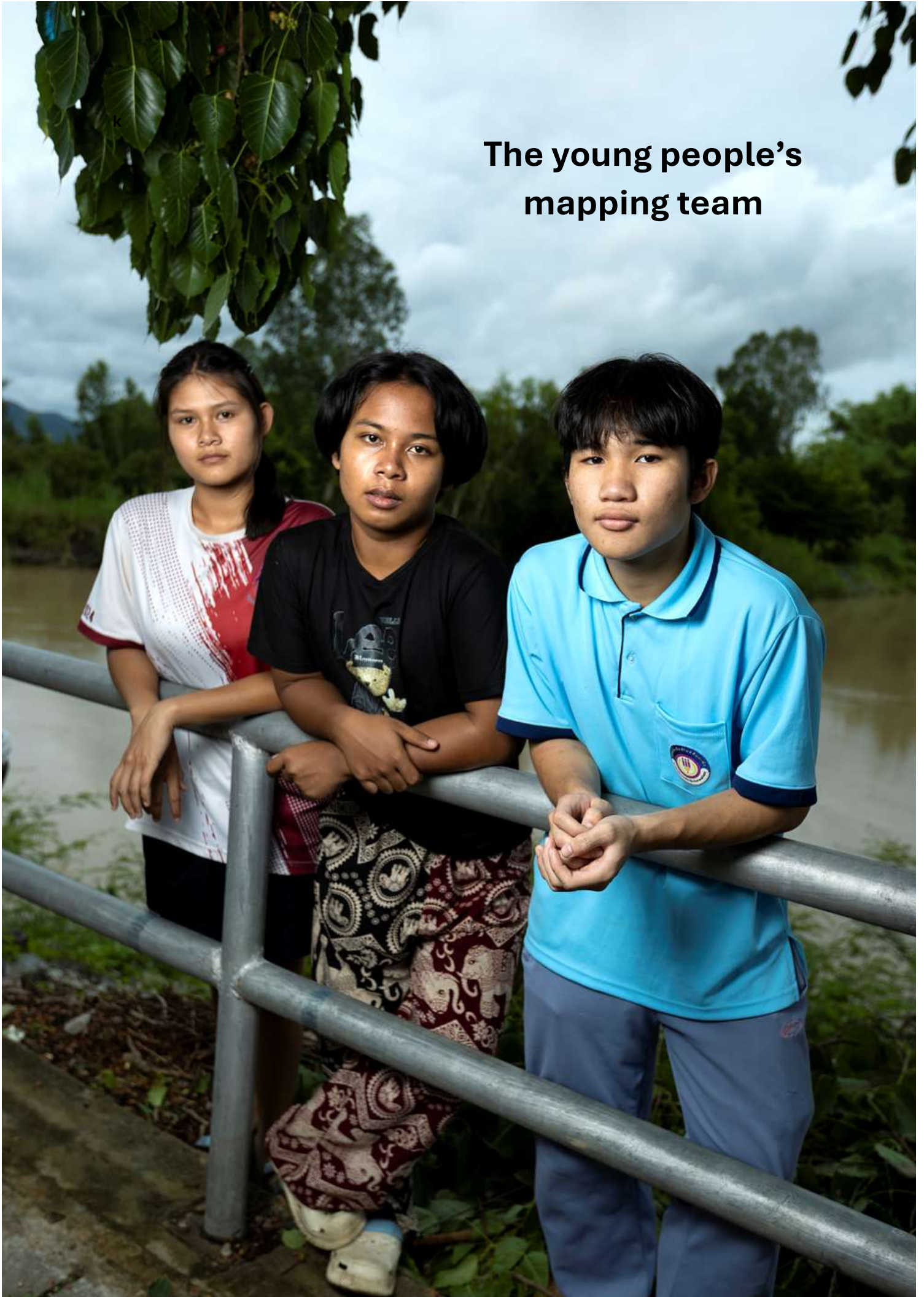


**The young people's
mapping team**



Wang Sila is a village located on the banks of the Ing River in Chiang Rai province, not far from a main road. It is on slightly higher ground than many surrounding villages. Most of the inhabitants belong to families who moved here from the drier north-east of Thailand, for what they saw as the areas abundant natural resources. Since settling here, they have relied on farming, fishing and trading activities for their livelihoods. A meeting was held in the village hall, where large maps of the village and diagrams of its disaster planning are now displayed. Joining the meeting were the village head; two older women members of the community, and a group of three young people who had undertaken a village mapping project as part of the climate resilience project.

