

# *GENDER ASSESSMENT*

Supporting a Funding Proposal to the Green Climate Fund

Programme Title:

*Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions  
Program through improved governance and sustainable  
forest landscape management*

*Commissioned by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale  
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## List of Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
ADWLE	Association for Development of Women and Legal Education
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CEDAW	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women
CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAFO	District Agriculture and Forestry Office
DLWU	District Lao Women's Union
DoF	Department of Forestry
ER Program	Emission Reduction Program
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FLEG(T)	Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (and Trade)
FLR	Forest and Landscape Restoration
GAP	Gender Action Plan
GCF	Green Climate Fund
GFP	Gender Focal Point
GIZ	German Development Cooperation (Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Lao PDR	Lao People's Democratic Republic
LDC	Least Developed Country
LWU	Lao Women's Union
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MRV	Measurement, Reporting, and Verification
NCAWMC	National Commission for the Advancement of Women, Mothers and Children
NPA	Non-Profit Organization
NSAW	National Strategy for the Advancement of Women
NSEDP	National Socio-Economic Development Plan
NTFPs	Non-Timber Forest Products
PAFO	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office
PLWU	Provincial Lao Women's Union
PRAP	Provincial REDD+ Action Plans
REDD+	<b>Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation and the role of conservation, sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks in developing countries</b>
RECOFTC	The Center for People and Forests
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SFM	Sustainable Forest Management
Sub-CAW	Ministry-based (sub-)Committee for the Advancement of Women
VPA	Voluntary Partnership Agreement

## 1. Introduction

Lao PDR is a landlocked, Least Developed Country (LLDC) with dwindling forest cover, from 70% in the 1960s to 58% in 2015. Forests are not only an important sector for Laos' national economy, but are also central to the income, nutrition and livelihoods of its people. Especially the poor rural population is strongly dependent on the natural resources derived from land and forests. Forest degradation and deforestation therefore pose a significant risk to the livelihoods of a majority of the Lao population. Women, the poor, and geographically remote communities are typically most vulnerable to these changes due to their limited adaptation capacities and limited access to alternative means of securing their livelihoods.

The core national strategies (8<sup>th</sup> Socio-Economic Development Plan, Central Party's Resolution on Land, Forestry Strategy 2020, Lao PDR's Nationally Determined Contribution) acknowledge the importance of Laos' forest resources and their sustainable management as an integral component of rural livelihood support and improvement. The National REDD+ Strategy and National REDD+ Vision to 2030 build on these national policies and emphasize the importance of all stakeholders, including households, communities, Government and private sector, to be an active contributor to reducing deforestation and degradation, and to promote forest restoration and reforestation.

The planned Green Climate Fund (GCF)-supported programme will contribute to the implementation of the national Emission Reduction (ER) Program. With approximately 250,000 direct beneficiaries from at least 23 different ethnic groups, and an additional 250,000 women and men indirectly benefitting, the ER Program aims to mainstream gender and ethnic sensitivity throughout all planned measures.

The proposed programme aims to support the successful implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management. The funding proposal describes four outputs to achieve that: Output 1 will address barriers at the national and sub-national levels, including development planning, policy and regulatory environment, law enforcement, Measurement, Reporting, and Verification (MRV) activities, and sustainable financing for the forest and land use sector, and therefore contribute to the creation of an enabling environment for REDD+. Output 2 will address key drivers of deforestation and degradation. It delivers emission reductions on the ground at scale through reducing the expansion of agricultural activities into forested landscapes. That will include the promotion of deforestation-free agricultural practices and value-chains, modernized technologies, and access to markets and financial means.

Output 3 aims to reduce emissions through Sustainable Forest Management (SFM) and Forest and Landscape Restoration (FLR), including the enhancement of carbon sequestration through the rehabilitation and restoration of degraded forest lands. Planned activities include systematic village forest and watershed management, support of national conservation forest management, and the promotion of private sector investments in community-based agroforestry.

Output 4 includes management activities and other services, as well as a contingency fund. The Gender Action Plan and stakeholder engagement activities are also planned under this output.

In order to guarantee a gender-sensitive approach and implementation of the programme and to meet the standard requirements of the GCF and GIZ, this gender analysis provides recommendations for the funding proposal for the GCF-ERP programme. Although by no means exhaustive, this gender analysis attempts to provide both a general and sectoral overview on the state of gender equality in Laos, covering direct and indirect factors which can impact the implementation of the program.

