



# Community Entrepreneur Development Institute

## Organisational Profile 1995-2005-2015-2025

### 1. The origin and Development of CENDI

CENDI was established in 2015 to continue the work of previous LISO (Livelihood Sovereignty) organisations since the 1990s as the needs and challenges of indigenous minority communities in the Mekong region changed.

Over the years 1995–2015, TEW (Toward Ethnic Women), CHESH (Center for Human Ecology Studies of the Highlands), CIRD (Center for Indigenous Knowledge Research and development), CODE (Consultancy on Development Institute) and SPERI (Social Policy Ecology Research Institute) worked with indigenous ethnic minority communities in Vietnam, Laos and Thailand through their grass-roots Key Farmer Network named Mekong Community Networking for Ecological Trading (MECO-ECOTRA 1995-2015). Communities of different ethnic identity and location selected their own Key Farmers who were highly respected and knowledgeable people who exchanged their own experiences, challenges and solutions by networking together. Step-by-step, the Key Farmer Network becomes a key practical pillar of community development work in the Mekong region for overcoming daily challenges and meeting the daily needs of indigenous communities.

In 2013, the LISO (Livelihood Sovereignty Alliance) was formed to strengthen joint collaboration between TEW, CHESH, CIRD, CODE, SPERI and CENDI in achieving for indigenous peoples the five fundamental rights of Livelihood Sovereignty: 1) the right to land; 2) the right to worship land spirits; 3) the right to apply their own wisdom, knowledge and customs in governing their own up-land farming ways; 4) the right to maintain their local seed which have survived for hundreds of years in their own territory; and 5) the right to co-govern their traditional territories with their neighbours.

In 2015, CENDI (Community Entrepreneur Development Institute) was formed to co-work with key farmers to strengthen the skills and capacities of their communities to address the challenges presented by the free market economic system. There are now young eco-farmers in Northern Vietnam, Central Vietnam, the Central Highlands of Vietnam, Northern Laos and Northern Thailand networking among each other to create Community Enterprises. CENDI sees it as its mission to facilitate, encourage and support these young farmers so that in the coming years, from these young seeds, Community Enterprises run by Community Entrepreneurs will be developed as a new model of community economy based on the community wisdom and customs in ecological farming and biodiversity preservation. For this

new thematic, we have adopted the name Agroecology to describe the production and post-harvest processing of ecological products – native rice, textiles, medicinal herbs, etc. – for socially, culturally, economically and ethically aware customers in local and regional niche markets. These ecological products, priced to include the added value of their cultural and ecological characteristics, will then become the main source of income for their communities, and an alternative to engagement with the socially and culturally corrosive, ecologically damaging, and externally controlled market economy.

## **2. Main Areas of Work**

### ***CENDI's Mission***

CENDI's mission is to secure: 1) Community legitimate right to their forests, rivers, streams and ancestral land; 2) community legitimate right to their local knowledge and wisdom in self-reliant and self-determined governance of their forests, rivers, streams and ancestral land; 3) community legitimate right to preserve and develop their local native species and genetic biodiversity of ecosystems via their traditional sustainable agro-ecology; 4) community legitimate right to pursue their philosophy of "Nurturing Nature" and creatively develop a community-based mindful economy, based on their own wisdom and cultural traditions.

### ***Strategic Objectives***

1. Facilitate community legitimate rights to: i) natural resources; ii) local knowledge and customary law; iii) local native species and biodiversity of ecosystems and ancestral territories through agro-ecology and sustainable maintenance of community self-reliant ecological livelihoods (i.e. community economy) to minimize negative impacts of the market economy.
2. Empower the ecological young farmer network named YIELDS-AGREE (Young Indigenous Ethnic Leadership Development Strategy for Agro-Ecological Enterprising) (see the link: <http://cendiglobal.org/yields-agree.html>) to consolidate and promote community enterprises on the basis of community agro-ecology models for fair trading of niche eco-products in various regions, which are started up, operated and governed by young community entrepreneurs of the YIELDS-AGREE.
3. Strengthen and improve practical models and curriculums from the community agro-ecology models mentioned in the strategic objective 1 and 2; create internal energy for the communities to become more confident, self-reliant to manage and develop natural and human resources of IEMs in the Mekong region.