The young people's mapping team: Ms Theerisara Kodmalee (16), Mr Hattha Chailert (17), Mr Milada Pakaew (16)

The group of three young people (one female, two males) who had carried out the community disaster risk mapping for the village joined in the initial meeting in the village hall, and explained how the mapping process had gone.

They explained that the concept was first introduced to them by a group of Mae Fah Luang University students/researchers, who came to Wang Sila. The MFU people initially introduced a photovoice project, where different community members contributed images of their experiences in responding to the floods. This showed up the community's pride and sense of achievement in how they had managed. The MFU team then asked about demographics in the community, particularly the number of children, elderly people, and People with Disability. They set out the model to follow in mapping to the local team, including identification of safe zones, people who would need help in evacuation, first aid provisions and locations and the full range of other information essential for rapid and inclusive response. The team members were also taken to visit other communities, and to learn about other economic activities practised there. This included distilling rice spirit and making cosmetics. They also had one site visit specifically to learn the process for pinning on Google Maps, so as to be able to clearly identify and record the flood-safe zones in the village. Use of this Google function is free, so the process was very accessible for them and the Wang Sila community.

The young people said they had then followed through by doing the actual mapping, going house to house to get accurate data, and preparing the physical map. This was still on display in the village meeting hall while we talked. The three team members said they were then also responsible for publicising all the relevant information to the village population as a whole. They liaised with both the government and MFU people for further information.

Given that it is more usual in rural Thai culture for younger people to be quiet and defer to their elders, we asked if the team felt their new knowledge and responsibilities were respected in the community, and if people listened to them when they came around questioning for data for flood mapping and preparation. There was some variation, they said, but overall:

"Most people paid good attention to us and responded well to our questions," so they were able to complete the mapping exercise comprehensively and accurately.

Mr Hattha Chailert said he'd been invited to join a meeting at MFU of young people from different villages, discussing how to cope with disasters. He said there was a large brainstorm session, where he was able to express his opinions and experience about disaster preparedness and response. He said the experience gave a real boost to his confidence.

He remembered clearly all the key measures that the young people in the workshop agreed were necessary, and on the spot, he listed them in full, from memory:

- Developing the Flood Early Warning System for the community, particularly for vulnerable people. This is both to prevent flood damage, and to evacuate people, rather than goods, as a priority.
- Setting guidelines to develop the community, to develop different livelihood activities, and to improve the overall quality of life.
- Ensuring that all households in the community have permanent, flood-safe accommodation.
- Recognising that local/provincial government has the responsibility to take care of clean drinking water provision for safe consumption, both during floods and at all other times.
- Recognising that local government also needs to improve infrastructure to provide better protection against floods.
- Schools need to be encouraged to raise children's and young people's awareness of flood risks, e.g. to teach swimming, and the need to take care of vulnerable people.

Previously, the community had not felt they had any channel to express their concerns directly to government and felt intimidated in speaking up to people with high official rank. One key part of the workshop was practising direct speaking of this kind, and ways to feel confident in doing so.

At the end of the workshop, Mr Hattha Chailert said he was called on to deliver these recommendations to the government representatives who'd joined, from the Department of Disaster Preparedness of the Ministry of the Interior.

"To start with," he said, "I felt very nervous. Then I just took a deep breath and spoke!"

Since that occasion, he has felt much more confident to speak publicly. Also, he was interviewed after the workshop and it was published on MFU's Facebook page, which he was very proud of.