

What works?

Developing Collaborative Solutions for Reducing Open Agricultural Burning in Thailand, Dr Jo Rose

Project summary:

The project aimed to shift farmers' perceptions of agricultural burning in Thailand and encourage the adoption of more sustainable alternatives. This involved using the Valuing Voices Tool to develop a monitoring framework to assess changes in attitudes for sustainable behaviour, particularly targeting younger people. The interdisciplinary team then worked with stakeholders, such as policymakers and farmers, to create an ethical code of conduct and explore alternatives to burning.

What challenge did this project set out to address?

Open burning of agricultural residue is a common practice amongst Thai farming communities. It is a major challenge in Thailand and causes great harm to health and the environment.

What worked, for who and why?

- One of our first tasks was to work together to establish an ethical code of conduct. Everyone involved said it had been a valuable exercise and tool to have. It set the tone of trust and respect for our future work.
- The UK team understood the need to respect and give time and effort to building trust. We are examining a complex challenge with many nuances and to fully grasp these takes time

and trust with everyone involved.

- We built in time and activities for team building - we did not use these terms, but they were essentially what we were doing.

What didn't work and why?

The 2025 farming season was disrupted by La Nina. Farmers were unable to burn because the rains came early and soaked the agricultural waste so we focused discussions on previous years and the upcoming 2026 January burning period.

What changed as a result of your project?

Several farmers stated they are not going to burn in January 2027 - we still need to wait to see if they follow through with this. Our visits created a knowledge exchange and debate amongst several farmers. One farmer who does not burn shared his experience with several other farmers who were able to engage in asking questions and discussing his solutions. Subsequently, they are going to start following his practice.

What next?

We have one journal article submitted; we have plans to submit a larger grant application; we are going to observe the farmers actions in the January 2026 harvest.

Progress towards equitable and responsible research practices

From the UK side, the project was led by a Senior Lecturer, whilst there were professors on the team. The team was largely made up of women. Before the project began, we held online discussions to find more about what each of us worked on and where the critical environmental challenges are in both the UK and Thailand. The Thai colleagues led discussions surrounding the

challenges of open-burning with the farmers and they led the ideas of what we could do as a team and how best we could apply the funding. Following this, we established our ethical code of conduct.

The UK research team all have experience of working in Thailand and Asia. We are mindful of the cultures, traditions and nuances and we ensure this informs our approach and work, which is needed to form responsible and sustainable partnerships.