## 2. GCF and GIZ Guidelines for the Promotion of Gender Equality

According to the GCF's Gender Policy, "proposed projects or programmes submitted to the Fund are required to be aligned with national policies and priorities on gender and with the Fund's gender policy<sup>1</sup>". This includes a mandatory initial socio-economic and gender assessment, complementary to the environmental and social safeguards (ESS) process.

The main goal of this assessment is therefore to determine how the programme can respond to the needs of women and men in view of the addressed forest degradation and deforestation, and the proposed measures.

Gender dynamics and related drivers of change will be identified to achieve the programme goals in a sustainable manner and will be reflected in the proposed activities. The assessment is required to include stakeholder consultations.

Additionally, implementation budgets will be provided alongside realistic indicators at output, outcome and impact levels.

In line with the above-mentioned GCF Gender Policy, GIZ's Safeguards and Gender Management System and Gender Strategy<sup>2</sup> require that a gender analysis is conducted at an early stage of the preparation phase of a programme in order to identify potentials for promoting gender equality and risks that need to be avoided, or at least mitigated, through specific measures.

The results and recommendations of this analysis are directly taken into account for the objective, indicators, the methodological approach and the results monitoring system of the programme.

The assessment will conclude with gender-responsive REDD+ Strategies with tangible benefits to women, and a concrete gender action plan (GAP) for addressing gender gaps and maximizing benefits and women's empowerment in the forest and landscapes sector in the accounting area.

## 3. Methodology

This gender analysis has been elaborated in three phases:

1. A desk review of relevant national policies, legal and regulatory frameworks, and pre-existing assessments in the sector.
2. Consultations with relevant local government authorities and villagers in three villages in two of the target Provinces (Houaphan and Luang Namtha).
3. Further research and finalization of the gender analysis and GAP.

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<sup>1</sup> Green Climate Fund 2015

<sup>2</sup> GIZ 2012

Overall, the availability of recent data and information on gender in the forest sector is limited in Lao PDR, and data collection and analysis usually take place in the framework of larger and more generic country assessments of donors, and census data collection.

The field consultations took place between 15-24<sup>th</sup> January 2019: one mission to Houaphan Province from 15-18<sup>th</sup> January, and one mission to Luang Namtha Province from 22-24<sup>th</sup> January 2019. In both Provinces, interviews were conducted with the Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO) and the Provincial Lao Women's Union (PLWU).

At the District level, interviews were conducted with the District Agriculture and Forestry Offices (DAFO) and District Lao Women's Union (DLWU) in Xam Neua (Houaphan) and Luang Namtha District. In total, four village consultations took place: Ban Yard Village in Xam Neua District; Ban Nam Mad Mai village and Ban Nam Dee village in Luang Namtha District.

In total, 148 people were interviewed and consulted (79 men and 69 women).

The selected villages are of different ethnic and economic background, and showed different levels of women's participation:

- Ban Yard village/Houaphan: Khmu and Hmong ethnicity, with two villages merged into one. High poverty and unemployment rates, low education standard. Strong weaving tradition, livestock as central income activity, shifting cultivation and paddy rice production. Women were highly active during the consultations, and the organization of two separate meetings for women and men was supported.
- Ban Nam Mad Mai village/Luang Namtha: Akha ethnicity. Village was moved several times in the past 20 years and has experienced improving income levels since they now live close to Luang Namtha town. Education levels are still very low. Rubber provides the main income, in addition to income from forest resources and rattan production. Shifting cultivation is still practiced. The villagers refused separate meetings. The women needed continuous translation between Akha and Lao, and appeared overall very shy to speak up in front of the village authorities and other men.
- Ban Nam Dee village/Luang Namtha: Lanten/Yao ethnicity. The village is an eco-tourism site. Income levels are proportionally higher, but with high dependence on funds for the tourism site which will end soon, and on their income from rubber with strong price fluctuation (monopoly of one Chinese company). Very low education levels amongst the women; the few women who attend school tend to leave the village. Villagers did not organize separate meetings, and the village head continuously overpowered the attending villagers. Women's participation could only be encouraged through the attending national Lao Women's Union representative.

Feedback from the consultations, including comments and recommendations have been integrated throughout the document. The findings and observations are crucial to the planning, implementation and monitoring of the planned programme. In actively integrating gender-sensitive and gender-responsive measures throughout the programme activities, the programme can not only prevent the continuation of traditional gender stereotypes, but can also contribute significantly to improving gender equality and equity in the target areas. This will largely add to the positive impact the programme can have.

