

ANNEX 6B

ETHNIC GROUPS PLAN (EGP)

**Annex to the GCF
Funding Proposal**

**Thai Rice:
Strengthening Climate-
Smart Rice Farming**



Annex 6b

Ethnic Groups Plan (EGP)

GCF Funding Proposal

*Thai Rice:
Strengthening Climate-Smart Rice Farming*

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Abbreviations and Acronyms

AIPP	Asia Indigenous People Pact
BAAC	Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives
CIPT	Council of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand
CO ₂ e	CO ₂ equivalent
COP	Conference of the Parties
CSA	Climate-smart Agriculture
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DNP	Department of National Parks
DoAE	Department of Agricultural Extension
E.coli	Escherichia coli
EE	Executing Entity
EGP	Ethnic Groups Plan
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
ESS	Environmental and Social Safeguards
EUR	Euro
FPIC	Free, Prior, and Informed Consent
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GPU	Grievance Consideration Unit
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GHG	Greenhouse Gas
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPF	Indigenous Peoples' Foundation for Education and Environment
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
IWGIA	International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFL	Mah Fah Luang Foundation
MoAC	Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives
MoC	Ministry of Commerce
NDA	National Designated Authority
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation

ONEP	Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning
PMU	Project Management Unit
PPE	Personal Protective Equipment
PSC	Project Steering Committee
RD	Rice Department
SDG	Sustainable Development Goal
SEAH	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment
SEP	Stakeholder Engagement Plan
TAS	Thai Agricultural Standard for Sustainable Rice
T-VER	Thailand Verified Emission Reduction Scheme
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples' Rights
UNFCCC	United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change
WHO	World Health Organization

1. Introduction

1.1. Project Background

The *Thai Rice: Strengthening Climate-Smart Rice Farming Project* will enable rice farmers – including women farmers – to adapt to a changing climate while simultaneously reducing GHG emissions. The project is expected to reduce 12.56 MtCO₂e during its 15-year lifespan, at a mitigation cost to the GCF of Euro 3.12/tCO₂e, and to build the climate resilience of approximately 253,400 smallholder rice farmers.

The project design follows a bottom-up logic: behavioural changes will be triggered at the level of the farmer. Farmers will invest and adapt their practices and climate-smart technologies, which will be made available by service providers as a result of the project's technical and financial support. The climate-smart rice that is produced will be verified, will incorporate production cost savings and will be sold at higher market prices, while rice straw residues will be monetised. The Thai Agricultural Standard for Sustainable Rice (TAS) will serve as a nationally recognised sustainability standard, augmented in an international context by corresponding international standards and systems. Building on an existing – albeit small – domestic voluntary carbon market, an innovative carbon crediting mechanism for the rice sector – the T-VER Rice Scheme – will be designed and implemented to unlock additional revenue flows. Policy-makers will be supported with technical assistance, monitoring tools and a new body – the Thai Rice Facility – that coordinates investments from the public and private sectors to achieve a strengthened and more 'joined up' institutional and policy environment for climate-smart rice.

The project targets approximately 253,400 smallholder rice farmers, including a minimum of 115,000 female farmers. The focus of the project is primarily at the level of individual farms, not broader landscapes. Technical assistance directed at market access, policy and regulations at the national level is directly coupled with, and motivated by, the on-farm interventions undertaken by the project.

The project area includes a total of 21 provinces, consisting of 12 provinces in the central plains, 7 provinces in the north-east region and 2 provinces in the north of Thailand, as shown in Figure 1 below. The farmland targeted by the project extends over a physical area of ~718,000 hectares, of which ~306,000 ha is irrigated and ~412,000 ha is rain-fed. As rice can be planted more than once each year in the same field, the 'effective farmland' – the wet season planting area plus the dry season planting area – amounts to ~1.07 million ha.

The project specifically targets lowland rice-growing areas. There is no specific objective or target to implement project activities in upland or mountainous rice-growing environments.



Figure 1 Geographical Scope of the Thai Rice Project

Note: Project provinces are shown in green.

Text Box 1 – Terminology

This document will use the term “ethnic group” to refer to communities commonly described as “hill tribes” (chao khao), “forest tribes/people” (chao ba), and other groups that self-identify as “Indigenous Peoples” in Thailand. Thailand has adopted the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples but has yet to formally recognize the existence of Indigenous Peoples. The recent Constitution (2017) only refers to ethnic groups (Hien et al, 2022).

1.2. Ethnic Groups Plan

1.2.1. Background Information

The need to engage indigenous peoples, or ethnic groups for Thailand, in climate change policies and actions has been recognized by the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC), including in the Cancun Agreement (decision 1/CP.16). The preamble of the Paris Agreement also acknowledges that Parties should, when taking action to address climate change, respect, promote and consider their respective

obligations on, inter alia, the rights of ethnic groups. The COP decision adopting the Paris Agreement (decision 1/CP.21) recognizes the need to strengthen practices and efforts of local communities and indigenous peoples related to addressing and responding to climate change. The COP has further requested that the GCF consider a recommendation to enhance indigenous and traditional knowledge and practices and their integration into adaptation planning and practices, as well as procedures for monitoring, evaluation, and reporting.

The GCF Indigenous Peoples Policy¹ has therefore included a process and requirements for ensuring that GCF activities are developed and implemented in such a way that fosters full respect for, and the active protection and promotion of, indigenous peoples' dignity, rights, identities, aspirations, natural resource-based livelihoods, self-government and autonomy, and cultural uniqueness. The policy aims to assist the GCF in incorporating considerations related to indigenous peoples into its decision-making while working towards the goals of climate change mitigation and adaptation.

Where ethnic groups are present, the GCF's safeguards policy requires special action to safeguard their social and economic status and to avoid restricting their capacity to assert their interests and rights.

The GCF Indigenous People's Policy was approved in March 2018 and is applied to all GCF projects. Therefore, the project is required to follow the guiding principles of the GCF safeguards policy on indigenous peoples. This Ethnic Groups Plan (EGP) will use GCF's guiding principles as a basis for its implementation, which includes the following:

- Develop and implement free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) as specified in the Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) and in Section 4.2 of this document.
- Respect and enhance the rights of ethnic groups to their lands, territories and resources and rights related to cultural and spiritual heritage and values, traditional knowledge, resource management systems and practices, occupations and livelihoods, customary institutions, and overall well-being;
- Recognize key international human rights and principles, including the principles set forth in the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples' Rights (UNDRIP) and other relevant international and regional instruments relating to the rights of indigenous peoples and individuals including, where applicable but not limited to, International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 169, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;
- Respect the right of ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples living in voluntary isolation, or remote groups with limited external contact to remain isolated and to live freely according to their culture. Activities that may affect these peoples, their lands and territories, or their ways of life will include the appropriate measures to recognize, respect and protect their lands and territories, environment, health and culture, and to avoid contact with them as a consequence of the activity;
- Respect and recognize traditional knowledge and livelihood systems, including ways of ownership and knowledge transmission;
- Enhance the capacity for ethnic groups within the scope of project activities, especially the capacity related to provide advice, take leading roles and decision-making;

¹ GCF Indigenous Peoples Policy (March 2018): <https://www.greenclimate.fund/document/indigenous-peoples-policy>.

- Ensure access to project resources where appropriate by inclusively engaging them with project activities and consider taking actions to better meet their needs and priorities to support their initiatives and efforts for climate change mitigation and adaptation actions; and
- Respect the system of self-government. The right of ethnic groups to freely pursue their economic, social, and cultural development and their right to autonomy or self-government in matters relating to their internal and local affairs, as well as ways and means for financing their autonomous functions.

The GCF's safeguards policy requires the conduct of free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) with potentially affected ethnic groups and to establish a pattern of broad community support for the project and its objectives. This includes establishing an appropriate gender-inclusive framework that provides a framework for an ongoing consultation process at each stage of project preparation and implementation, as well as uses appropriate consultation methods to the social and cultural values of the ethnic groups and their local conditions and, in designing these methods, gives special attention to the concerns of ethnic women, youth and children and their access to development opportunities and benefits. The policy also addresses public disclosure, especially on the information about the project, including an assessment of potential adverse effects of the project on the affected ethnic groups, in a culturally appropriate manner at each stage of project preparation and implementation.

1.2.2. Approach

This document constitutes the EGP for the project "Thai Rice: Strengthening Climate-Smart Rice Farming". The presence of self-identified indigenous peoples (recognized by the government as ethnic groups) in selected provinces within the project area has triggered GCF's safeguards policy on indigenous peoples.

This document will use the term "ethnic group" to refer to members of communities that self-identify as "indigenous peoples" or members of groups often described in Thailand as "hill tribes", "ethnic peoples" or "forest tribes". Ethnic groups commonly practise their own culture, language and clothing styles, and often engage in agricultural practices that differ from mainstream Thai society.

2. Baseline information

2.1. Ethnic Groups Legal Frameworks

2.1.1. National Policies on Ethnic Groups

Thailand has not yet formally recognized the existence of “Indigenous Peoples” in the country. The recent Constitution (2017) does refer to ethnic groups. It states that: “The State shall promote and protect the rights of Thai people of different ethnic groups to live voluntarily and peacefully without disturbances in the society according to their culture, customs and traditional ways of life...”. Ethnic groups are not further defined. The Constitution also recognizes community rights on land and natural resource management. However, there has been no sub-law to guide how this concept should be translated to implementation (Morton & Baird, 2019).

In 1969, the first law in Thailand related to surveying and identifying people who were not Thai citizens was passed. For communities to be identified as “hill tribe” or “ethnic people”, two criteria (sloped terrain and location above sea level) were required; 35% of the living area was to be sloped and it was to be located at least 500 metres above mean sea level. Later, several laws and regulations were developed and implemented to identify people and protect ethnic peoples’ rights, including presenting some exceptions from major laws and regulations to support these groups in Thailand.

The Thai State classified ethnic peoples into different groups, notably those who immigrated into Thailand before 1969 and after 1969. Those who immigrated into Thailand before 1969 (more than 200,000 people) were granted a specific identification card. Those who immigrated after 1969, approximately 500,000 people, were denied citizenship. The colour and number of identification cards are still, today, used to classify individuals into four groups:

1. the minority people who were permitted to live in Thailand according to the agreement of the Thai State at that time. Most of the hill tribes belong to this category;
2. people who had temporary permission to live in Thailand;
3. people who had provided support in matters relating to national security²;
4. illegal immigrants (Office of Foreign Workers Administration, 2015).

All Thai people are assigned a specific number at birth. This specific number consists of 13 digits: e.g. 1234567892344. The first number refers to the different categories (explained further below) of people living in Thailand; the second and third numbers refer to the number of the province of residence; the fourth and fifth numbers refer to the number of the residential district; the sixth to tenth digits refer to the number of the set of the birth certification; the eleventh and twelfth numbers refer to the number of the birth certification; and the thirteenth number refers to the specific calculated number to confirm the accuracy of the entire 13-digit string.

The first digit has been classified into 10 different numbers and meanings:

- ‘1’ refers to a Thai national that is born in Thailand from 1 January 1984 onward and whose birth the government office is informed of within 15 days after birth;
- ‘2’ refers to a Thai who is born in Thailand and whose birth the government office is informed of within 15 days after birth;
- ‘3’ refers to a Thai who has been registered in the Thai data system before May 31, 1984;

² In 1961, Thailand granted asylum for anti-communist fighters from the Chinese Civil War; in return, they supported the prevention of communist infiltration in Chiang Rai. To this day, this community is present in this area.