### ***Network Connections***

CENDI's work is addressing needs and challenges of smallholders and local communities through facilitating/strengthening grassroots farmers network in the Mekong region i.e. MECO-ECOTRA, and recently, with young farmers in the Vietnam and Southeast Asia region named YIELDS-AGREE.

*Locally:* CENDI has had strong relationships with local government authorities and relevant agencies, key research institutes, key media channels.

*Nationally:* CENDI has continued tightening relationships with Communist Party Magazine, Ethnic Council and Science and Technology Council of National Assembly, Central Economic Committee-CEC for advocacy and policy lobbying strategies. Vietnam National Agriculture Academy for Student Internship.

*Research Institutes:* CENDI has continued collaboration with The Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development, Chiang Mai University, Chiang Mai, Thailand; Department of Anthropology, Waikato University, Hamilton, New Zealand; Australian National University, Canberra, Australia; International Working Group on Indigenous Affairs, Denmark; and relevant local research institutes in Vietnam.

*International Churches:* CENDI has had support from international church-based organizations e.g. France (SCCF, CCFD), Germany (MISEREOR, BROT, ESP, NLI) and Japan (SDM). CENDI also continues our strategic traditional donor ICCO (the Netherlands) by continuous advice and inputs.

*Other international networks:* CENDI has been the key executive committee member in the various alliances in the SEA region including Towards Organic Asia, International Network of Engaged Buddhists, Stop Golden Rice campaign (MASIPAG, GRAIN)

### ***Cooperation with International Donor Organisations***

MISEREOR (Germany); Secours Catholique Caritas France - SCCF (France), CCFD (France); SODI (Germany); Bread for the world (Germany); Naturelife International (Germany) and SDM (Japan)

### ***Primary Areas of Work***

1. Promoting IEM's legitimate right to forests and land
2. Promoting IEM's legitimate right to nurture spiritual ecosystems in forest and land
3. Promoting IEM's right to practice local wisdom in medicinal herbal plants, traditional artisans, local knowledge in protection of the genetic biodiversity of ecosystem.
4. Promoting IEM's legitimate rights to maintain and develop local native species in agro-ecology and maintain ecological livelihood according to the indigenous culture.
5. Promoting IEM's rights to community-based and customary law-based co-management of natural resources.
6. Preservation and development of biodiversity of the community ecosystem
7. Consolidation and development of uniqueness of the community ecosystem
8. Development of interaction among ecosystem characteristics in the indigenous agro-ecology.
9. Development of ecological adaptability in indigenous agro-ecology
10. Maintenance of the stability of the indigenous upland ecosystem

### ***Main Geographical Areas of Work***

1. Kon Plong district of Kon Tum province in the Central Highlands of Vietnam, bordering to Southern Laos and Cambodia
2. Que Phong district of Nghe An province, Huong Son district of Ha Tinh province, Tuyen Hoa and Bo Trach districts of Quang Binh province in the Central Vietnam, bordering to Laos
3. Bat Xat and Simacai districts of Northern Vietnam, bordering to Yunnan, China