## 4. Gender-related Aspects of Emission Reduction through Forest Governance and Forest Landscape Management

The following chapter provides an overview of relevant gender strategies in the forestry sector at international, regional and national level.

### International level: Agenda 2030, FAO's Criteria and Indicators

The Agenda 2030 for Sustainable Development, including its seventeen Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), represents the overarching framework for sustainable global development throughout different sectors, including gender and forest protection. Gender equality is addressed as a stand-alone development goal under SDG 5, but is also integrated into all other SDGs. With regard to forest governance and protection, three SDGs provide guidance for the planned programme:

- Sustainable production and consumption (SDG 12): development of production and consumption that takes into account the limitation of natural resources and empower local populations, including women, to keep the ownership of their lands and means of production.
- Climate action (SDG 13): women, indigenous peoples and local communities, and other groups have the right to be represented in climate summits as climate change affects them in different ways and they are the holders of knowledge and experiences that can help finding adapted solutions to climate change.
- Conserving forests and biodiversity (SDG 15): limiting the industrialization of agriculture and forestry in order to protect forests, biodiversity and preserve local communities' ways of subsistence.<sup>3</sup>

The Women 2030 Program is a coalition of gender network organizations supporting the implementation of the 2030 Agenda. It is implemented in 50 countries all over the world, including Lao PDR, aiming at the realization of the SDGs in a gender-equitable and climate-just manner. The Program works mainly through capacity building of women's civil society organizations and enables them to participate in relevant policy dialogues and monitoring, as well as citizens' engagement.<sup>4</sup>

Amongst the agencies of the United Nations, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) leads the way regarding an integrated approach of gender and forestry. FAO's Criteria and Indicators for sustainable forest management (SFM) were recently updated with a gender-responsive toolbox providing a general framework for practical integration of gender aspects for the forest development sector<sup>5</sup>. FAO recognizes that, even though women play a very important role in forest-related work and the generation of income from forest resources, this is rarely reflected in forestry-related planning and programming<sup>6</sup>.

Another important international framework is provided through the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), which Laos ratified in 1996. A Gender Plan of Action (currently until 2020) is

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<sup>3</sup> Women2030 Project: About the Sustainable Development Goals

<sup>4</sup> Women2030 Project: About Women2030

<sup>5</sup> FAO 2018

<sup>6</sup> FAO 16/07/2018: Sustainable Forest Management Toolbox increases gender considerations in its modules.

aligned with the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity and provides concrete tools and action steps to integrate gender into related national policies and implementation efforts. Parties to the Convention are requested to report on actions undertaken to implement the Gender Plan of Action under the CBD<sup>7</sup>.

The four strategic objectives of the CBD Gender Plan of Action are:

1. Integration of gender perspectives
2. Promoting gender equality
3. Demonstrate the benefits of integrating gender
4. Increase the effectiveness of implementation efforts

Actions based on these objectives are organized around four spheres of work: policy, organizational, delivery, and constituency. The Plan further provides concrete actions to integrate gender aspects into all mentioned spheres relevant to successful implementation of the Convention.

### Regional Agreements on Forestry in the ASEAN region

The only regional agreement in the forestry and biodiversity sector is a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on ASEAN Cooperation in Agriculture and Forest Products Promotion Scheme. The MoU has been renewed three times since 1994, with the current one being in force since 2014. As an MoU, it does not require further ratification or detailed integration processes, and it focuses on economic promotion rather than resource protection. None of the related documents considers gender aspects of the addressed schemes and production chains<sup>8</sup>.

The year 2007 was seen as a political landmark in ASEAN cooperation with regard to forestry and related forest law enforcement and improved forest governance. The ASEAN Statement on Strengthening Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) was issued in 2007 and paved the way to take action addressing illegal logging and its associated trade issues as a joint effort with regional partners and international stakeholders. The FLEG work plan 2016-2025 does not provide specific recommendations for gendered aspects of transboundary trafficking of wildlife and timber or illegal logging, but it recognizes the social and cultural aspects in general, and poverty as a driver for related illegal practices in particular.

Gender considerations are notably absent in the actions set for improved market access, capacity building for law enforcement-related authorities and community stakeholders, awareness-raising activities and training on forest governance for business actors, civil society organizations and local communities<sup>9</sup>.