- '4' refers to people who had not been assigned the Thai 13 digits after being surveyed between 1 January 1984 and 31 May 1984;
- '5' refers to those who were missing from the survey;
- '6' refers to legal immigrants and temporary residents living in Thailand;
- '7' refers to children of people identified in the 6th category;
- '8' refers to migrants who have been granted Thai citizenship;
- '0' refers to stateless persons who did not show any information as Thai and cannot be classified into other categories;
- '00' refers to migrant workers employed in Thailand since 1932.

Under the laws and regulations of Thailand, only those who have been assigned the numbers 1-8 as a first digit are entitled to move and work anywhere in Thailand. Persons with an ID beginning with "0" or "00" need an approval by a government officer before moving to other places in Thailand. Persons who do not possess an identification card are not permitted to move.

Individuals need to meet at least two criteria to be granted land ownership: (1) possession of a Thai ID card, and (2) the land parcel must be categorized as eligible for a Freehold Title Deed ("Chanote" or "Nor Sor 4"). Almost all indigenous peoples in Thailand live in restricted areas or conserved forest areas.

Regarding climate change policy specifically, there is no evidence of the existence of a differentiated climate change policy with regard to ethnic groups by central and provincial government offices, including in the Ministry of Commerce (MoC) and Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MoAC). The missions of these two Ministries are focused on extending the nation's gross domestic product (GDP) by expanding commerce, marketing and mass-market products on economic crops, including rice farming. There is no specific mission or programme to transfer knowledge and technology to ethnic groups for improved agricultural practices. The ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous people are farming based on their experiences and traditional methods.

Many regulations to control open burning in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai provinces are implemented, especially during the period of poorest air quality between January and April annually. These regulations are implemented to monitor and reduce the level of air pollution (PM10 and PM2.5) and have delivered benefits to ethnic group communities in terms of improved air quality and, therefore, health. At the same time, ethnic groups who are farming have reported some higher costs of farming due to the inability to legally burn rice residues. For example, when residues are not burned, seeds of weeds remain in the field, resulting in a greater need for weed management (often addressed through chemical application) later in the season.

2.1.2. International Legal Frameworks

Thailand has further endorsed, signed and/or ratified various international treaties and conventions related to ethnic groups and human rights (see Table 1 below). However, Thailand has not ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 169, designed to safeguard the rights of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (ILO 169). With a limited count of 24 nations having endorsed this convention since its inception in 1989, Thailand remains among those yet to formalize their commitment to its principles (ILO, 2017). In 2007, Thailand demonstrated its support and recognition of the principles outlined in the United Nations Declaration of Indigenous Peoples' Rights (UNDRIP) by voting in favour of it.

Table 1 International treaties signed and/or ratified by Thailand related to ethnic groups and human rights

Treaty Name/ Description	Treaty Abbreviation	Signature Date	Ratification Date, Accession(a), Succession(d) Date
Paris Agreement	-	22 April 2016	21 September 2016
Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	CAT		02. Oct 2007 (a)
International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	CCPR		29. Oct 1996 (a)
Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance	CED	09. Jan 2012	
Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	CEDAW		09. Aug 1985 (a)
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	CERD		28. Jan 2003 (a)
International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	CESCR		05. Sep 1999 (a)
Convention on the Rights of the Child	CRC		27 Mar 1992 (a)
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict	CRC-OP-AC		27 Feb 2006 (a)
Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children child prostitution and child pornography	CRC-OP-SC		11 Jan 2006 (a)
Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities	CRPD	30 Mar 2007	29 Jul 2008
Convention on Biological Diversity	CPD		29 January 2004
Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage	-		17 October 2003
Agreement on the Importation of Educational, Scientific and Cultural Materials	-		17 June 1950

Source: OHCHR, 2023; UNFCCC, 2023; UNESCO, 2023.

2.2. Ethnic Groups in Thailand

2.2.1. National Level

A map of ethno-linguistic groups is shown below, as a relative and imprecise indication of locations of ethnic groups (Kermel-Torrès). Ethno-linguistic groups distinct from the Tai ethno-linguistic group include Malay and Mukan in southern areas; Khmer, Mon, Mountain Khmer and Mon (Kuy) in the north-east and east; and Akha, Hmong, Karen, Lahu, Lisu, Yao in the north and west.

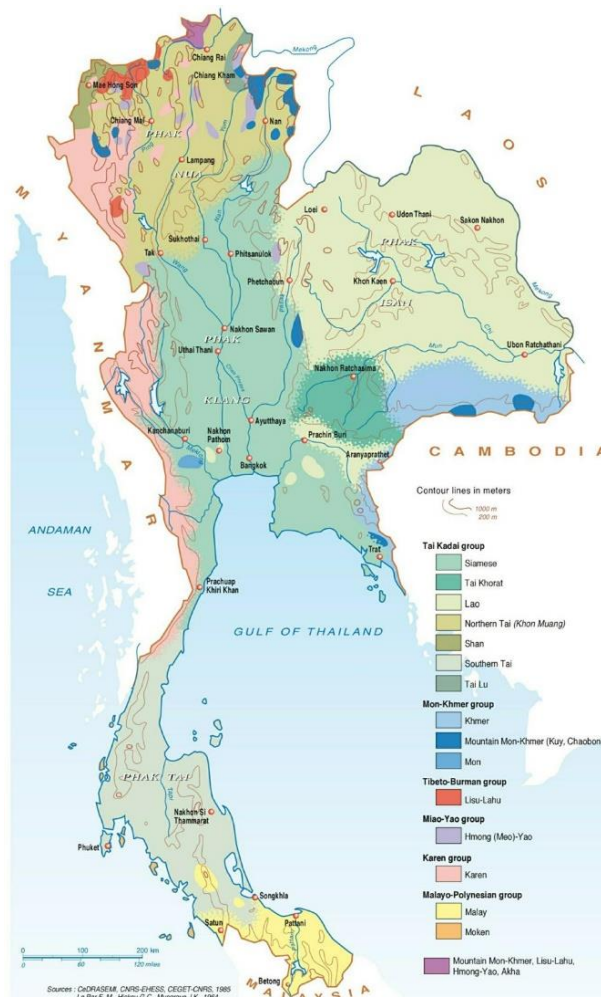


Figure 2 Map of ethnic groups in Thailand

Source: CeDRASEMI, CNRS-EHESS, CEGET-CNRS, 1985; Le Bar, Hickey, Musgrave, 1964.

The Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre (Public Organization) maintains a database of ethnic groups, using the name that the group call themselves and by which they want to be called. There are 62 ethnic groups listed; however, not all ethnic groups necessarily self-identify as indigenous people (Sirindhorn Anthropology Centre, 2023).

There is no authoritative list of ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples in Thailand and information differs by source. Differences in naming further complicate assessment.

The Council of Indigenous Peoples in Thailand (CIPT), established in 2014, comprises representatives of groups that self-identify as indigenous people. However, membership may not necessarily include all ethnic groups that self-identify as such. Member groups are located in Chiang Mai, Chiang Rai and Mae Hong Son in the north (Bisu, Dara-ang, Hmong, Karen, Khmu, Mlabri) and Pattalung, Satun, Songkla, and Trang in the south (Mani, Moken, Moklen, Uraklawoy), with some small groups in other localized areas (Chong, Kaleung, Kaw-Empi, Sotawueng, Tai-Sak, Yakru) (Thai IP Portal, 2023).

The Asia Indigenous People Pact (AIPP), a regional organization founded in 1992 by indigenous peoples' movements and author of the "Thailand" chapter in the International Work Group for Indigenous Affairs (IWGIA)'s annual "The Indigenous World" report, notes that the ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples of Thailand live mainly in three regions of the country: fisher communities and small populations of hunter-gatherers in the south; small groups on the Korat plateau of the north-east and east; and many different highland peoples in the north and north-west of the country (Hien et al, 2022). Nine groups are explicitly recognized and all are in the north: Hmong, Karen, Lisu, Mien, Akha, Lahu, Lua, Thin and Khmu (Berger et al, 2023).

North and West

There are 12 ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples, totalling 1.15 million persons living in 20 provinces in north and west Thailand, as recorded by the Health Centre for Ethnic, Marginal and Migrant Workers under the Department of Health (HHDC, 2023), namely (in descending order of population): Karen, Hmong, Lahu, Akha, Lua (Lawa), Yao (Mien), Lisu, Chinese Ho, Khmu, Paluang, Malabri, Kachin, and other.

A share of this population moved down from south China in the past centuries to settle in present-day Thailand. This is commonly associated with two primary migration routes: (a) China to Myanmar and subsequently Thailand for the Akha, and Lisu people, and (b) China to Laos and subsequently Thailand for the Hmong and Yao. However, the Karen people have their original residence in the west of Thailand or along the border of Thailand and Myanmar. Not all members of ethnic group communities have been issued Thai identification cards, especially in older generations (Apidechkul et al, 2016a), and a substantial share are living under the national poverty line. Many individuals aged 40 years and older do not possess full fluency in the Thai language (Apidechkul et al, 2016b). Most people apply traditional farming methods. Commonly, members of ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples experience disadvantages with regard to access to education, finance and technology when compared with Thai peers (Baird, Leepreecha & Yangcheepsutjarit, 2017). Due to the geography of their residency in mountainous areas and border areas, including their frequently insecure status/lack of Thai citizenship, difficulties are often faced by members of ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples to access public services, including the right to own land.

North-East and East

No agreed figures are available for self-identified indigenous people in the north-east and east of Thailand (Berger et al, 2023).

The Khmer and-Mon ethno-linguistic groups in the provinces of the north-east and east of Thailand are estimated to number 1.2 to 1.4 million persons. Long-established members of the Khmer ethno-linguistic group do not seem to experience a great deal of discrimination or obstacles in Thai society; many own small businesses or are successful rice growers. The Mon constitute a dispersed group that has been largely absorbed into Thai society; one indication is

that few young persons still speak the Mon language today. They are in many ways indistinguishable from Thailand's ethnic majority and do not perceive to be targeted for discrimination (World Directory of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples, 2018).

Additionally, the Mountain Khmer (Kuy) ethnic group is recognized as native to the Korat Plateau and is estimated to number up to 400,000 persons. Most Kuy are socially integrated into Thai society and live in villages alongside the Khmer ethnic group (whereas in Cambodia and Laos the Kuy tend to live in remote, separate villages and are not integrated into mainstream society) (Academic Accelerator, 2023). As such, the Khmer, Mon, and Kuy ethnic groups are not considered as self-identified indigenous people in this document.

South

In the south, there are approximately 12,000 people of Chao-ley (fisher communities) descent (Hien et al, 2022).

2.2.2 Presence of Ethnic Groups that Self-Identify as Indigenous People in the Project Areas

The Indigenous Peoples' Foundation for Education and Environment (IPF) maintains an Indigenous Peoples Data Sovereignty (IDS) Application, which draws census data from the Ministry of Interior's Bureau of Registration Administration. Data shows persons of the following ethnic groups (some of whom may self-identify as indigenous peoples and some of whom may not) registered in selected provinces relevant to the Thai Rice Project (Indigenous Peoples' Foundation for Education and Environment, 2018). Please refer to Figure 1 for the geographical scope of the Thai Rice Project.