### ***Most Important Achievements***

1. Continuing the work of CENDI's preceding organizations of the Livelihood Sovereignty Alliance (LISO) including TEW (Toward Ethnic Women, 1994), CHESH (Centre for Human Ecology Study of Highland, 1999), CIRD (Centre for Indigenous Knowledge Research and Development, 2000), SPERI (Social Policy Ecology Research Institute, 2006) and CODE (Consultancy on Development Institute, 2007) in lobbying government for recognition of indigenous people's rights to: i) land and forests; ii) customary law on management of sacred forests; iii) local native species for agro-ecology farming. For more information, see the links:  
<http://livelihoodsovereignty.org/68/basic.html>  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVyRwBD3zZ4&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVyRwBD3zZ4&feature=emb_logo)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqYENvvYE08&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NqYENvvYE08&feature=emb_logo)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?time\\_continue=26&v=d2dm4\\_WwNsY&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=26&v=d2dm4_WwNsY&feature=emb_logo)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUg6qYrr6G8&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HUg6qYrr6G8&feature=emb_logo)  
[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gc3TQ8IO-XU&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Gc3TQ8IO-XU&feature=emb_logo)
2. Bringing about a change to the Vietnam Forest Law No.16/QH14/2017 with 17 Articles to recognise the rights of indigenous people to their Sacred Forest and the rights of indigenous

people to govern their territory according to their own customary law. For more information, please see the link <http://cendiglobal.org/17-articles-provided-by-liso-that-have-been-included-in-the-new-forest-law-no.16-2017-qh14-of-the-vietnamese-government-s89.html>;

3. Empowering a network of young eco-farmers among Southeast Asia countries to share and exchange local knowledge in preservation and development of local native species through international organizations such as Masipag (the Philippines), Grain (Indonesia), Metta (Myanmar); BioThai (Thailand), Toward Organic Asia. For more information, please see CENDI website at [www.cendiglobal.org](http://www.cendiglobal.org) and HEPA-Eco Farming School links: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCOWP9FoJqo&feature=emb\\_logo](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yCOWP9FoJqo&feature=emb_logo) [https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/recommends/ báo cáo-why-how-ecological-farm-training-Workshop-in-hepa-Eco-farm-school-vietnam](https://wrm.org.uy/articles-from-the-wrm-bulletin/recommends/bao-cao-why-how-ecological-farm-training-Workshop-in-hepa-Eco-farm-school-vietnam)

### **3. Policies of the Organisation**

#### ***Environmental Protection***

Preserving farmer's local knowledge and local native seeds, and promoting community-based nurseries for enriching agroforestry and biodiversity conservation is the primary intervention of CENDI. As measures for ensure environmental protection, CENDI bans the use of plastic products, chemical fertilizers and herbicides. Heavy fines are imposed for breaches of this ban. All visitors and educational groups to CENDI facilities are required to abide by these rules. Through these interventions the negative environmental impacts that are reduced are: loss of species, climate change impacts, and production of waste.

#### ***Involvement of staff and beneficiaries in organisational decision making***

Those employees involved in the project facilitation are frontline fieldworkers. They are involved in observing and analysing farmers' needs, and decision-making for solutions by bridging between farmers, local authorities and CENDI leaders. They are directly involved in connecting farmer's achievements to policy makers and media. They also play a frontline role in supervising interns who usually are the international university students, who come to the CENDI's project areas for practical research experience in the field of indigenous knowledge in natural resources governance and development of community self-reliant ecological livelihood. The target group/beneficiaries select key farmers to represent their community to work with CENDI field staff on 3-month/6-month/ 1-year action plans. They also work on cross monitoring and evaluation between beneficiaries in the communal project areas.

The collaboration between the key farmers and CENDI staff in planning project activities, cross monitoring and evaluation has formed a learning by doing strategy which is the most effective solution toward democracy, transparency and empowerment in the community development. This enables the young farmer networks in the different areas to become confident, self-reliant and self-determining in their communities. They, in the future, will potentially become the community entrepreneurs in their regions to enterprise their own ecological agricultural products, which is the ultimate goal of the CENDI decision-making to fulfil our missions in the communities.

#### ***Social Accountability***

CENDI operation is totally transparent. It incorporates target groups/ beneficiaries in its annual internal evaluation by key farmer independent monitoring and evaluation assembly and professional external evaluation by external experts every three year.

### **4. Management Structure and Decision Making**

#### ***Role of Founding Board***

1. To decide CENDI philosophy, objectives and strategies
2. To decide the splitting, merging, establishment of field offices
3. To supplement and revise the CENDI Regulation
4. To select and propose appointment and dismissal of CENDI Director and Vice Directors
5. To decide financial issues arising during the organization governance according to the CENDI Regulation and financial regulations.

