

**Pak Ing Tai - Mr Manop Maneerat Village
Head**



Pak Ing Tai stories - 25th May 2025

Pak Ing Tai is a small village of around 50 households at the confluence of the Ing and Mekong rivers. It is unusual in that it has very little irrigated rice land – the inhabitants have for a long time depended on the Ing and the Mekong rivers for much of their livelihood, and more recently, off-farm income has become important to the village economy. Pak Ing Tai was particularly hard hit by the floods in 2024, and the community is also very concerned about the impacts on land and water levels of the current government's works to reinforce the banks of the Ing river against erosion.

Several members of the community met in the village hall to talk about the background of the village, challenges facing them, the impacts of climate change, and how they had been able to respond and adapt, including their engagement with the SCR project.

Mr Manop Maneerat, the Village Head: He's not old enough to remember personally the start of the village, but older people here said that they moved here from Chiang Mai and Luang Prabang decades ago. He himself moved here from Udon Thani (North-East Thailand) about 16 years ago, he said. He farms corn (on contract), grows cucumbers and other vegetables, on rented land.

Because of the small size of the community, with about 50 families in total, labour supply is limited. People do some fishing and raise livestock – poultry especially – to eat and sell. The biggest earners are fishing and cattle raising. Employment in the tourist industry, e.g. in nearby resorts, is also now significant, he said.

Corn is planted in May, harvested in August/September. People here grow two types of corn, Mr Manop said, one for consumption, and one for commercial animal fodder. Some people do this on contract – the company provides the seed and other inputs and collects the harvested corn. Most of the families on the contract system are also able to grow some other crops for themselves on land that they rent. Only about 20% of the families in the village own any land of their own, and some of them can grow corn on a more independent basis, buying the seed themselves and selling on the market, rather than being tied into a contract – it's a much better deal for the growers, he said.

Mr Manop Maneerat said that major changes in the village and the surrounding environment had been most noticeable since about 2012.

When he first came here 16 years ago, there was obvious abundance of natural resources of many kinds. Since then, a lot of forest has been cleared, and the river level has been altered because of new infrastructure in the region. Rainfall and river levels have become unpredictable. Fishing has always been one of the major livelihoods of the community, but now some fish species have disappeared altogether from the river, and much of the forest cover is gone.

Climate change has had direct effects, he said. For people who grow corn, warmer temperatures mean that there are new pests affecting the crop. He mentioned one particular type of earthworm that has become prevalent. Farmers here now have to use chemicals to control the different pests, which he said they never had to do before.

Mr Manop Maneerat said that they'd been well prepared for the major flood in 2024, as for quite a while before that, they had been collaborating with MFU, and so they had full preparations in place. This included:

- Awareness raising on disaster preparedness for the community members

- Development of an evacuation plan for people at risk
- Assignment of roles and responsibilities among community members
- Identification of most vulnerable/most urgent needs, especially People with Disability and the elderly.

Also, he said, they benefited from new knowledge introduced through the SCR project. In particular, it had been particularly valuable learning how to effectively use the smartphone apps for the monitoring and communication of river water levels. The surveillance system was set up, with different community members allocated to do the monitoring. This has proved to be useful to predict flooding from the Mekong and Ing rivers, as information is passed along from communities along the rivers. Unfortunately, he pointed out, the app system doesn't work in the same way for flash floods, as these are much more local and rapid in onset.

As they had clear advance warning of the flood, they organised an evacuation three full days in advance of the flood waters reaching the village. Mr Manop Maneerat and others in the meeting said that the details they received from upstream communities through the app were combined with local fishers' observations of the river levels – the fishers have become very acute in their observations, due to long experience. Although it wasn't certain that the village would actually be flooded, they decided to evacuate pre-emptively. People moved into the school and other higher ground locations in the village. Some of the elderly people had relatives in Pak Ing village, he noted, which is on higher ground, and so they were able to walk there themselves. People had to stay in the evacuation locations for up to five days before they could return to their homes.