### Forestry and Biodiversity in Lao PDR

The current Lao National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025 mentions the Lao Women's Union as a potential civil society stakeholder to reach out to women, but it does not take gender issues into account beyond that. The proposed way forward for the current strategy, however, recognizes that future training efforts supported under the National Strategy should also consider women, youth and ethnic groups beyond the internal

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<sup>77</sup> Convention on Biological Diversity: 2015-2020 Gender Plan of Action

<sup>8</sup> Memorandum of Understanding on ASEAN Cooperation in Agriculture and Forest Products Promotion Scheme 2014

<sup>9</sup> Compare Work Plan for Forest Law Enforcement and Governance (FLEG) in ASEAN, 2016-2025



Government system. Furthermore, the Strategy also proposes to consider women and youth leaders as specialists and training resources in their function as keepers of Traditional Knowledge<sup>10</sup>.

With regard to the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on ASEAN Cooperation in Agriculture and Forest Products Promotion Scheme, Laos assigned the Director of the Division of Planning under the Department of Forestry at the MAF to be the national coordinator and focal point for the other ASEAN member countries. The overall coordination of all ASEAN members under this MoU is facilitated through the ASEAN Forest Products Industry Club – led by the Malaysian Timber Industry Board and therefore the private sector. Given the variety of stakeholders involved in the concerned promotion schemes, gender considerations would have broad potential to be taken up, but do not form part of any guiding principles of the Club or the agreement itself.

It is not likely that the MAF's focal point will proactively add a gender dimension to the cooperation. The MAF has its own gender focal point who could be consulted for such matters, but that is usually only utilized when projects/partners set specific requirements towards gender mainstreaming.

The Lao FLEGT Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) process is still in the negotiation phase, with expectations for its ratification and signing in 2020. Despite the relevance for gender- and ethnicity-sensitive inclusion in areas concerning production and village forests, and the implications of the VPA on forest governance structures, the FLEG VPA negotiations completely lack a respective gender lens<sup>11</sup>. In a 2018 gender analysis, the GIZ-FLEGT programme in Laos pointed out that most FLEGT-VPA meetings were predominantly led by senior men. If social issues were raised, it was mostly initiated by the represented CSOs, and had a rather general focus on people's benefit-sharing<sup>12</sup>. A gender imbalance at decision-maker levels, combined with generally low gender knowledge, is a significant barrier to successful integration of gender aspects into Laos' forestry sector as a whole.

The National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED) VIII, as Laos' guiding strategic document, refers to environmental protection and natural resource management in section 3.4.3, but its content is not specifically gender-differentiated. The cross-cutting section on Women's Development, however, offers several targets which directly or indirectly influence the forestry sector and therefore can be used for strategic decisions/communication of such decisions towards donors and partners of the GCF programme, such as to "ensure gender equality in economic opportunities, including access to resources such as land, funds, technologies and basic infrastructure (electricity, roads, markets)", and the goal to "promote women to take up 20% of leading management-level positions"<sup>13</sup>.

The main legal document in the forestry sector is the new Forestry Law (currently still under final revision). The current version (July 13<sup>th</sup> 2018) does not mention gender or women in any of its articles. The same applies to the recently-developed Provincial REDD+ Action Plans (PRAPs) and the Law Enforcement Action Plans in the interviewed Provinces. The interviewed Government partners at Provincial and District level all agreed that the Forestry Law itself does not need to mention gender dimensions explicitly since other relevant legislation – the

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<sup>10</sup> National Biodiversity Strategy and Action Plan 2016-2025

<sup>11</sup> Compare: FLEGT VPA process in Lao PDR 2018

<sup>12</sup> GIZ/Bode 2018

<sup>13</sup> Lao PDR's National Socio-Economic Development Plan VIII 2016-2020

Constitution, the Labor Law, the Family Law, the Law on Women's Union, and the Law on the Development and Protection of Women – already provide the legal basis for gender equality throughout all sectors. The interviewed partners stated that gender aspects in the development of the PRAPs were covered by involving the Lao Women's Union in the respective consultations. They did not see any entry points for direct inclusion in the resulting PRAPs due to the technical nature of the measures. All interview partners emphasized, however, that future guidelines and regulations need to provide concrete guidance on the integration of gender into implementation structures.

The interviews also showed that the Provincial and District Forestry agencies might possess only limited awareness on the relevance of gender-responsive measures in their sector. This was signaled by their responses, which lacked concrete understanding of gender mainstreaming, as well as the fact that most interview partners in the forestry offices were men. One office mentioned that they have a gender focal point but did not consider inviting her to the interview. This is rather symbolic of the under-utilization of gender resources within the partner structures.

