based</u>						
Promoting organic farming to the community			/			
Farmer-consumer relationship					/	
Consumer awareness					/	
Capacity building for young farmer						/
Appropriate technology for small scale farmer	/					

5. Way forward

The meeting agreed to have one representative from each country to take part in TOA action-research working group which will coordinate with partners and researchers in their own countries.

1. Bhutan: Kesang Tshomo
2. Cambodia: Kaem Makarady
3. Laos: Kolaka Bouanedaheuang
4. Myanmar: Gum Sha
5. Thailand and TOA: Thanapol Kheolamai
6. Vietnam: Vin Loc Van

Preparing from the information received from the partners during the two-day workshop, TOA Secretariat will develop draft action-research guideline for TOA action-research implementation and circulate among partners for inputs and comments before finalizing it. The TOA Secretariat will provide technical support for partners in doing action-research such as a country assessment

workshop and facilitate exchange of experience and research findings among themselves. TOA Secretariat will also synthesize the information earned from all countries as a knowledge package before October 2014 to which the IFOAM Conference will take place in Turkey and some partners will represent the TOA and present their action research in the said conference. Whereas, some of the action-research are planned to be done at the middle of 2015.

The TOA Steering Committee Meeting was also held at the end of the TOA Partner Workshop where the TOA Steering Committee Members agreed to have Action-research Workshop again in Thailand probably from 3-5 July 2014 when partners can update their action research implementation and share their lessons learned. A steering committee plans to develop a joint Action-research project for the Mekong region and Bhutan.

6. Participant list

No.	Name	Organization	Country
1	Ms. Kesang Tshomo	National Organic Programme	Bhutan
2	Mr. Sam Vitou	Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC)	Cambodia
3	Mr. Phoukham Douangchanhome	Participatory Development Training Center (PADETC)	Laos
4	Mr. Thongsay Saynahuck	Participatory Development Training Center (PADETC)	Laos
5	Ms. Thida Win Ko Ko	Empower	Myanmar
6	Mr. Saw Nay Tha Gay	Gaia Sustainable Management Institute (GSMI)	Myanmar
7	Mr. Thet nai	Gaia Sustainable Management Institute (GSMI)	Myanmar
8	Mr. Aung Moe Hein	Kalayana Mittra Foundation	Myanmar
9	Ms. Narumon Paiboonsittikun	Kalayana Mittra Foundation/Spirit in Education Movement	Myanmar
10	Mr. Myo Aung	Kalayana Mittra Foundation/YOF	Myanmar
11	Mr. Gum Sha	Metta Foundation	Myanmar
12	Mr. Kin Myaung Latt	Metta Foundation	Myanmar
13	Mr. Wai Zin Aung	Metta Foundation	Myanmar
14	Ms. Angging Aban	Asia-Pacific Network for Food Sovereignty (APNFS)	Philippines
15	Ms. Supa Yaimuang	Alternative Agriculture Network (AAN)	Thailand
16	Mr. Nakorn Limpakubtathavorn	Urban Garden Center/Thai Green Market Network	Thailand
17	Ms. Wallapa van Willenswaard	Suan Nguen Mee Ma social enterprise / Thai Green Market Network	Thailand
18	Mr. Johannes van Willenswaard	School for Wellbeing Studies and Research	Thailand
19	Ms. Dusita Krawanchid	School for Wellbeing Studies and Research	Thailand
20	Mr. Thanapol Kheolamai	School for Wellbeing Studies and Research/ Towards Organic Asia/ YOF	Thailand

21	Mr. Chainat Jitwatna	Mekong Youth Alliance for Organic Agriculture	Thailand
22	Ms. Dang To Kien	Social Policy Ecology Research Institute (SPERI)	Vietnam
23	Mr. Viengphet Pan Oudom	Social Policy Ecology Research Institute (SPERI)/Kalayana Mittra Foundation	Vietnam/ Myanmar