Table 2 Number of persons self-reporting as members of ethnic groups within the 21 provinces of the Thai Rice Project, by applicable province

Selected provinces (relevant to the project area)	Population	Ethnic groups
North		
Chiang Mai	317,475	Karen, Lahu, Hmong, Lisu, Ahka, Tai-Yai, Lua, Dara-ang, Palong, Yao (Mian), Tai-Lue, Kachin
Chiang Rai	290,265	Akha, Lahu, Hmong, Yao (Mien), Lisu, Karen, Tai-Yai, Lua, Tai-Lue, Khmu, Bisu, Tai-Ya, Tai-Puan
Central		
Uthai Thani	10,434	Karen, Lua, Khmu
Kampaengpetch	16,231	Yao (Mien), Karen, Hmong, Lahu, Lisu, Lua
Pitsanulok	8,755	Hmong
Suphanburi	8,034	Karen, Lua
North-east		
Surin	9,034	Kuy
Nakhonratchasima	960	Nyah Kur
Ubonratchathani	669	Bru

The persons are roughly mapped as shown in Figure 3 below.

Figure 3 Map of approximate location of villages containing members of ethnic groups

Note: Villages are shown as grey circles in the map.

Source: Indigenous Peoples' Foundation for Education and Environment, 2018.



Source: GCF Indigenous Peoples policy (March 2018).

Text box 2 – Characteristics of Ethnic Groups (Indigenous Peoples)

Groups should possess the characteristics indicated in the GCF's Indigenous People Policy to be considered as ethnic groups (indigenous peoples):

- Self-identification as members of a distinct indigenous social and cultural group and recognition of this identity by others;
- Collective attachment to geographically distinct habitats, ancestral territories, or areas of seasonal use or occupation as well as to the natural resources in these habitats and territories;
- Customary cultural, economic, social or political systems that are distinct or separate from those of the mainstream society or culture; and
- A distinct language or dialect, often different from the official language or languages of the country or region in which they reside. This includes a language or dialect that has existed but does not exist now due to impacts that have made it difficult for a community or group to maintain a distinct language or dialect.

Taken together with the information provided in Section 2.2.1, we find that within the 21 provinces included in Thai Rice Project:

- North: All reputable sources (e.g., AIPP, CIPT, IPF, Census, other) appear to corroborate that there is a notable share of the population of two provinces in the north – Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai – who are classified as members of ethnic groups by official data *and* are known to self-identify as indigenous peoples. They possess the characteristics indicated in Box 2.
- Central: Reputable sources (e.g., AIPP, CIPT) do not appear to have determined the presence of ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous persons in the central region. Census and IPF data shows the presence of members who self-identify with these broad groups in low numbers and high dispersion. The members present in these areas may not possess the characteristics indicated in Box 1 (e.g., they are more mainstreamed into Thai society).
- North-east: Reputable sources (e.g., AIPP, CIPT, IPF, Census, other) appear to corroborate that the ethnic groups present in the north-east (e.g., Kuy) are not considered as self-identified indigenous people (e.g., they are mainstreamed into Thai society). They do not possess the characteristics indicated in Box 2.

As such, ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples in Chiang Mai and Chiang Rai will be the focus of the current EGP. Ethnic groups present in the central and north-east regions do not appear to possess the characteristics indicated in the GCF's Indigenous Peoples Policy to be considered as indigenous peoples. They are not the focus of the current EGP. However, in case GIZ confirms the final project area is close to ethnic groups, the project will ensure that the respective groups are fully informed, consulted and provided with adequate and legitimate opportunities to actively participate in the project.

It is important to note that the project's target areas for implementation of activities in all 21 provinces are lowland rice farming areas, and not the mountainous highland areas (in the north) where the ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples reside (Akha, Hmong, Karen, Lahu, Lisu, Paluang, Yao).

Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai are the northern-most provinces of Thailand. Both provinces share a border with Myanmar: the border between Chiang Rai and Myanmar is 310 km long, the one of Chiang Mai and Myanmar 277 km. The major geographical typology of both provinces is highlands.

The Thai government counts members of ethnic groups through a census system. In Chiang Rai, there are nine officially recognized ethnic groups, with a total of 211,752 people (106,130 women). This comprises 42,405 families living in 711 villages. The major groups are listed in

Table 3 E.

Table 3 Ethnic groups in Chiang Rai

Group	Size of group	Number of women	Number of villages
Akha	73,810	37,421	245
Lahu	52,309	26,063	217
Hmong	31,963	15,964	59
Yao	14,430	7,284	56
Karen	7,564	3,679	31
Lisu	6,971	3,502	35

Source: Department of Health, 2019a

In Chiang Mai, there are ten officially recognized ethnic groups, with a total of 269,182 people; this comprises 61,422 families living in 986 villages. The major groups are listed in Table 4 E.

Table 4 Ethnic Groups in Chiang Mai

Group	Size of group	Number of women	Number of villages
Karen	146,635	72,705	623
Lahu	46,390	23,450	172
Hmong	26,964	13,875	47
Lisu	20,178	10,185	73
Akha	10,349	5,245	43
Yao	1,149	582	4
Palong	4,523	2,446	10

Source: Department of Health, 2019b

Based on the present assessment, these groups possess the characteristics indicated in the GCF's Indigenous People Policy to be considered as ethnic groups (indigenous peoples):

- Self-identification as members of a distinct indigenous social and cultural group and recognition of this identity by others;
- Collective attachment to geographically distinct habitats, ancestral territories, or areas of seasonal use or occupation as well as to the natural resources in these habitats and territories;
- Customary cultural, economic, social, or political systems that are distinct or separate from those of the mainstream society or culture; and
- A distinct language or dialect, often different from the official language or languages of the country or region in which they reside. This includes a language or dialect that has existed but does not exist now due to impacts that have made it difficult for a community or group to maintain a distinct language or dialect.

In line with the GCF policy, this EGP has been developed to ensure that ethnic groups in the project's targeted areas are fully and ongoingly informed, consulted, and provided with adequate and legitimate opportunities to obtain their consent to actively participate in project design and the determination of project implementation arrangements and operations, as well as the project's closure. Similar to the ESMP, this EGP provides a practical plan to manage the potential unintended environmental and social negative impacts associated with project's activities. Specifically, it is to ensure ethnic groups' rights are safeguarded and they receive the project's benefits in a culturally appropriate manner. It further ensures meaningful and inclusive consultations take place and ethnic groups are actively engaged throughout the life-cycle of the project. The EGP will complement, and will be implemented in parallel with, the ESMP and Gender Action Plan (GAP).

Poverty

In 2021, the World Bank reported that 12.2% of Thais were living under the national poverty line, estimated at 2,762 baht (\$79) per person per month. Also in 2021, Apidechkul et al (2021) reported that 71.2% of the ethnic people living in Chiang Rai province had an annual income of less than 50,000 baht (\$1,428), and 20.6% earned 50,001-100,000 baht. In effect, around 80% of the ethnic groups living in the two northern provinces are under the national poverty line of Thailand (Belghith, 2023). A large proportion of ethnic groups are working in traditional or subsistence farming. The high poverty rates among ethnic groups are commonly associated with

lack of educational certificates, lack of Thai language skills and lack of certain administrative requirements (ID cards and citizenship) to obtain higher-paid employment.

Poor Education

Within members of ethnic groups in the study areas aged 40 years and older, only 5% ever attended the Thai school system (Juntip, 2021). With the lack of the opportunity to access education, a significant proportion are not able to speak Thai, especially in the older generations. Many members of ethnic groups lack understanding of new technologies and specific procedures in accessing resources, with poor education perpetuating this inequity. Education certification is also one of the major requirements for getting well paid jobs (which require skilled labour). Among people aged 40 years and older in the ethnic groups, fewer women have attended school than men. However, there is an equal ratio of girls and boys attending school in the current generation of school children. Still, family economics and parents' perceptions play a key role in terms of support to their children in attending high school and university. Lisu, Yao, and Hmong members are typically far more supportive of their children attending higher education compared to Akha and Lahu members (consultations conducted during this study).

Language Barriers

The formal and official language in Thailand is Thai. All essential messages released from Thai government and officers are generally in the Thai language. Thai language communication skills, including reading and writing, are the key factors to be able to access all possible resources for development. As mentioned previously, especially older members of ethnic groups have limited skills in the Thai language. (Apidechkul et al, 2016b). Several negative impacts are clearly observed in access to medical care among members of such communities. A certain stigmatization is also often described in the context of the language barrier (Mulikaburt et al, 2022).

Food and Clean Drinking Water Security

Access to food (Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) No. 2) and clean drinking water (SDG No. 6) are basic human rights and have been clearly stated as major indicators of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations. According to consultations conducted during this study, members of ethnic groups in Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai provinces may face problems in seeking food for their family members during the dry season or drought periods. This may both be linked to a lack of adequate storage facilities or practices for food conservation during the dry season or the lack of sufficient crop yields from subsistence agriculture. The issue may be especially severe for individuals who do not hold a Thai ID citizenship or ID card, as these individuals have no access to social services offered by the Thai State or formal employment as an alternative source of income beyond subsistence farming. The diminishing amount of forest cover in northern Thailand also exacerbates this problem, as, traditionally, certain communities depend on foraging in forest areas if other sources of food are not available. Many villagers consulted during the present study mentioned the 2021-2022 period as a period with increased food insecurity due to a severe drought.

Regarding daily drinking water, members of ethnic groups often use water from rivers nearby to their villages. Typically, most villages and settlements of ethnic groups are located near a river. A study conducted in more than 60 ethnic villages found that all of the water which was used for consumption did not meet the WHO standard for drinking water. Almost all of the samples analysed were detected to contain E. Coli bacteria (Sudsandee et al, 2021). Currently, some of the ethnic groups consulted declared they buy bottled drinking water, but there are still concerns regarding the quality of this water due to a lack of regular monitoring by public health authorities.

Access to water, especially drinking water, is still commonly cited as a challenge in both the dry and the rainy seasons. In the dry season, the available amount of water is the main issue, while in the rainy season its cleanliness is the main issue.

Unintended Consequences of Agricultural Extension Activities: Example

During consultations conducted for this study, an example of unintended consequences arising from planting rubber trees was commonly cited. In 2005, Thailand promoted the cultivation of rubber trees to certain ethnic groups in northern Thailand. At the time, demand for natural rubber was high and the country sought to increase its production. Planting of rubber trees was also introduced on the lands inhabited by ethnic groups. In the years after planting, the villagers observed that natural sources of water in the villages disappeared or had reduced in volume, particularly during the dry season. Villagers connect this development with the introduction of rubber trees in local areas. No specific response or compensation has been offered to concerned villagers up to now. As a result, villagers may be wary of new concepts or agronomic practices being introduced by government officers.

Geographic Conditions of the Land Inhabited by Ethnic Groups

A very significant share of ethnic villages are located in mountainous areas, or in restricted forest or conservation areas, including in national parks. In many cases, the ethnic villages may have existed prior to the establishment of these conservation areas. It is also known that in many areas under the authority of the Department of National Parks (DNP), the DNP has created maps jointly with local communities to show the boundaries of customarily owned plots. The DNP supports the communities' use of mapped plots for agricultural purposes and communities agree not to deforest additional lands.

In addition, a large share of members of ethnic groups do not hold formal land titles for the land they inhabit or farm on. It should be noted here that formal Thai citizenship is required to legally own land in Thailand. In many communities, traditional ownership and customary land rights are well recognized within the community and transfer or sale of land through customary arrangements is commonplace.

Another issue inhabitants of the northern mountainous areas are confronted with is the difficulty of developing irrigation systems for farming. There are two main reasons commonly cited:

- Through the national laws and regulation to protect forest areas, a large portion of the land inhabited by ethnic groups is protected land or conservation forest. A condition of irrigation development in Thailand is that the land must not be under the restricted areas or be part of a protected forest;
- Due to the mountainous or hilly geography where ethnic groups reside, development of irrigation infrastructure and systems to supply water for daily routines and farming may be physically not feasible.