For more details, please refer to Article 8 of the CENDI Regulation on the Organization and Operation at [http://cendiglobal.org/upload/files/II\\_Organization%20and%20Operation%20Regulation%20CENDI%20in%20English\(2\).pdf](http://cendiglobal.org/upload/files/II_Organization%20and%20Operation%20Regulation%20CENDI%20in%20English(2).pdf)

### ***Role of Supervisory Board***

The supervisory board meets yearly and is responsible for checking the honesty, objectiveness and the performance of the participatory methodology of target groups/beneficiaries in the implementation of the project activities and objectives for the project as committed to by the community and donor. Accordingly, the supervisory board has the following role:

1. Identify SWOT (Strong Weak Opportunity and Threatening of CENDI)
2. Provide critique and recommendations to target groups/beneficiaries, community leaders, local authorities and CENDI for lesson learned and appropriate adjustment for the next action plans in case of mid-term project of 2 - 3 years. Accordingly, CENDI Board of Directors may also decide visionary strategic orientations for 3 - 5 year, which may lead to a re-negotiation with financial partners, local authorities and/or even Government high-ranking policy-makers.

### ***Role of the Senior Management Team***

Meets quarterly to approve 1 -year-, 6-month and 3-month field action plans.

For more information, please refer to Annex XIII: "Governance of bank account, projects and co-operation programs with donors and partners, and internal financial monitoring" of the CENDI Regulation on Financial Management at [http://cendiglobal.org/upload/files/2019\\_03\\_15\\_DECISION\\_CENDI\\_FINANCIAL%20REGULATION\\_%20ALL.pdf](http://cendiglobal.org/upload/files/2019_03_15_DECISION_CENDI_FINANCIAL%20REGULATION_%20ALL.pdf)

## **5. Strengths and Challenges of CENDI**

The strengths of CENDI is its highly skilled and dedicated staff that are trusted and respected by the grassroots key farmers, supported by the local authorities, and listened to by the policy-makers via the forums connecting key farmers with legislators.

Following the proceeding organizations, CENDI has been pursuing the strategy of nurturing nature based on community values and philosophy over nearly three decades since 1990s, and community needs, challenges and solutions. The practical lessons learned by CENDI and its preceding organizations have been transformed into our own concepts, definitions, methodologies and BHE (Biological Human Ecology) theory via 10- year visionary direction, 5- year systematic strategic orientation, 3-year and 1-year cooperation action plan by the former MECO-ECOTRA (1995 - 2015) and current YIELDS-AGREE (2015 - 2025). For more details, see the link: <http://cendiglobal.org/founding-president-cendi-speri.-model-of-development-1995-2005-2015-2025-s63.html>.

The challenges that CENDI is confrontation with are profit-driven cooperation, companies and free traders that have increasingly strong impacts on the communities, causing a chaotic situation in maintaining local native species in agro-ecology, preserving biodiversity and community self-reliant livelihoods. The increase in GDP growth-driven industrial agriculture policies has paved the way for replacing a number of natural forest areas and forestland resources in high slope land areas with commercial mono-crops. These areas are vulnerable to

soil erosion and soil nutrient washout, and at the same time, contain a huge treasure of local knowledge and native species, not only Vietnam but for the whole world, which has been maintained and preserved by indigenous peoples for generations. Large-scale plantations of rubber, acacia, industrial cassava for processing and export have been transforming ecosystems, landscapes and climate, and reshaping social forms and relations between indigenous people and their ecological home.

To counter these challenges, CENDI facilitates four interlinked Strategic Actions: 1) Lobby towards Legislative changes and ensuring the rights to land and forests to local communities and good governance; 2) Strengthen Young Farmers network and networking amongst farms at all levels whilst engaging with educational sectors and relevant agencies and vocational trainings promoting agro-forestry biodiversity; 3) Consolidating HEPA Eco-farming school to become regional revolutionary platform for knowledge exchanges and socio-ecological transformation targeting all societal actors, agencies, organizations and leaderships; 4) Empowerment of Skills and Knowledge for local communities and farm-holders towards self-reliant and mindful economy.