The key message from the interview partners was coherent with other programme findings: the key challenge to effective gender mainstreaming in the forestry sector is only partly in the legal provisions but mainly at the implementation level. This includes knowledge and awareness, as well as personnel and financial resources, and lack of designated and committed responsibilities beyond the Lao Women's Union.

### Implications for the GCF programme

The planned GCF programme can draw valuable recommendations for the practical integration of gender into forest governance from international frameworks and action plans, as mentioned above. Regional structures and existing legal frameworks do not provide sufficient guidance for all concerned stakeholders for a gender-sensitive implementation of the ER program or its associated GCF programme. A valuable contribution of the programme can therefore lie in supporting the development of guidelines and regulations for forest governance and protection which are sensitive to the diverse needs of the communities with regard to gender, ethnicity and economic status. Furthermore, the programme might be able to significantly promote gender balance in stakeholder meetings and other platforms relevant to decision-making.

The institutional structures for improved gender-responsive forest governance do currently exist (ministries' gender focal points, Lao Women's Union), but currently lack in-depth technical knowledge, budgets and the internal mandates to be taken seriously enough.

## 5. The Contextual Situation of Gender Equality in Laos

Laos currently ranks 106<sup>th</sup> on the Gender Inequality Index (rank 138 on general Human Development Index; as of 2015). Major negative contributors to that ranking are the maternal mortality ratio, the adolescent birth rate and the low female proportion of people with at least some secondary education. Positively influencing contributors are the proportionally high share of female parliamentarians and the high female labor force participation rate<sup>14</sup>.

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<sup>14</sup> Gender Inequality Index

## 5.1 The Meta Level: Norms and Traditional Roles of Women and Men in Laos

Despite a strong legal framework stating and promoting the equality of Lao women and men, the influence of gender norms and traditional roles is still seen as one of the major obstacles in achieving factual gender equality in Laos. This becomes most visible in decision-making positions throughout all sectors, as well as at the community level where women continue to struggle to participate on equal terms and in equal numbers.

Gender equality is additionally influenced by ethnic background in Laos. The Lao-Tai group represents 67% of Lao PDR's population, along with three major non-Lao-Tai ethno-linguistic groups, namely the Mon-Khmer (21%), the Hmong-Lu Mien (8%) and the Chine-Tibetan (3%). These groups further splinter into 49 distinct ethnicities and 200 ethnic sub-groups. Many traditional norms within Lao-Tai cultures are favorable with regard to gender equality: women are often financial decision-makers, inherit land and property more often, and have gained equal access to education. The other three ethno-linguistic groups mostly have stronger patriarchal traditions and norms, limiting women's access to decision-making, property and education<sup>15</sup>.

Violence against women is, however, a reality for women from all ethnic backgrounds in Laos. Research indicates that around 20% of Lao women have been physically and/or sexually abused by a partner or non-partner, and at least 35% of women live in circumstances of emotional violence, with both figures estimated to be much higher since most cases go unreported. Perhaps more jarringly, the majority of women and almost half of all men in Laos believe violence is justified if a woman does not adhere to traditional gender norms and roles, such as leaving the house without permission or burning the food<sup>16</sup>. This indicates that problems are both in enforcement and broader issues of tradition and culture that cannot be fixed in the short-term<sup>17</sup>. Village Mediation Units are the first micro institution to deal with cases of domestic violence and often smooth over cases for the sake of village unity and the rewarded status of "case-free village" (no referrals to district courts). Traditional gender roles directly influence the village-based justice system, in addition to women's generally weaker access to justice outside the village structures due to illiteracy, lack of Lao language skills and legal knowledge, and lack of means and permission to travel.

Lao PDR has one of the highest rates of early marriage in the region as part of traditional practices, including "bride kidnappings" and child marriages. One-third of women marry before age 18, while one-tenth marry before age 15. Early marriage is often associated with early pregnancy. In 2012, 19.4 percent of reproductive-age women had given birth by age 18, while 3.6 percent had done so by age 15. Both early marriage and adolescent birth have a negative impact on the education and livelihood opportunities of women<sup>18</sup>.

