



## Why CENDI baby was born in January 19, 2015?

CENDI was set up to continue the work of previous LISO<sup>1</sup> Alliance's organisations since the 1990s as the needs and challenges of indigenous minority communities in the Mekong region changed.

Over the years 1995–2015, TEW, CHESH, CIRD, SPERI and CODE (LISO Alliance) worked with indigenous ethnic minority communities in Vietnam, Laos and Thailand through their grass-roots Key Farmer Network which they formed amongst named Mekong Community Networking for Ecological Trading (MECO-ECOTRA 1995-2015). It means that, communities of different ethnic identity and location selected their own Key Farmers who were highly respected and knowledgeable people who exchanged the own experiences, challenges and solutions by networking together. Step-by-step, the Key Farmer Network become a key practical pillar of community development work in the Mekong region for overcoming daily challenges and meeting daily needs of indigenous communities.

Over decades, MECO-ECOTRA which operated according to six integrated network action themes. 1) The first theme consisted of networking by highly knowledgeable and prestigious traditional elders on customary law governance of community ancestral land. This was the leading theme and functioning as the legislative justice ministry for grass-root civil political foundation and, giving rise to the other five networks. 2) The second thematic networks focused on traditional rotational cultivation in upland farming and ecological food sovereignty. This was the fundamental foundation which offered destiny for the third theme; 3) herbal medicinal wisdom in community health care and biocultural diversity maintenance, which in turn initiated a fourth network of 4) traditional artists and craftspeople who developed their wisdom in traditional handicraft textiles via nature dyeing, handicraft weaving and embroidery, and encouraged women to keep their traditional knowledge and romantic vision in their designing and production of clothing and furniture to meet the daily needs of their families. Women for this network then initiated the theme 5) a savings fund for rotational credit to support the activities of various interest groups in textile handicraft, livestock raising, gardening, herbal medicinal plants, ecological farming, and forest protecting in their communities. Out of these network activities there arose awareness of the need to have a theme 6) legal rights to their ancestral community's land and forests and maintain their community economy.

That is why there appeared the **L**ivelihood **S**overeignty (LISO) mission and strategy combining five fundamental rights: 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 surviving for hundreds of years in their own territory; and 6) the right to co-govern their traditional territories with their neighbours. The goal of **LISO** was adopted by the TEW, CHESH, CIRD, SPERI, CODE and CENDI organisations the basis for sustainable community development in the Mekong region by translating it into an action framework led by Key Farmers for their people, detail in the link of CENDI historical profile [http://cendiglobal.org/upload/files/7\\_%20CENDI%20and%20her%20historical%20background%20of%20transformation%201995-2005-2015-2025%20in%20partnership%20with%20MECO-ECOTRA%201995-2015%20to%20YIELDS-AGREE%202015-2025.pdf](http://cendiglobal.org/upload/files/7_%20CENDI%20and%20her%20historical%20background%20of%20transformation%201995-2005-2015-2025%20in%20partnership%20with%20MECO-ECOTRA%201995-2015%20to%20YIELDS-AGREE%202015-2025.pdf)

It was recognised, however, that challenged and confronted by the new market economic system, Key farmers need to strengthen their skills and capacities for linking their ecological farming product with the market system. They need to shift up to become Community Entrepreneurs. So in 2015, CENDI

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<sup>1</sup> Livelihood Sovereignty Alliance stands for 1) Towards Ethnic Women (TEW 1994); Centre for Human Ecology Studies of Highland (CHESH 1999); 3) Centre for Indigenous Knowledge Research and Development (CIRD 2000); Social Policy Ecology Research Institute (SPERI 2006) and Consultant on Development (CODE 2007)

(Community Entrepreneur Development Institute) was established. Now there are 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 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 basis for a new model of community economy based on the community wisdom and custom in ecological farming and biodiversity preservation world wider. 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, ethically and economically aware customers in local and regional niche markets. These ecological products, priced to include the added value of their cultural end 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.