Further, the sloped terrain complicates the use of machinery and equipment for farming and particularly rice harvesting. Consequently, rice straw is often eradicated by burning which does not require machinery.

Public Perception and Stigmatization by Mainstream Thai Society

Members of ethnic groups consulted raise concern regarding their perception by mainstream Thai Society, and existing stigma and prejudices against ethnic groups. Commonly cited examples include an alleged (historic) affiliation of some ethnic groups in northern Thailand with the cross-border drug trade or opium growth. In some instances, ethnic groups are associated by members of Thai mainstream society with air pollution and haze from agricultural burning.

Mass Open Control Policy and Implementation

Since 2007, the Thai government approved a new law to control (restrict) open burning in the period of January to April in every year in 9 provinces located in northern Thailand, which includes Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai provinces (Pollution Control Department, 2017). There has been limited success in controlling open burning in these areas, including the ethnic villages. However, although implementation of the new law has been widely accepted, several aspects have been negatively perceived by the ethnic groups. Villagers said that open burning is best practiced during March to April (in terms of effectiveness in eradicating the agricultural residues and preventing growth of weeds). The consequence is villagers need to spend more money buying chemicals to clear weeds from their farms. Moreover, from their experience they perceive that crops grow better on fired lands and have fewer problems with diseases than on unfired land. The solution of mass control of open burning by laws is counter to the lifestyle of, and economically hurts, the ethnic groups.

Uneconomic Crops or Traditional Crops

The major crops of the ethnic groups are traditional types which have little changed over time. Many items are related to their daily lifestyle and religious practices. Rice and corn are the principal crops. “E-TO” is the name of the rice that is most favoured by all ethnic groups that identify as indigenous peoples. It is planted in wet and dry rice farms. More than 80% of the ethnic peoples are practising dry rice farming due to the specificity of mountainous geographies. The ethnic groups grow sticky rice as well, which is also used for making foods in the New Year ceremony and religious rituals. Some Yao, Karen and Lisu practise wet rice farming. Some families of Akha also work on wet rice farms on other people’s lands and then the product is divided into four parts: one part for land owners and three parts for farmers. In conclusion, wet farms are not a common practice for ethnic peoples. The major purpose of rice farming is for family consumption, not for selling. Some families cultivate rice one year to supply the family with rice for more than one year. Even though rice farms comprise a small area of farmed area, a lot of human labour is required to complete farming activities as there is no better option or no proper technology. Some local people use salt diluted in water to eradicate weeds in place of chemicals as a cost reduction measure, but the spray tank used is quickly damaged.

The majority of ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples are familiar with the cultivation of corn. Corn is the major cash crop for many ethnic peoples. Normally 4 to 5 times the area of land is used for the cultivation of corn as compared to the area of land used for rice cultivation. There are two types of corn: sweet corn for human consumption and corn for animal feed. Sweet corn requires large amounts of water and diligent care all along its life cycle. The corn for animal feed requires less care but has a longer cultivation period.

Other kinds of crops that are planted by the ethnic peoples are beans, tomato, ginger, chili, etc. After rice farming, different kinds of beans (soybeans, red beans, and black beans) are grown on the same land before the next rice farming season. Villagers say that it is the best method to maintain the quality of soil for continued farming on the current lands on which they can cultivate.

Undocumented or Unlicensed Land

Currently, almost all ethnic groups live in the mountainous areas (restricted areas or forests under Thai laws and regulation) where freehold land titles are not possible, so the official sale and purchase of land for full individual ownership is not possible. Land therefore cannot be used as collateral for loans from financial institutions. However, the unofficial selling and buying of land among villagers is practised; there are no formal evidentiary requirements and this practice is accepted by villagers in the communities. Moreover, all ethnic farmers register their land in the

government system. Those with a Thai ID who have registered lands can access support payments from the government in the case of natural disasters. The rate of the compensation is 1,000 baht per rai. Nonetheless, it remains the case that more than 30% of the people in some villages do not have their own land, even under the unofficial ownership model accepted by communities. They must spend money to use other people's land for farming. The cost of rice farming is estimated at 2,000-3,000 baht per rai, to cover chemicals and fertilizers.

Special Geographic Conditions with Limited Use Technology

With the specific uniqueness of the terrain (steep slopes), the difficulty of transportation is a common trait in areas in which ethnic groups reside. Technologies available and effective in the lowlands of Thailand may not work in sloped highlands. For instance, on the corn and rice farms in the lowlands, people use tractors, harvesters and technology for spraying chemicals or fertilizers on their farms. But these technologies are not possible in extreme slope areas where all farming processes require human labour. On rice farming areas, which comprise a small number of rai for each family, people in the village use the method of helping each other (mutual support), so called “AOU MUR” (เอาหมู่อ). It means that many people will work on a single owner's land on the first day to complete farming, and then move to the second owner's land on the second day, and so on. Rice farming does not add to family income and includes difficult work conditions due to geographic conditions; as such, the new generation within ethnic groups often prefers not to practise rice farming but to trade instead. Many families work in corn farms to make more money with easier and less expensive procedures and buy rice from other farmers for family consumption. Another technique used (especially by the Lisu people) is to work a rice farm alternate years for planting rice and corn; rice will be planted for 2-3 years on the family's entire cultivation area and kept for own consumption, followed by planting of corn or other cash crops for multiple years for income generation. Rice seed selection is based on the suggestion of friends.

Poor Marketing and Market Chain

The ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous people in this area have the same perspective as other farmers in Thailand on markets. If any kind of agricultural product has a high price, many people will shift to grow it. Once the product exceeds the needs of the market and the price falls, then people will look for the next kind of crops to plant. Whenever corn has increased its price in the market, people favour growing corn. No specific and strong supply chain or value chain for corn has been observed in the ethnic group communities.

Another point that is presented as one of the challenges of the market chain is logistics. Given the geographic conditions of ethnic groups' living and farming areas, transportation and logistics is a significant barrier for transporting agricultural products, especially in the rainy season. Villagers estimated that 30-40% of the cost of farming is related to transportation fees of a product.

Poor Literacy of Family Financial Management

The majority of the ethnic people have poor access to education and have not been trained on family or farm financial management. Low literacy on the topic of family or farm financial management is clearly observed. Moreover, almost every family has debt and being indebted is common in a village. Debt is mainly formal debt, such as through group borrowing programmes from the national agricultural bank serving farmers. Villagers replied that they are struggling to manage their family finances. Many do not have any savings for emergencies such as a health crisis or other urgent events. However, given the strong relationships among people in the villages, the norm of helping others when they have a financial crisis is commonplace.

Waste Management, PPE and Health in Farming

The ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous people practice spraying of chemicals and fertilizers on their farms by using small pieces of cloth to cover their nose, mouth and boots. People do not use glasses or other essential pieces of personal protective equipment (PPE). Spraying of chemicals and fertilizers is usually conducted by male family members. Most have not received training in the proper use of PPE and safe use of chemical products. After use of chemicals, the plastic or paper packages are left on their farm and not disposed of appropriately. In cases where the container is a bottle or plastic gallon, some respondents confirm that they were washed and subsequently used for storage, drinking water or sale – a clear health and safety concern.

Almost all the people reported that they have never been checked for their health status. However, a few people volunteered information that they had experiences of having side-effects from chemicals and fertilizers used on their farm.

Limited Attention from Relevant Government Agencies

Information from government officers from the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives and the Ministry of Commerce indicates that there is no special policy or implementation to support rice farming for the ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous people in Thailand.

The local ethnic groups report having never been trained on topics such as climate change or even impacts of chemicals, overuse of natural resources and the environment. All people do know that open burning is a cause of air pollution and are concerned on this point. The main reason cited for no longer practising open burning in the control (prohibition) period is because they fear penalties.

Seeking Money to Support Family

Members of the ethnic minority groups seek many ways to earn money to support their families. Respondents indicate that, in some villages, 90% of families are in debt. There are two major methods detected: seeking a job abroad and engaging in commercial sex. The new generation of ethnic people do not favour studying in university and indicate a preference to seek jobs abroad, particularly in Korea and Taiwan. Some young women favour engaging in commercial sex. Respondents provided many examples of young people working in Korea and Taiwan or young women engaging in commercial sex work and sending back money to support their families.

Many Kinds of Agricultural Chemicals and Fertilizers Used

Many kinds of chemicals and fertilizers are used in farming, including rice farming, by ethnic groups. The source of information for opting to use and selecting which chemicals to use comes from peers in the village. There is no specific training provided by the government extension service. However, some areas are supported on good techniques and knowledge by officers under the Thai Royal Project Foundation³. Local people report that the prices of chemicals and fertilizers have increased considerably over time, and represent the major source of expenses for farming.

Gender Roles

All the ethnic people prefer to have male rather than female children to continue their family lineage. Regarding working on the farm, the role of men is to take on physically demanding tasks

³ The Royal Project Foundation was established by H.M. King Rama IX to promote sustainable development of highland communities in northern Thailand and to reduce dependence on the cultivation of narcotic crops. Market linkages are promoted to ensure income generation, self-reliance, security and sustainability of these ethnic groups.

such as cutting grass, cutting trees, clearing forest for new agricultural land, and other difficult labour. Meanwhile, women handle “softer” work such as rice seeding, cooking and family care. Rice harvesting is undertaken by both male and female farmers. Some ethnic groups have very strong gender roles; in many ethnic groups, community leadership and meetings are a place for men only. Also, primarily men practise religious rituals.

Food Security

The main sources of food security derive from agricultural cultivation. Since the majority of ethnic groups live in highland areas, their livelihoods are maintained through rotational upland agriculture activities, including upland corn and rice farming for subsistence. A major limitation for ensuring food security is the region’s mountainous terrain, and limited space for cultivation. They often do not engage in economic or trading activities. The annual yields are low, and cultivation requires challenging physical labour and unsustainable practices, which can lead to degradation (landslides, erosion events, etc.). An estimated 25% of rural households in the region are food-poor.

3. Key Findings and Analyses of Impacts, Risks, and Opportunities

The Thai Rice Project covers 21 provinces in central, north-eastern and northern Thailand. Within this geographic scope, two provinces – Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai – have a significant share of the population that both self-identifies and is officially classified as members of ethnic groups by census data. Communities of ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous people (Akha, Hmong, Karen, Lahu, Lisu, Palong, Yao) reside in the highland areas of these provinces and are reliant on agriculture (the main economic activity), forests and other natural resources for both their income and subsistence. It is observed that the Karen tend to reside in lower-highland areas; the Hmong, Lahu, Lisu, Yao in mid-highland areas; and the Akha around mountain peaks due to each group's history, traditions and beliefs.

While the Thai Rice Project's target areas for implementation do not include highland areas where communities of ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous people permanently reside, it is important to consider *potential* adverse risks that may arise and to apply proactive mitigation measures. The following sub-sections highlight the possible positive impacts generated by the project on ethnic groups, and potential adverse impacts on ethnic groups. These potential impacts were identified through desk assessment and/or arose during consultations undertaken to inform this EGP.

As indicated in Sections 2.2.1 and 2.2.2 above, the members of ethnic groups present in the central and north-east regions are not considered as self-identified indigenous people, and therefore are not the focus of this document.

3.1 Potential Positive Impacts

The Thai Rice Project's objectives as a whole and activities in nearby lowland rice farming areas may result in indirect positive impacts on ethnic groups at the individual, family, community, provincial and regional, and national levels. They are described below.

Individual Level

Ethnic group members might:

- (1) Learn, practise and adapt rice farming techniques to more efficiently use natural resources.
- (2) Increase productivity of farming and improve food security.
- (3) Access forums to share and innovate to improve farming practices.
- (4) Protect physical and mental health by minimizing the hazards from improper farming (e.g., chemical overuse, unsafe chemical application techniques).
- (5) Reduce family medical expenses due to better health.