The impact of these factors on a programme cannot be underestimated. It affects women's participation, their confidence to speak up and voice opposing opinions, and their willingness and capacity to participate in village management tasks. Many rural women themselves also

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<sup>15</sup> King & van de Walle 2007

<sup>16</sup> World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2012

<sup>17</sup> Open Development Laos 2018: SDG 5 Gender Equality

<sup>18</sup> Compare United Nations in Lao PDR 2018

think that women are generally not capable of decision-making due to lack of education and perceived lack of inherent leadership qualities, a viewpoint that was expressed in two out of three village interviews during the assessment mission. The third village had higher income rates for the women and a culture of women being part of decision-making. The latter is the more decisive factor, since another village also claimed that women earn more than men, but there it did not lead to higher participation rates of women.

#### Implications for the planned GCF programme

In addition to avoiding the continuation of existing gender stereotypes and norms which are of disadvantage to Lao women, the planned GCF programme has a significant potential to contribute positively to gender equality. Inclusive awareness-raising measures targeting women as carriers of traditional knowledge and change agents within their families have great outreach, especially when presented in different ethnic languages, and tailored to lower education levels.

Whenever possible, any form of awareness-raising, village consultation, training or dissemination meeting should proactively involve components of empowerment for village women. This includes separate meetings between men, women and village authorities to create safe spaces for everyone to share, trainings for concerned staff on inclusive facilitation, sending staff who speak ethnic languages or providing budget to hire translators, and designing any concrete activities with the specific social conditions of a village in mind.

Since one of the GCF programme's central approaches will be to create new production methods and value chains, and therefore new income structures for communities, it is important to minimize financial risks for participating families. Research indicates that financial and work-related problems increase the likelihood of domestic violence, especially in families where women have lower educational levels and lower incomes in comparison to their husbands<sup>19</sup>. Where forestry regulations affect family businesses, or communities are supported to change traditional ways of living and earning, it can be assumed that women are at a higher risk of domestic violence.

The GCF programme could therefore contribute to a prevention of violence against women through the formulation of gender-sensitive and -responsive prevention strategies, aiming at women's skill development and empowerment, and men's change of attitudes towards gender equality.

#### 5.2 Macro Level: International and Regional Commitments & National Legislation and Policies

At the international level, Laos is a signatory to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW). A recent Capacity Assessment on CEDAW implementation in Laos conducted by the Association for Development of Women and Legal Education (ADWLE) concluded that, despite having a very advanced legal framework for gender equality, there is only very limited implementation of these laws due to lack of capacities, knowledge and budget<sup>20</sup> - basically, the exact same situation as in the forestry sector, with strategic frameworks but a lack of capacities to implement them properly.

Besides that, the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are having a strong overall influence on Lao strategies and policies, including SDG 5 which is aiming to achieve gender equality and

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<sup>19</sup> NCAW 2015

<sup>20</sup> Compare ADWLE 2016

empower women and girls. The elevated relevance of the SDGs for the Lao PDR is connected to the country's efforts to graduate from Least-Developed Country status. Even though the original goal to graduate in 2020 cannot be reached anymore, the Government is determined to further push towards it. Efforts to promote women's economic integration and opportunities will directly contribute to graduating from LDC status<sup>21</sup>.

At the regional level, several ASEAN declarations lay the foundations for gender mainstreaming in the region. The Declaration of the Advancement of Women in the ASEAN Region<sup>22</sup> was signed in 1988 and focuses mainly on the promotion and implementation of equitable and effective participation in all fields and at all levels. Even though the declaration mentions the political, social and cultural sphere, the emphasis is on women's economic participation.

The social dimension was added consecutively in later declarations, namely with the ASEAN Declaration Against Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (2004); the Ha Noi Declaration on the Enhancement of Welfare and Development of ASEAN Women and Children (2010); the ASEAN Human Rights Declaration; the Declaration on the Elimination of Violence against Women and Elimination of Violence against Children in ASEAN (2013); and other relevant declarations, especially on social protection.

A further important step towards integration of gender aspects was the ASEAN Declaration on Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals in 2017. The Declaration provides unusually detailed guidance on the improvement of gender-responsive data collection and analysis, and policy review, emphasizes the necessity to end violence against women (including making men and boys engaged agents of change efforts), and encourages cooperation with women's groups and organizations for improved gender-responsive implementation<sup>23</sup>.

Lao PDR has a strong legal framework for promoting gender equality. The revised Constitution of 2003 and other laws explicitly state that women and men have equal rights in all spheres - political, social, cultural and in the family.

Women's equal rights are also stipulated in the Family, Land and Property Laws; the Labor Law; the Electoral Law; and the Penal Law.