## **6. Personnel**

### ***Number of full-time staff***

Administrative staff: 3 female, 1 male

Project staff: 3 female, 5 male

Contractual staff: 6 female, 6 male

### ***Human resources development strategy***

#### ***Management staff:***

We strengthen their capacity by requiring them to first spend 3 years fieldwork for learning-by-doing the different cultures of indigenous peoples and gaining a realistic view of indigenous peoples' needs and challenges in maintaining their own cultural values and life skills. After these 3 years, staff become managers and coordinators in the organizational development governance.

#### ***Professional (technical) staff:***

1. CENDI provides them opportunities to approach, learn and understand values and differences in culture, customs and practices, community governance structure, community concept on spiritual ecosystem, forest classification and land use planning of indigenous people vs. government policies; differences in farming, harvesting, and processing of indigenous peoples vs. economic corporations, ect., which enables them to understand differences in community institutions and social governance of indigenous peoples vs. economical governance structure and government institutions. For instance, the indigenous people categorize forests based on topographic and fundamental ecological characteristics from the view point of a spiritual ecosystem, thus they govern forests based on their wisdom, customary laws and behavioral norms toward the ecosystem, while the government categorizes forests based on topographic characteristics and forest status from the view point of an economically valuable asset for cash to increase the national GDP. Through learning, professional staff would understand that village elders and key farmers are their real teachers, and that participatory methodology of bottom-up vs. top-down is the way of practicing grassroots democracy during the project implementation.

2. Accordingly, professional staff not only value the indigenous people's active inter-generational engagement in the project activities (prestigious village elders, older key farmers, youths and women), but more importantly, they understand that local people are a direct

resource who later address their issues and concerns to legislators and executors, while CENDI just plays a bridging and consulting role.

3. CENDI has been performing a mission to enable people to become masters of policy-making, who supervise and evaluate the implementation of development activities and propose solutions to overcome their own challenges.

4. In that way, CENDI and its professional staff would avoid the top-down and stereotype methodology to make sure CENDI management staff and professional staff would not damage indigenous values and culture of natural resources governance according to their own customary laws.

#### ***Support Staff:***

1. Provides training via regularly weekly and monthly meetings with management staff and technical staff for cross-learning between fieldwork/technical work and administration procedures in the organization.

2. Provide training on accountability to government and funding agency requirements.

3. Support staff receive training from funding organization on financial management system.

4. Seek external expert to supervise financial management system in order to satisfy Vietnamese government and funding agency requirements of accountability and transparency of spending at field.

5. Provide training together with management staff and field staff to find the best way to deal with billing and receiving to meet the organization financial regulations.

### **7. Planning – Monitoring – Evaluation (PME) system**

CENDI's PME system is built upon its Strategic Vision of achieving the long-term objective of Livelihood Sovereignty for indigenous communities and Biodiversity Preservation in environmental management. This entails changing the behaviour, attitudes and vision of government authorities, policy-makers and policy-implementers.

#### ***Planning:***

Professional staff and key farmers work together on building up a logframe based on objectives, methodology, output, outcome and effects set for each monthly/quarterly/6-month/yearly action plan. This planning method is a learning-by-doing process aimed at strengthening the capacity and skills of the key farmers.

#### ***Monitoring:***

The key farmers, based on the logframe for the monthly/quarterly/ 6-month/yearly action plans, monitor the project implementation.

The project coordinator, based on the key farmers' evaluation, draws lessons and exchanges these with other coordinators from different departments of CENDI on a quarterly/6-month/yearly basis through cross-meetings to promptly respond to the monitoring results.

#### ***Evaluating:***

Based on the monitoring results, CENDI and the key farmer network organize inter-communal and inter-district multi-stakeholder workshops with the participation of functional agencies and local authorities in order to present the project results, strengths, opportunities, weakness, challenges and risks, and recommend solutions to higher-level local authorities. Companies can also be invited to these workshops if there is land conflict(s) in the project area.