Family Level

- (1) Discussion, recognition and strengthening of women's socioeconomic role.
- (2) Improve family financial literacy to manage their finances.
- (3) Reduce family debt.

- (4) Reduce domestic violence due to improved family income and finances.
- (5) Reduce migration, particularly for young adults, with improved opportunities at home.
- (6) Improve care for elderly by younger generation (a cultural role), with reduced migration.

Community Level

- (1) Maintain indigenous crops by improving farming techniques.
- (2) Protect community activities related to religious rituals and activities such as “AOU MUR”.
- (3) Improve attitudes on caring for nature and reducing agricultural chemical overuse.
- (4) Strengthen relationships of community members through joint activities (with shared workload).
- (5) Strengthen leadership skills of community members to lead activities.
- (6) Expanded use of mobile phone-based systems and tools for access to, and sharing of, knowledge.

Provincial and Regional Level

- (1) Reduce air pollution problems from application of better farming techniques (no-burning).
- (2) Potential for producing and marketing environmentally-friendly products.
- (3) Potential for pooling agricultural products produced with better farming techniques, for better prices.
- (4) Possibility to provide forums for government officers at the provincial level to integrate their routine and strategic plans to further improve the quality of life of ethnic groups.
- (5) Possibility to integrate project activities with Royal Initiatives to lead to more effective outcomes.

National Level

- (1) Improved demand and market share of Thai agricultural products produced with better farming techniques.
- (2) Possibility for new (refined) laws and regulations to support ethnic groups living in restricted forest areas to become partners in protecting natural resources, including protecting against wildfires.
- (3) Learning and ideas to develop national strategic plans to improve ethnic groups' economic well-being, which will directly support the GDP of the nation.
- (4) Reduced drug problems, with increased family income of ethnic groups.

3.2. Unintended/ Potential Negative Impacts

As the project is implemented in lowland rice cultivation areas, it does not directly interfere with the ethnic groups' way of life (in mountainous, highland areas) or their use of indigenous knowledge and beliefs. It is observed that the Karen tend to reside in lower-highland areas; the Hmong, Lahu, Lisu, Yao in mid-highland areas; and the Akha around mountain peaks due to each's traditions and beliefs. It is further observed that members of these communities conduct farming within their villages (permanent use) and very rarely seek lands outside of their villages for farming (temporary use). Formal land ownership in many of these areas is not possible, but there are community-recognized systems of land ownership. These traditional systems appear to be functional within villages, with ownership recognized and respected by peers.

Further, there is no physical relocation or removal or non-removal of assets that could directly cause any adverse impact on the identity, social norms, culture, spiritual and socio-cultural beliefs of the ethnic groups. The introduction or promotion of new climate-smart rice farming practices by the project as a whole and through activities in nearby lowland rice farming areas may pose minor risks on traditional practices and beliefs of ethnic groups.

The following potential unintended or negative impacts that have been identified:

- Lack of awareness of the unique cultural or religious significance of rice for ethnic groups may be perceived as disrespect: For almost all ethnic groups, rice is part of the practices and rituals to commemorate the deceased or to remember ancestors. Some ethnic minorities have a religious practice after preparing the land for planting rice, to respect the keepers of lands and the keeper of rivers to support them in growing rice. All ethnic groups have a special event to celebrate the harvesting of the first seed of rice, where villages come together to share experiences and hopes. Also, farming of some kinds of rice (e.g., sticky rice) is related to ceremonies; for example, every person must prepare sticky rice (white or black) for the “kao pook” which is a key feature in the new year ceremony.
- Adoption of new practices by ethnic groups without proper comparison to their own traditional farming methods may lead to worsened conditions: Most ethnic groups have their own experience in farming, which may work well in their production context already (e.g., sloped lands). Technologies and innovation (if any) should be reviewed for applicability by/for the local people, and should not increase difficulty or length of the work day of farmers to avoid imposing added physical and mental stresses. Further, the traditional varieties of agricultural crops (including rice) grown by ethnic groups may offer current value to the ecosystem. Changes in crop mix without careful consideration could include negative impacts for biodiversity, for example.
- Activities focused on market-linkages may counter beliefs and norms of ethnic groups: Since the history of ethnic groups includes serious food insecurity of the previous generation, communities do not farm to sell rice but, rather, farm for own consumption. Many families farm rice one year for consumption for more than one year. Even though rice farming can be difficult, communities prefer to farm rice because it is core to their beliefs and to respect the ways of previous generations. Many people indicate that they want to keep rice seeds for the next generations. Further, many ethnic groups believe that rice is food for humans, and not for animals; feeding of rice to animals is often considered a sin.
- Communications in Thai and English languages may be misunderstood by ethnic groups: Sharing of essential information should consider whether the receiving ethnic groups are fluent in Thai, or if use of an ethnic language is required. In addition, meetings (if any) should consider periods in which community members are available.

4. Measures to Avoid, Minimize and Mitigate Negative Impacts and Enhance Positive Impacts and Opportunities for Ethnic Groups

The project's Environmental and Social Management Plan (ESMP) includes mitigation measures for all potential negative environmental and social impacts, both potential internal and external factors (see Annex 6a ESIA/ESMP/ESMF, Section 6.6, Table 38: ESMP). The present EGP does not repeat specific measures, actions and indicators specified under each ESMP mitigation measure, but aims at complementing it by adding interventions aimed at engagement of ethnic groups in a culturally-sensitive and respectful manner in accordance with the GCF's Indigenous Peoples Policy. The EGP provides guidelines on how to inform, consult, engage and empower the ethnic group community in the project areas.

The ESMP covers the following safeguards areas:

Table 5 Overview of actions within Thai Rice Project ESMP

ESS No.	Title
ESS 1	Assessment and management of environmental and social risks and impacts
ESS 2	Labour and working conditions
ESS 3	Resource efficiency and pollution prevention
ESS 4	Community health, safety and security
ESS 5	Land acquisition and involuntary resettlement
ESS 6	Biodiversity conservation and sustainable management of living natural resources
ESS 7	Indigenous peoples
ESS 8	Cultural heritage
ESS 9	Stakeholder engagement and information disclosure
ESS 10	Climate change resilience and adaptation
-	Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment (SEAH)
-	Emergency preparedness and response

Source: ESMP (available in Annex 6a)

4.1. Measures to Avoid, Minimize and Mitigate Negative Impacts and Enhance Positive Impacts and Opportunities

The interventions in **Error! Reference source not found.** below are designed to avoid, minimize and mitigate negative impacts and enhance positive impacts and opportunities for ethnic groups that are potentially reached by the Thai Rice Project throughout the project period. They are intended to guide the project's safeguards team and will effectively inform, consult, engage and empower the ethnic groups and seek their free, prior and informed consent. Table 5 cross-references to the broader project concept and Funding Proposal package, indicating ethnic group-related concepts and interventions covered in other parts of the FP, such as the GAP, ESMP and SEP.

The Thai Rice Project's safeguards staff will be responsible for implementation of the outlined measures. The safeguards staff are required to have both a high level of knowledge on the ethnic culture, diversity and rights of the ethnic groups in Thailand and also the necessary cultural sensitivity to engage with them.

Wherever Thai language skills of the ethnic groups are low, interpreters will be hired to address language barriers. They will support communication, consultations, capacity building and facilitate knowledge dissemination in local languages and support mutual understanding between project stakeholders and the respective groups.

As a general rule, persons self-identifying as indigenous people and engaged in rice farming will be included in the project interventions, although the intervention area does not cover the upland areas where most groups live. Their Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC) to participate in the project will be sought – on an individual level and/or through the authorities of the groups involved.

Further, ethnic group issues will be treated as a cross-cutting topic in the project. Where relevant, and where language barriers exist, documents, including handbooks and training materials, will be translated into the relevant language (see also SEP intervention 4). For guidelines that are newly developed and revised, special attention will be paid to social inclusion and safeguarding the rights of indigenous peoples. Apart from ethnic sensitivity, the project will pay special attention to intersectional topics: e.g. to show gender sensitivity for questions arising at the crossroads of ethnicity and gender. This means understanding and taking into account ethnic groups' gender perspectives.

Further, the project will respect traditional knowledge; customary use of lands and forests; territories; resources; rights related to cultural and spiritual heritage; values; resource management systems and practices; occupations; livelihoods and ethnic groups' institutions.

Table 5. Measures to avoid, minimize and mitigate negative impacts and enhance positive impacts and opportunities for ethnic groups

No	Impact / need / opportunity	Measure	Indicator	Timeline	Reference
1	There is a lack of region-specific data on the knowledge held by ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples on climate change and adaptive measures in agriculture.	The project M&E system put in place will be designed in an ethnic-group sensitive way, including socio-economic as well as project implementation relevant data.	The M&E system will include ethnic group-related data over the entire project period.	Year 1-5	M&E component of the project (FP)
2	With regard to ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples, there is a lack of region-specific data on their needs and challenges in general (e.g. discrimination) and with regard to climate-smart rice agriculture specifically.	A survey will be undertaken to ensure that those farmers who self-identify as being part of an indigenous people: (i) have fair and equitable access to project support and that (ii) any challenges they encounter as a result of their ethnicity (cultural, language, etc.) will be addressed (e.g. in subsequent training materials, workshops, etc.).	A sample of farmers (or all such farmers, if the number is manageable) are surveyed on an annual basis (after obtaining free, prior and informed consent as a collectivity).	Year 1-5	ESMP intervention No 19
3	Ethnic groups are faced with discrimination and are frequently under-served by the state (often due to the remoteness of villages).	An ethnic groups engagement field guide (guidebook) that incorporates the concept of ethnic group sensitivity and potential (cultural responsiveness), including consultation/social inclusion, is developed. Training is provided to key government and project staff on the above mentioned guidebook.	The ethnic groups engagement guidebook is developed and at least 2 trainings conducted.	Year 1-5	NA
4	The views and concerns of ethnic groups are not always heard in the public sphere. Further, groups are often under-served in terms of social services.	Where the project activities may reach self-identified indigenous peoples, adequate information on project interventions will be provided and engagement sought. The conduct of meaningful consultations that seek to obtain FPIC will be ensured (with special attention paid	Number of individual meetings, field and community visits with	Year 1-5	SEP intervention 5 and 10

		to ethnic women). This aims to ensure transparent processes and active, free, effective, meaningful and informed participation of individuals and groups throughout these processes, with due consideration to gender equality, social inclusion and safeguarding the rights of ethnic groups throughout project implementation.	participation of ethnic groups		
5	Poverty, population growth and limited land in which to expand farming are placing considerable pressures on upland tribe communities. There is potential for young, capable ethnic community members to move temporarily to the lowlands where they can generate additional income from climate-smart rice farming activities.	Where the project activities will reach self-identified indigenous peoples, their equitable access (especially of ethnic women) to climate-smart agriculture, finance and (other) training measures will be ensured. This is foreseen to be operationalised in cooperation with stakeholders who have experience in engaging ethnic groups in the north, especially the Mah Fah Luang (MFL) Foundation. This might further entail translation of training material and adaptation of formats: e.g. inclusion of time and space to exchange.	Number of training measures that include participants who self-identify as belonging to an indigenous people	Year 1-5	ESMP intervention 20 SEP intervention 8
6	Female members of self-identified ethnic groups often lack representation in the public sphere.	To improve female representation, women from self-identified indigenous peoples will be offered to participate in the annual national gender workshop of the Thai Rice Project.	Number of women who self-identify as belonging to an indigenous people attending the annual national workshop	Year 2-5	GAP intervention 59
7	Ethnic groups' needs, grievances and concerns are frequently not addressed properly.	To ensure ethnic groups know about/have access to and confidence in the project grievance redress mechanism (GRM) and their concerns are addressed properly, the GRM will be communicated to ethnic groups as part of project engagement. The GRM considers culturally appropriate ways of handling the concerns of ethnic groups in the project areas and accepts grievances in local languages. Grievances can be submitted anonymously but can also be marked as originating from a person self-	Regular reporting of the grievance status in regular project reports.	Year 1-5	NA

		identifying as pertaining to an ethnic group. The grievances will be documented and reported accordingly (for further details, see Section 7.2 – Ethnic-Groups related Grievances).			
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4.2. Free, Prior and Informed Consent

Free, prior and informed consent (FPIC) is not only a mandatory requirement prior to and during project implementation, but is also necessary to ensure that FPIC is being applied to rice farmers self-identifying as indigenous peoples. The ESMP includes specific measures to address rice farmers self-identifying as indigenous peoples in its Actions No. 19 and Action No. 20. The FPIC process is implemented in two separate stages, which are referred to as FPIC 1 and FPIC 2:

FPIC 1: Consultation: during project development, the project starts to communicate and engage with ethnic group communities freely and without intimidation, so that the rice farmers have access to project information and can express their feedback, concerns and interests.