The Law on the Development and Protection of Women (2004) is the most specific Lao legislation with regard to equal rights and access for women, and provided the framework for several later laws defining women's rights, and served also as a basis to form the National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mother-Child.

#### Implications for the planned GCF programme

The legal foundation for the promotion of gender mainstreaming into policies and regulations is strong. Laos has an elevated interest in adhering to international agreements relevant to gender mainstreaming. The ASEAN Declarations relevant to gender provide regional entry points, and the national framework to integrate gender into policies and strategies at all levels is broad and strong. Unfortunately, this strength might at the same time constitute a barrier for effective integration of gender into sector-specific legislation, including in the forestry sector: as mentioned also by interviewed Government staff, integration is not perceived as

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<sup>21</sup> UNDP 2017

<sup>22</sup> ASEAN 1988

<sup>23</sup> ASEAN Declaration on Gender-Responsive Implementation of the ASEAN Community Vision 2025 and Sustainable Development Goals in 2017

relevant because overarching legislation is seen as sufficient to inform the interpretation of sector-specific laws such as the Forestry Law. The planned GCF programme can therefore contribute substantially to an improvement of gender-responsive legal frameworks in supporting the development of gender-sensitive and -responsive regulations, guidelines and by-laws based on the upcoming revised Forestry Law. In adherence with the ASEAN declaration to engage with women's organizations to improve policy analysis<sup>24</sup>, a Lao-based CSO such as ADWLE can assist with gender-proofing any planned intervention in this area. To develop capacity of the relevant Government agency, the Gender Focal Points/Sub-CAW within the MAF (national and Provincial level) should also be involved in these processes as much as possible (more under 5.3).

### 5.3 Meso Level: Institutions and Non-Governmental Organizations

The National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mother-Child (NCAWMC) is responsible for formulating and implementing the national policy for the advancement of women, as well as for mainstreaming gender aspects in all sectors. NCAWMC's capacity and institutional support remains limited despite donor support for capacity development. The NCAWMC is also responsible for formulating the National Strategy for the Advancement of Women (NSAW), which is renewed every five years and seeks to promote and enhance equality between men and women in Laos in all spheres. The inclusion of the strategy's goals in other strategies and plans, including the National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSED), is advancing well, but it often lacks implementation power and funded mandates<sup>25</sup>.

The lead Government agency in the forest sector, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), was the first ministry to create a Division for the Advancement of Women ("Sub-CAW"), and a ministry-internal Gender Network with focal points in each department. The Asian Development Bank (ADB) supported this development significantly between 2006-2008. The final report of this programme ("Capacity Building for Gender Mainstreaming in Agriculture and Forestry in Lao PDR") concludes that while MAF's commitment to gender mainstreaming and to the established structures is very high, the gender division remains understaffed and therefore with low absorption capacity<sup>26</sup>. Interviews with two Provincial and District Agriculture and Forestry Offices mirrored these capacity gaps. If there was a Gender Focal Point (GFP) appointed in the office, the concerned staff member was not invited to the interviews because the senior staff did not consider her knowledgeable enough to be of value for the meeting, which they considered to be of a rather technical nature.

On the strategic side, the MAF developed a Strategy for Gender Equality in the Agriculture and the Forestry Sector (2016–2025) and Vision 2030<sup>27</sup> that aim for men and women of all ethnic groups to have equal access to natural resources, agricultural land, shelter, development funds and technical support. Vision 2030 additionally states that women should hold at least 30% of leadership positions.

The constitutional mandate to protect women's rights and interests is traditionally with the Lao Women's Union (LWU; Article 7 of Constitution). The LWU has representation in every village, with one member of the LWU representing women in each village council. Through its

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid, page 3 of the Declaration

<sup>25</sup> World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2012

<sup>26</sup> Asian Development Bank 2008

<sup>27</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry 2015

extensive networks, the LWU has been able to bring women's voices into public administration at all levels — often providing the only female voice at the table<sup>28</sup>. The LWU also has its own policy research center (Gender Resource Information and Development Center, Vientiane), which has undertaken research tasks on issues such as violence against women and gender budgeting on behalf of donors<sup>29</sup>.

The current National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDV VIII) foresees a 70% LWU membership of women 15 years and older<sup>30</sup>. Development partners will therefore almost automatically work with members of the LWU and should capitalize on its vast access to, and understanding of, Lao women as much as possible.

