

Interview with Mr Boonta Kantakew



Pa Kha village is located along Phahonyothin Road in Kun Tan district of Chiang Rai province. It is close to the Ing River, and is quite low-lying, with the village centre, including village hall, health station, temple and rice bank barn being located on slightly higher ground. It currently comprises 126 households, with a total population of 571. Of these, there are 139 elderly people, and 38 People with Disability – two of these are bed-bound. Irrigated rice and corn are the main crops, and livestock raising for market is also important. Fish catch from the Ing River has also been a major source of livelihood.

Interview with Mr Boonta Kantakew, aged 74

Mr Boonta, aged 74, said he was born and raised in Pa Kha, and is still farming his own land here, growing both rice and corn. He also fishes. He has 20 rai (3.2ha) of irrigated rice land and 60 rai (9.6) for corn, which he grows in the dry season. He also pastures 25 head of cattle.

Mr Boonta said that floods have come quite unexpectedly in recent years and are doing a great deal of damage. Floods used to be predictable, he said, usually coming in September. Now, they come earlier and can completely destroy crops. In last year's flood, there was THB 300,000 (\$AUD 15,000) worth of damage done.

As for prevention and mitigation, he said

“There's nothing that can be done to prevent the floods”.

After last year's floods, he said that he'd received the standard government provision of THB 9,000 (\$AUD 430) of compensation per household to support repair of damaged houses and to replace agricultural implements that had been lost.

Talking about his experience of evacuation during the floods he said the displacement lasted for about one month, though people could go back by boat to check on their houses and belongings. Livestock had all been brought to higher ground before the floods rose, in accordance with the village plan which had been developed in collaboration with MFU. When the floods reached their greatest height, they completely surrounded the high ground in the village, which is where people and livestock had been evacuated to.

As for his expectations for the future, Mr Boonta said there might not be floods like that every year, but they certainly could happen. At least when the source of the floods is in Phayao province, i.e. upstream along the Ing River, they can get early warning via the app, which the village community now makes full use of. This had been developed earlier by the government's Office of National Water Resources, but not systematically used. Part of the training provided by the project was on how to effectively use the app for early warning, and now communities along the Ing river basin collaborate to share information. The project also helped the village to organise and plan for disaster management. One important part of this was the PA system, which had been provided by the government, but not systematically used before. The system was complemented by advice on evacuation procedures and response after the flood had hit. This enabled the village leadership to get timely warnings and transmit them to the whole village population, and coordinate evacuation and relief efforts.