FPIC 2: Working Together: FPIC starts after the rice farmers self-identifying as indigenous peoples freely, willingly and collectively agree to work with the project. The areas and interventions in which ethnic group members will be potentially engaged are covered in Section 4.1.

In all activities and interventions, the project applies the following FPIC principles:

- FPIC is prerequisite for starting any activity.
- The beneficiaries must receive adequate, transparent, clear and comprehensive information about potential risks and benefits of participating in the programme. This information must include both benefits and risks to beneficiaries in terms of climate-smart agriculture and the proposed technologies as well as income possibilities.
- Project communication must be in languages that participants understand. A community's level of the Thai language is assessed during the FPIC as well as the languages used during the meetings.
- Records are kept of all FPIC processes and results, and are maintained in a database for continued tracking throughout the project's life. The process flexibility helps build trust and mutual understanding among all stakeholders involved. A database of records will be created to record and monitor ongoing consent amongst all participants at a community level, with care given to ensure participation by ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples.
- A grievance mechanism structure is introduced not later than the start of implementation of key activities (excluding FPIC 1).
- Although consent is given after FPIC process is finalized, the opportunity is left available for rice farmers self-identifying as indigenous peoples to opt-out of the project at any time.

5. Results of Consultations and Future Engagement

5.1. Results of Consultations with Ethnic Groups

Consultations have been held to support the development of the Thai Rice Project and to inform the EGP. Provincial-, district- and community-level consultations were conducted in two provinces (Chiang Rai and Chiang Mai) with villages of ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples, with local authorities and with a Civil Society Organisation (CSO).

Consultations integrated and considered culture and gender sensitivity. Diverse consultation formats were applied, including one-on-one meetings and village meetings, which included in-depth interviews with individual community leaders and farmers, in small groups and in full-group discussions. Community leaders comprise three types of persons, with clear and internally-respected roles and responsibilities for village matters:

(1) “Pooyaibaan” (which translates as “elder of the house”) and their assistants: These persons are elected by village members following State rules and they are authorized to perform certain roles and take certain decisions. For example, they will lead in addressing conflicts such as land disputes and theft. It is observed that they tend to be from a younger generation (e.g., in their 30s) and have high fluency in the Thai language.

(2) Village elders: This designation reflects traditional authority structures of the villages. Groups of elders who acquire this designation from age and wisdom collectively take decisions on traditions, such as selecting auspicious dates for annual events and festivals.

(3) Spiritual leaders: Many communities, such as Hmong, Lisu, Yao, and Akha, worship their ancestors. Spiritual leaders are key figures who lead related rites and rituals, and may provide guidance and remedies for illnesses.

Discussions were held in the languages of the ethnic groups where needed. Attention was paid to ensure the equal participation of men and women throughout the consultation process.

There were a total of 119 participants (58 female, 61 male), shown in Table 6. Out of the total participants, 114 participants were community leaders and farmers from the following ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous people: 22 as Akha (19%), 11 as Hmong (9%), 9 as Karen (8%), 23 as Lahu (20%), 26 as Lisu (23%), and 23 as Yao (20%). Additionally, 4 participants represented government authorities and 1 participant represented a local CSO serving ethnic groups; these additional stakeholders were interviewed separately in their offices to confirm understanding of selected baseline information and the policy landscape (they were not present during meetings conducted with the ethnic groups).

Ten villages were consulted (six villages in Chiang Rai and four villages in Chiang Mai), where 13 consultations were held with villagers using semi-structured interview guidelines to inform them of the project and receive feedback on the project context and proposed activities. The selection of villages was intentional and strategic to receive feedback from diverse ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples on topics of interest and where potential adjustments may be considered. At the village level, 48% of the participants of the consultations were women.

Process for participant identification and ensuring free, prior and informed consent (FPIC1):

The multidisciplinary study team, including experts of Mae Fah Luang University’s (MFU) Centre of Excellence for Hill Tribe Health Research, contacted community leaders of ethnic group villages

who identify as indigenous peoples to provide an overview of the objectives of the planned consultation and intended uses of information to be gained. Community leaders called “Pooyaibaan” and their assistants are the entry-points for such inquiries. The background, objective and process were transparently shared with the Pooyaibaan, for them to advise on how to best proceed. This respects traditional authority structures of the villages and is also aligned with official governance structures of the State.

Where the Pooyaibaan indicated preliminary interest, written letters were issued by the team to these communities to communicate the same information in writing, for common records and as standard good practice by institutions conducting research (please see Appendices 1 and 2). Where community leaders agreed to further engage, the team requested their support on date selection and to gather community members who were farmers, have grown rice for multiple consecutive seasons, and with 50% female representation.

At the village meetings, the team again overviewed objectives of the planned consultation and intended uses of information to be gained to all participants. In some cases, the Pooyaibaan provided additional explanation specific to the community. Further, the team shared that any participant may exit the session or choose not to engage in certain aspects of the session at any time, due to any reason without the need for explanation. Participating persons signed individual consent forms, which reflected the same information conveyed verbally (in the ethnic language) by the team.

Discussions proceeded in the full group, in smaller groups and as individual interviews where selected participants showed interest and willingness to offer more in-depth or supplemental information. Summaries were prepared for each consultation, to capture participant inputs while maintaining anonymity of specific input providers.

Table 6 Overview of stakeholder consultation to support the preparation of the project and EGP

Description of consultation(s)	Place	Dates	Stakeholders engaged	No. of Participants			Types of Participants	
				Total	Male	Female	Ethnicity (as self-identified)	Authority
1. Depth interview and group discussion	Ban Vieng Klang Moo.11 Mae Khao Tom, Mueang, Chiang Rai	30.06.2023	Community leaders ⁴ and farmers	14	8	6	Lisu	-
2. Depth interview and group discussion	Khun Huay Mae Pao Moo.17 Tambon. Mae Pao A. Phayamengrai, Chiang Rai	30.06.2023	Community leaders and farmers	11	6	5	Hmong	-
3. Depth interview and group discussion	Ban Tammajarik Moo.13 Mae Chan, Mae Chan, Chiang Rai	02.07.2023	Community leaders and farmers	14	7	7	Yao	-
4. Depth interview and group discussion	Ban Pha Mub, Moo. 12, Mae Yao, Mueang, Chiang Rai	02.07.2023	Community leaders and farmers	9	3	6	Lahu	-
5. Depth interview and group discussion	Ban Khwae Wua Dam, Moo. 12, Mae Yao, Mueang, Chiang Rai	02.07.2023	Community leaders and farmers	9	5	4	Karen	-
6. Depth interview and group discussion	Ban Akpha, Mae Yao, Mueang, Chiang Rai	02.07.2023	Community leaders and farmers	13	8	5	Akha	-
7. Depth interview	Chiang Rai Provincial Agriculture Office	06.07.2023	Head of department	2	1	1	-	Local authority

⁴ Community leaders refers to Pooyaibaen, village elders and spiritual leaders, as described in Section 5.1.

Description of consultation(s)	Place	Dates	Stakeholders engaged	No. of Participants			Types of Participants	
				Total	Male	Female	Ethnicity (as self-identified)	Authority
8. Depth interview and group discussion	Ban Pangpoy, Moo9 Mae Ka, Fang, Chiang Mai	08.07.2023	Community leaders and farmers	14	8	6	Lahu	-
9. Depth interview and group discussion	Ban Mueangrae Moo.6 Mae Ka, Fang, Chiang Mai	08.07.2023	Farmer	9	3	6	Akha	-
10. Depth interview and group discussion	Ban Huai San, Moo. 10, Tha Ton, Mae Ai, Chiang Mai	09.07.2023	Community leaders and farmers	12	6	6	Lisu	-
11. Depth interview and group discussion	Ban Mueang Ngam, Moo. 9, Tha Ton, Mae Ai, Chiang Mai	09.07.2023	Community leaders and farmers	9	5	4	Yao	-
12. Interview and discussion	Office of Provincial Commercial Affairs Chiang Rai	17.07.2023	Head of department	2	-	2	-	Local authority
13. Interview and discussion	The Association for Akha Education and Culture, Chiang Rai	21.07.2023	Head of the association	1	1	-		Non-governmental organisation (NGO)
Total No. of Participants in Stakeholder Consultations				119	61	58		

The local authorities and CSO interviewed (consultations No 7, 12, and 13 in Table 6) were interviewed separately in their offices; they were not invited to, nor present at, consultations with ethnic groups that self-identified as indigenous people. These interviews helped to confirm understanding of selected baseline information and the policy landscape, earlier obtained through desk research.

The consulted ethnic men and women confirmed that they understood the project's intentions and supported the project's proposed activities and interventions in principle. The informants reported that they have noted changes in their areas related to climate change as years have passed, such as related to water availability and temperatures. However, **most of the consulted villagers noted that rice farming is a minority share of their agricultural activities** (for example, compared to corn) in terms of land use, labour and income and with any production of rice being mainly for own consumption. They expressed their willingness to explore options regarding sustainable agricultural practices and indicated that where project activities may reach ethnic groups self-identified as indigenous peoples, addressing topics relevant to a mix of crops (rice and more predominant crops) can lead to higher value for communities.

This supports findings from earlier stakeholder engagement processes which indicated that ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples in the north are not dominated by rice farming activities, and particularly not in the lowland areas where the project will be implemented. Most of this population resides in the highlands, where agriculture is dominated by other cash crops such as vegetables and fruit.

Regarding distinctions observed between the ethnic groups self-identifying as indigenous people:

- The Karen tend to reside in lower-highland areas; the Hmong, Lahu, Lisu, Yao in mid-highland areas; and the Akha around mountain peaks due to each's history, traditions and beliefs.
- The Karen appear to be most rooted to a parcel of land where they farm year over year. Conversely, the Lahu appear to be the most mobile and may move their village's location each year. Other groups may adjust their farming lands each year, such as through clearing additional lands (deforesting) from season to season.
- The Karen favour rice farming more than the other groups. The Akha, Lahu and Lisu farm corn as their main income source, with the Lisu also diversifying to coffee and macadamia. The Hmong and Yao farm fruits for their main income (e.g., mango, lychee, longan).
- On limited occasions, some ethnic groups from mid-highland and mountain peak areas may engage as hired temporary labour in lowland areas during rice harvest time. During consultations, it was identified that the Hmong, Lisu, and Yao do not normally accept jobs as labourers (including on rice fields) due to cultural norms. The Akha and Lahu are, in contrast, more willing to accept jobs as labourers (including on rice fields).