#### ***Link between Planning and Strategy:***

Our strategy is rights-based, and is to facilitate the legitimization of community rights to land and forest and their customary law-based governance of their natural resources. Individual projects are planned to implement this strategy. They are formulated by professional staff together with key farmers, and each project specifies the objectives to be achieved, the methodology to be used, the expected project outputs, outcomes and effects, and how these relate to the overall strategy.

***Monitoring of Impacts of work:***

Impacts are a deeper level of achievement than outputs, outcomes and effects. Impact indicators are designed to measure such things as whether 1) the indigenous community is now governing their own lives sustainably, culturally, ecologically and politically, according to their own knowledge, wisdom and customs; 2) the government and community is no longer worried about biodiversity and cultural identity loss, the loss of the community's voluntary cooperation ethic, and the loss of local seed varieties; and 3) government authorities, policy makers and policy implementors have changed their attitude and behaviour toward indigenous peoples and now recognize the value of bringing community-based custom, knowledge and wisdom into the governance system for natural resources.

***Implementation of recommendation from evaluation:***

Upon the recommendations from the annual evaluation, CENDI will continue to:

- 1) include them in the objectives and priorities for further planning activities and solutions in a quarterly/6-month/yearly basis;
- 2) for those recommendations related to land conflicts resulting in or causing harm to the community legitimate rights, CENDI will hold workshops to facilitate the key farmers to openly address the issues with relevant stakeholders, while involving local authorities to witness and come up with solutions to support the community to solve the issue;
- 3) for those recommendations related to the community needs for consolidating and strengthening their self-reliant and self-governed institutions toward traditional sacred forests and watershed forests, CENDI will provide legal consultancy to the community leaders and key farmers to encourage them to confidently set up interest groups such as group for updating and disseminating laws, community supervisory group which enables the community to supervise programs imposed from outside that may have negative impacts on the local people, and supporting group to support voluntary and community development activities according to the community culture and customary law. CENDI also takes this opportunity to reform CENDI organizational structure and strengthen capacity of staff in order to meet the increasing dynamic needs of the community in the context of the market economy.

***Use of External Expertise:***

Through working with our external experts, the anthropologist Dr. Chris Erni and the scientist of reforestation, Dr. Friedhelm Goeltenboth, we have been shown that the five legitimate rights of Livelihood Sovereignty that our indigenous people have been achieving so far with CENDI's facilitation efforts are compatible with Articles 3, 4, 5, 12, 20, 24, 25 and 26 of the UNDRIP Convention on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples ([https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP\\_E\\_web.pdf](https://www.un.org/development/desa/indigenouspeoples/wp-content/uploads/sites/19/2018/11/UNDRIP_E_web.pdf)) based on CENDI achieved objectives, strategies and indicators. From these findings, the external experts have recommended and supported CENDI to continue with research topics and theoretical and factual foundations for the development of community customary law-based forest governance models, which have already been legalized, into centres for research and training on sustainable development.



***Participation of target groups in PME process:***

All programs and projects of CENDI have been implemented in different ethnic communities through our key farmer network incorporating three generations: 1) village elders who are the prestigious spiritual leaders of the community; 2) mid-aged key farmers with rich experience in the community governance and response to interventions from outside; and 3) young eco-farmers or YIELDS-AGREE (Young Indigenous Ethnic Leadership Development Strategy for Agroecology and Ecological Enterprise); plus 4) the Agro-ecologist for the tropics and subtropics and rainforestation specialist Prof. Dr. Friedhelm Goeltenboth. All communicate with each other through group email (Livelihood Sovereignty Based Yields Agree 2015-2025: yields.agree@speri.org) and Skype meetings whenever they feel necessary. Furthermore, HEPA Eco-farming School facebook is available to provide an effective communication tool to keep different young eco-farmers of different regions well informed of the PME processes.