Overall, ethnic groups do not contribute significantly to rice cultivation in lowland areas, nor are they affected by rice farming in the lowland areas. The project will not affect access to lands or resources of the communities of ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous people (Akha, Hmong, Karen, Lahu, Lisu, Yao).

5.2. Future Engagement

The project will implement activities to promote climate-smart rice farming in lowland areas. Most ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples reside in highland areas in the north of Thailand, outside of the project's target areas. Therefore, direct engagement with ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples in highland areas will be very limited.

However, the following potential touch-points are observed:

- A small number of members of ethnic groups residing in highland areas engage as labourers in lowland rice farming areas, particularly at rice harvest time. During consultations, it was identified that the Akha and Lahu are willing to accept jobs as labourers (including on rice fields), which may bring them into contact with project activities..
- The Karen reside in lower-highland areas and favour rice farming on the same parcel of land year over year. As such, they are likely to be located between the lowland areas that farm rice (where the project will focus) and the highland areas where the other ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples reside. As such, the Karen may warrant particular attention for future engagement efforts.

Taking into consideration the needs and interests of these ethnic groups (particularly of the Karen, Akha and Lahu community members), the project will aim to direct some of its climate-smart training at ethnic groups who are not located in the project's target areas but who may provide a pool of talent and labour for climate-smart rice farming (Sub-Activity 1.1.1.1) in lowland areas. This is foreseen to be operationalised in cooperation with stakeholders who have experience in engaging ethnic groups in the north, such as the Mah Fah Luang (MFL) Foundation. The project will ensure availability of general project information and key content on which labourers need to be informed or for which labour capacities need to be built on climate-smart farming in the language of ethnic groups. Additionally, appropriate monitoring activities (in line with FPIC) will ensure that unintended negative impacts to (members of) ethnic groups self-identifying as indigenous people from activities conducted in the project area do not occur or, in case they cannot be avoided, are mitigated.

A stakeholder engagement plan is included in FP Annex 7a that outlines the project's stakeholder engagement process for project implementation. As previously mentioned in Chapter 4.2, FPIC is at the core of each activity. Project implementing staff will be trained on gender and social inclusion, to promote the participation of diverse stakeholders, including women and members of the ethnic groups that self-identify as indigenous peoples.

A communication and information dissemination plan will be elaborated during the project's inception phase. Annual implementation plans will include information on planned stakeholder engagement.

5.4.1 Consultations on Project Activities

The following considerations will be followed when designing consultations with the men and women of ethnic groups identifying as indigenous people to foster two-way communication:

- Consultations will be conducted in a manner that is accessible and culturally appropriate, paying due attention to the specific needs of beneficiaries and others who may be affected by project implementation (including gender, literacy, language or accessibility of technical information).
- The objective and the anticipated results of the consultation will be clearly stated.
- Consultation design will take into account the specific indigenous peoples who are targeted, and their context (interests, capacities, cultural background).
- Information provided in consultations will be complete, transparent, easy to understand, promote inclusiveness and gender sensitivity. It should explain the objectives of the project, including positive and potentially adverse effects

- Suitable trainers and facilitators will conduct the consultations, including trainers who are trained in social inclusion, indigenous peoples rights and gender equality. Translation services will be provided for non-Lao speaking ethnic groups (when necessary).
- Transparent, accurate and consistent documentation and reporting will be required from all consultations. Attendance sheets should be collected from each meeting, along with meeting summaries and photos. A record of all consultations conducted within the framework of the project will be managed by the project management units.

Consultations with ethnic groups will be ensured according to the provisions of Section 3.5 of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan, SEP (Annex 7.a). They will take the form of individual meetings (timeframe / periodicity: as required by the project), field and community visits (timeframe / periodicity: throughout the implementation of the project) and a stakeholder forum (timeframe / periodicity: once a year at the end of the annual cropping cycle). Detailed budgeting for stakeholder engagement and consultation activities is included within the project's budget.

5.4.2. Reporting on Indigenous Peoples Engagement

GIZ will provide regular updates on project implementation, through various media sources (online, print, workshops, among others). Communications and information-sharing will be promoted, including through a bilingual project website and social media network; brochures and educational materials; wire broadcasting; meetings and exchanges; field visits; participation in local events; and other channels. When appropriate, information will be presented using visuals and in other local languages to reach diverse ethnic groups. Channels and approaches to be utilized to effectively reach different target stakeholders are detailed in the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (Annex 7a).

Annual reporting will further provide an overview of consultations and workshops conducted, information on progress implementing the project, including its EGP, GAP and ESMP, and will provide insight into upcoming events for the following year. To ensure the widest dissemination and disclosure of project information, including any details related to applicable environmental and social safeguards, local and accessible disclosure tools including audio-visual materials such as flyers, brochures, videos and community radio broadcasts in local languages will be utilized in addition to other communication modes. In the case of individuals identifying as indigenous people, particular attention will be paid to women, illiterate or technologically-illiterate people, and people with hearing or visual disabilities, people with limited or no access to internet and other special needs these groups may have. The dissemination of information will be carried out with the project counterparts and local actors such as village leaders and producer groups.

6. Gender Assessment and Action Plan

Gender equality is additionally influenced by ethnic background in Thailand. Ethnic groups tend, as with mainstream society in Thailand, to be patriarchal, which offers the opportunity to promote gender equality within these groups (UNDP, 2021). According to the GCF IP Policy, indigenous traditional belief systems constitute the basis of the climate resilience of indigenous groups. However, as in any other society in the world, some of those beliefs may limit the way women in ethnic groups express themselves and their opinions. Further, although many ethnic group members have ID cards, there are fewer women who have Thai nationality, since there are fewer women who can read, write and speak the Thai language well (IWNT, 2011). Women who have

no official nationality are limited in their ability to engage in activities requiring this documentation, such as formal employment or financial services. When there are limited economic opportunities in the communities, coupled with insufficient household income from available economic activities (e.g., agriculture) and debt, trends indicate that instances of domestic violence rise. When the traditional security measures fail to protect these women, many of them decide to perform illegal work in order to make a living and have access to the resources that will help them obtain nationality for their families and themselves, particularly for those who are widows and have children to take care of (IWNT, 2011).

A Gender Action Plan has been developed (Annex 8b), based on a detailed gender assessment (Annex 8a), to mainstream gender-related measures into the project, ensuring that gender-related risks are avoided or mitigated, and to maximize climate and development co-benefits for both men and women from diverse ethnic groups, mainly those who self-identify as indigenous peoples. It pays special attention to women, considering that women are not a homogeneous group, and the additional challenges and opportunities that women from different ethnic groups may face. The plan includes:

- Gender-responsive measures for project activities, as well as cross-cutting measures that address and strengthen the voice and agency of women, including those of indigenous women, in climate action within the context of the proposed project. Timelines and responsibilities are also indicated within the Gender Action Plan.
- Gender-responsive result indicators and sex-disaggregated targets, including indicators and targets that apply to the double identity specificity of indigenous women - based on both gender and ethnicity.

7. Grievance Redress Mechanism

According to the GCF's Revised Environmental and Social Policy⁵, the purpose of the Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) is to receive and facilitate the resolution of concerns and grievances about the environmental and social performance of GCF-financed activities. Full details of the project's GRM are provided in Annex 7a (SEP). In the context of the Thai Rice Project, the specific objectives of the GRM are to:

- Provide a communication channel to receive feedback and grievances from stakeholders (including, but not limited to, farmers, service providers, local authorities, NGOs and others), ultimately with the goal of resolving grievances amicably where possible and minimising the use of the legal system.
- Establish a grievance procedure with clear responsibilities and reporting lines in order to process stakeholder grievances in a timely and transparent manner.
- Establish a system for recording grievances and the measures (if any) put in place to respond to the grievances.
- Provide a separate GRM for SEAH-related grievances that reflects the particular gender, cultural and privacy sensitivities that can be associated with SEAH complaints.

The project's GRM is predicated upon the following basic principles:

- **Transparency:** the receipt and processing of grievances will be conducted transparently, in a culturally-appropriate and gender-sensitive manner, and in the appropriate language.
- **Consistency:** open channels of communication will be maintained between the claimant and the GRM for the duration of the grievance process.
- **Accessibility:** all stakeholders will be able to freely access the GRM.
- **Disclosure:** all grievances will be recorded and archived, regardless of whether the grievances are justified or not (the subsequent investigation will determine if the grievances are justified).
- **Discussion:** all justified grievances will be followed up by one or more discussions with the claimant – accompanied, if useful or relevant, by a site visit by a project representative.
- **Privacy:** the GRM will be consistent with Thai data protection law and will respect complainant confidentiality and privacy.

Two categories of grievance can be identified:

A grievance that is not related to project implementation. This occurs when a claimant raises a grievance that may geographically or temporally overlap with the project, but which nonetheless lies outside of the conceptual project boundary. This type of grievance is beyond the scope of the GRM. As per standard GRM practice (see below), a preliminary screening and investigation will be undertaken if a grievance is reported to the GRM.

A grievance that is related to project implementation. Such a grievance stems from implementation of project Outputs, Activities and Sub-Activities that lead to adverse impacts on stakeholders. This type of grievance can be direct or indirect:

- **Direct:** a project-delivered intervention fails to satisfy the recipient in some way.
- **Indirect:** a set of conditions established by the project may impose harm or inconvenience on a stakeholder. The grievance is not about a project-supplied service and the complainant may

⁵ GCF's Revised Environmental and Social Policy (September 2021): [Revised environmental and social policy | Green Climate Fund](#).

not necessarily be a targeted project beneficiary (for example, it might be a farmer outside the project boundary), but the grievance could probably not have arisen in the absence of the project.

A detailed description of the GRM is provided in Annex 7a (SEP). In brief, the project's GRM enables grievances to be reported through a number of channels, ensures all grievances are acknowledged and responded to within defined time-periods, and are systematically recorded. The GRM is predicated upon an escalatory model. Grievances are processed locally to the extent possible. Where the local-level Grievance Consideration Unit (GCU) is unable to address a grievance to the satisfaction of the complainant, the grievance is escalated to a GCU in the next level of the GRM hierarchy.

Processing Grievances

A grievance is initiated by a complainant. The complainant submits a grievance to the project, via the project website, phone number, a local project representative, a local event or a grievance body located at an appropriate location. This grievance is recorded, screened for scope eligibility by the Environmental and Social Safeguards (ESS) Manager and, if found to be eligible, is then processed and delegated to the appropriate GCU. In either case – eligible or non-eligible – the grievance submission is acknowledged to the complainant within a defined time period (5 days). The project's ESS Manager, a member of the PMU, is responsible for day-to-day management of the GRM and for maintaining systematic records of grievances received and how they are addressed.

The GRM is based upon an escalatory model. Grievances are processed locally to the extent possible. Where the local-level GCU is unable to address a grievance to the satisfaction of the complainant, the grievance is escalated to a GCU in the next level of the GRM hierarchy. GCUs are temporary structures that are convened to consider specific grievances and are then dissolved after successful resolution of the grievance or when the grievance is escalated up to the next level. This ensures that GCUs can be constituted with the appropriate technical, cultural or geographical expertise to address context-specific grievances.

There are 3 hierarchical levels in the GRM and complementarity with a fourth (GCF) level: **local, national, GIZ and GCF**. At each hierarchical level, a grievance will be considered, and remedial actions proposed within 30 days of the grievance being first received (local level) or the grievance being escalated to the next level (national or GIZ).

Table 7 Steps to resolve grievances

Step to Resolve Grievance	Responsible Entity
Step 1: Submission of grievance to the project	Stakeholders
Step 2: Registration of grievance	GIZ officer records the claim
Step 3: Screening for scope eligibility	ESS Manager
Step 4: Investigate grievance by hierarchical levels	Consider and propose remedial actions by local-level GCU or national-level GCU or GIZ Thailand country office or GCF
Step 5: Closure of grievance	ESS Manager records, documents and formally closes grievance case

Table 88 Grievance analysis according to degree of severity

Level of Grievance	Description	Actions
Not justifiable	Grievance or concern is not related to the project.	Communicate and explain real situation to claimant. Register as not justified.
Negligible	Grievance is related to project with no damage. Resolution can be done immediately.	Communicate and explain real situation to claimant. Solution will be considered based on the grievance treatment system.
Minimum	Grievance is related to project and causes small damage and/or over small area. Negotiation is required.	Communicate, explain real situation, disclose data and information if needed, discussion with claimant for solution. Solution will be considered based on the grievance treatment system.
Moderate	Grievance is related to project and causes moderate damage with expansion of area. Negotiation and consultation are required.	Communicate, explain real situation, disclose data and information if needed, discussion with claimant and any other stakeholder involved for solution. Solution will be considered based on the grievance treatment system.
Serious	Grievance is related to project and causes large damage and/or over vast area with difficulty to control.	Communicate, explain real situation, disclose data and information if needed, discussion with claimant and any other stakeholder involved for solution. If necessary, local-level GCU nominated to resolve the issue. Usually, nominated GCU contains a respected person in a village. Solution will be considered based on the grievance treatment system.
Catastrophic	The grievance is related to project and damage cannot be controlled; typically requires complicated resolution.	Consult national-level GCU for solution if grievance cannot be addressed by local-level GCU.

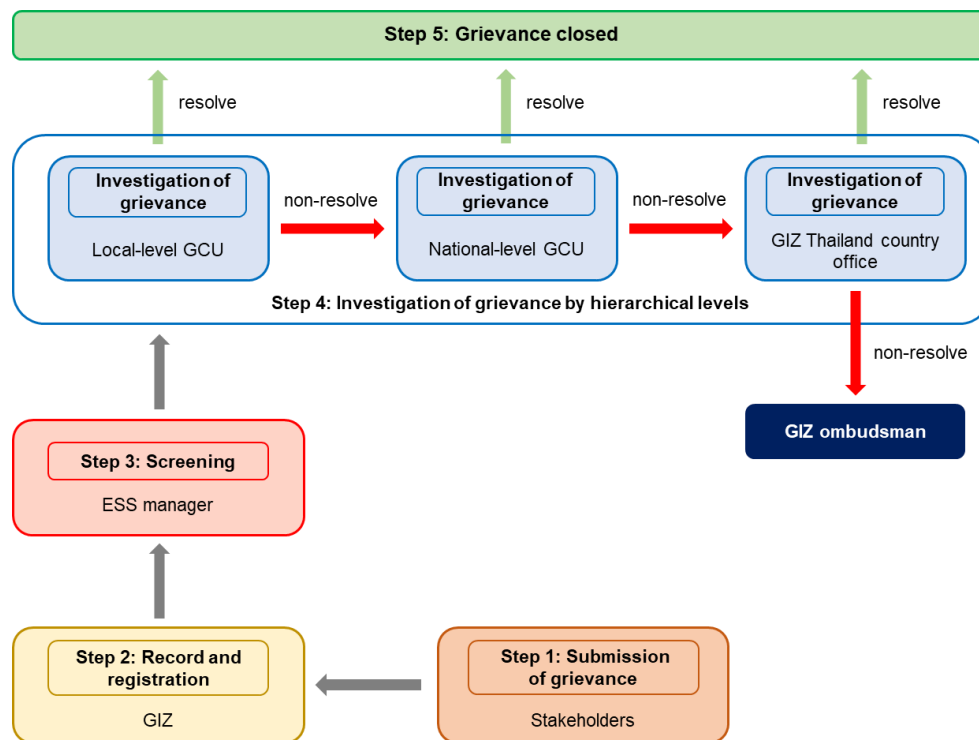


Figure 4 GRM Procedure Flowchart

7.1 SEAH-Related Grievances

SEAH-related grievances follow a different process, as they have the potential to be qualitatively different – and potentially more serious – than non-SEAH grievances:

- Potential conflicts of interest: the complaint may relate to the behaviour of a project stakeholder who might be involved in the consideration of grievances.
- Privacy: a complainant making serious allegations of sexual harassment or abuse may not wish his/her identity to be widely known.
- Gender and cultural sensitivity: a complainant, particularly if traumatized, may wish to discuss a grievance only with someone of their own gender or in a culturally acceptable context.

Accordingly, the Thai Rice Project incorporates a survivor-centred and gender-responsive GRM for SEAH-related grievances. Individuals who wish to submit a SEAH-related grievance will be encouraged to use a dedicated project phone number (different from the general GRM phone number) or a dedicated project e-mail address (different from the general GRM e-mail address) which will be directly received by the ESS Manager. A full description of the SEAH GRM process will be provided on the project website as well as in project literature (leaflets, workshop notes, etc.).

Given the range of possible grievances, and the range of possible levels of seriousness of allegations, a one-size-fits-all model is not considered desirable. Nor also may the standard escalatory model – start locally and then, if necessary, escalate to the national level and then the GIZ level – be appropriate: for example, if the allegations relate to local project representatives or

if there is a danger of the identity of the complainant becoming known to the local community (against the wishes of the complainant).

SEAH-related grievances will always be considered with compassion and sensitivity. Where the ESS Manager is not best placed to lead the investigatory response (e.g., for gender or linguistic reasons), he/she will nominate a Grievance Focal Point who is better positioned to do so. The Grievance Focal Point may be a member of the PMU, a member of the broader project implementation team (e.g., an Executing Entity (EE) staff member) or an outside expert. In all cases, the Grievance Focal Point will be bound by tight confidentiality requirements.

As a starting point, the Grievance Focal Point will follow up with the complainant – by phone, e-mail or in-person (as appropriate) – to elucidate the details of the complaint and to understand the ‘ground rules’ that the complainant wishes to operate under (e.g., whether his/her identity is to be kept confidential, whether he/she is happy for other relevant stakeholders to be interviewed, what sort of resolution the complainant is seeking, etc.). This will then define the options available to the project to investigate the grievance and, if found to be legitimate, to put in place appropriate response measures. The Grievance Focal Point and the ESS Manager (if they are not the same individual) will, together, formulate a bespoke response approach based on the nature and seriousness of the allegations and the wishes of the complainant.

If a complainant is unhappy with the response approach that is developed or the actions that are proposed to address the grievance, the complainant can escalate the grievance to the GIZ Country Office.

7.2 Ethnic Groups-Related Grievances

The Thai Rice Project’s Grievance Redress Mechanism (GRM) will be operated in a way to effectively address ethnic groups’ (including those identifying as indigenous peoples) project-related concerns. It will follow all the GRM procedures and principles outlined above: e.g. confidentiality and disclosure. In addition, the provisions outlined hereafter will be implemented to ensure ethnic groups’ grievances are processed in an effective, accessible, fair, transparent and constructive way:

- Submission of grievances from ethnic groups will be accepted in different ways: (a) in written form in local languages (to ensure that language barriers/limitations can be overcome); (b) in oral form through a dedicated project phone number; (c) by personal presentation; (d) by sending a representative to be chosen freely by the claimant⁶, e.g. a community leader (Pooyaibaan, village elders, spiritual leaders) or any other person of trust.
- To ensure proper grievance proceedings, the project will provide for interpretation and/or translation in the claimant’s preferred local language.
- GRM procedures will be publicly advertised in the relevant languages: e.g. on website(s) and in project-related documents. Ethnic group participants in capacity building measures and community leaders (Pooyaibaan, village elders, spiritual leaders) will be specifically sensitized for the GRM and its functioning. These awareness-raising measures are intended to ensure that ethnic groups know how to air their potential concerns. Where the

⁶ The free choice of the representative is of utmost importance as anecdotal evidence shows that some socially disadvantaged groups do not always feel properly represented by community leaders for different types of grievances.

project's ESS Manager is not best placed to lead the investigatory response to a grievance (e.g. due to language barriers or cultural reasons), he/she will nominate a Grievance Focal Point who is better positioned to do so. The Grievance Focal Point may be a member of the PMU, a member of the broader project implementation team (e.g., an Executing Entity staff member) or an outside expert. In all cases, the Grievance Focal Point will be bound by tight confidentiality requirements.

- Ethnic group-related grievances, including individuals who self-identify as belonging to an indigenous people, will be considered with the appropriate technical, cultural or geographical expertise. In case needed, the local-level GCU and/or national-level GCU (described in Section 7 above) will include an ethnic group representative.

8. Costs, Budget, Timetable and Organizational Responsibilities

8.1. Costs, Budgets, Timetables

The budget and implementation of the EGP is reflected in the ESMP's Budget and implementation (Annex 6a).

The programme management approach is highly integrated, in the sense that information collected for the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) System, for safeguards aspects, gender and also EGP-relevant aspects are channelled through the same tools and mechanisms. Therefore, EGP budgets, timelines and responsibilities are summarized under the ESMP and GAP. As required by GCF's Indigenous Peoples Policy, this approach is proportionate to the scope and scale of potential risks and impacts of the Thai Rice Project for ethnic groups in the project area.

8.2. Implementation Arrangements and Organizational Responsibilities

The Thai Rice Project will be overseen by a Project Steering Committee (PSC), which will serve as the principal governing body for the project. The PSC will meet twice a year and will consist of representatives of Thai national ministries and departments – including the Office of Natural Resources and Environmental Policy and Planning (ONEP), which serves as the Thai National Designated Authority (NDA) – and close project partners. Private sector interests will be represented by a seat reserved for the private sector partners engaged in the project through the develoPPP programme (one seat on a rotational basis). The PSC will be responsible for political oversight and coordinating partner cooperation.

The Project Management Unit (PMU) will be responsible for day-to-day implementation of the Thai Rice Project. Members of the PMU will consist of delegated staff from 4 of the Executing Entities – Rice Department (RD), Bank of Agriculture and Agricultural Cooperatives (BAAC), International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and GIZ – as well as from Department of Agricultural Extension (DoAE) (as the Thai entity with an overall mandate for agricultural extension support, working in the Thai Rice Project context through RD). PMU is to be informed by the Safeguards Team about any major safeguards (including EGP-relevant) issues to trigger mitigation measures. Feedback on technical details of safeguards issues is to be provided by the Safeguards Team directly to project EEs and GIZ advisors.

In addition, ESS focal persons will be assigned within GIZ, RD, BAAC, ONEP and IRRI to assist in coordinating and ensuring the benefits of ethnic groups, as well as overseeing other social safeguards. The Environmental and Social Safeguards Management (ESM) team will be responsible for implementation and monitoring of the EGP.

8.3. Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting

Indicators of the EGP will be included into the overall information management system of the project and will be collected in conjunction with other data to be collected for the purposes of M&E, safeguards, and gender mainstreaming. The main reporting mechanism is the Annual Progress Report to the GCF. The report is shared with all relevant stakeholders and key points will be presented in Project Steering Committee (PSC) meetings. Also in the M&E context, the FPIC principle will be obtained whenever the knowledge held by ethnic groups (including those self-identifying as indigenous peoples) is involved, especially if it is to be documented, shared and become public.

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