The Lao Front for National Construction oversees and coordinates all Lao mass organizations and is responsible for overall social mobilization and the inclusion of ethnic groups in national development. At the local level, the interviewed villages shared the view that the Lao Front is a key player in organizing activities related to forest protection and resource management.

There is a diverse range of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Laos active in areas of particular relevance to gender equality, including women's rights and development, child protection, support of people with disabilities, environment, education and health. CSOs in Laos are, however, usually not actively invited by the Lao Government to participate in policy dialogue at any stage. Most CSOs are therefore implementers at the local level but have limited opportunities to feed their implementation experiences into policy processes<sup>31</sup>.

Organizations, Non-Profit Associations and NGOs which are active in the nexus of forestry and gender in Laos are<sup>32</sup>:

- RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests
- Green Community Alliance (GCA)
- Green Community Development Association (GCDA)
- Love Natural Resources Association (LNRA)
- Maeying Huamjai Phattana (MHP)

Organizations which are not directly active in the forestry sector but are valuable partners with in-depth gender expertise are:

- Gender Development Association (GDA; gender, law, community development, education)
- Participatory Development Training Center (PADETC; participatory community development)
- Association for Development of Women and Legal Education (ADWLE; law, gender)

RECOFTC appears to have the strongest ties to the Department of Forestry (DoF/MAF). A joint national consultation workshop in October 2018 with the DoF, other Government partners, CSOs and private sector representatives focused solely on the identification of potential inputs to promote gender equality in the Lao forestry sector<sup>33</sup>. MAF's Strategic Plan to restore forest

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<sup>28</sup> World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2012

<sup>29</sup> ADB 2011

<sup>30</sup> National Socio-Economic Development Plan 2016-2020

<sup>31</sup> ADB 2011

<sup>32</sup> Compare Lao CSO Directory 2017

<sup>33</sup> RECOFTC November 2018

cover to 70% of the country's terrain until 2020 includes the goal of having at least 30% of all Government positions in conservation work held by women<sup>34</sup> - a goal strongly promoted by RECOFTC. The close collaboration leads to the assumption that RECOFTC has valuable and valued cooperation experience with the DoF which can be utilized by other programs.

#### Implications for the planned GCF programme

Based on the existing institutional structures and strategies, the planned GCF programme has strong leverage to link up with MAF – particularly the DoF – for institutional support to promote female leadership and participation in stakeholder processes from the national to the local level. The political commitment seems currently particularly high and should be capitalized on. The approach should be two-fold: utilizing the existing gender structures (GFPs, MAF's Sub-CAW, LWU on all levels) while at the same time actively involving senior and technical staff to foster a Government culture where gender is increasingly mainstreamed. Capacity development is necessary for all stakeholders, since only very few Government staff possess in-depth knowledge on gender and REDD+ at the same time. The efforts which have already been put into mainstreaming gender into forestry activities also need to become more prominent and shared as best practice<sup>35</sup>. The planned GCF programme can support the REDD desk to compile these practices and to disseminate them to other line agencies, departments, Provincial and District agencies, and LWU.

The interviewed Provincial and District LWU offices demonstrated high commitment towards supporting the planned GCF programme but admitted that they need more technical expertise to be of meaningful assistance, and budget to contribute responsibly and by their own means. A technical training for all concerned Provincial and District LWU, P/DAFO, P/DOFI (Forest Inspection) on gender in forestry/REDD+ is recommended to mainstream efforts and align the local implementers and decision-makers.

Furthermore, the planned GCF programme will need to ensure that the acquired knowledge is utilized. Gender aspects can be integrated into Standard Operating Procedures, guidelines, manuals and work plans, and appointed staff should be given the responsibility to regularly follow up on the status of implementation. Trainings and gender-sensitive guidelines alone will likely not be sufficient to ensure effective implementation.

High-level, regular meetings, such as programme steering committee meetings, should make it a requirement to report on gender aspects and related implementation efforts.

#### 5.4 Micro Level: Gender Equality among the Target Group

This section briefly examines the gender equality situation in the areas of political participation, decision-making and leadership, education and economic participation.

##### Political participation: Decision-making and leadership

With 27.5% female Members of Parliament, Laos is well above global average (22.5%). However, women in decision-making positions in the district, provincial and national

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<sup>34</sup> RECOFTC October 2018

<sup>35</sup> RECOFTC November 2018



Government agencies constitute only 5% (as of 2012). The highest proportion of women in the Government can be found in the legislative branches at the national level (more than a quarter)<sup>36</sup>; the lowest proportion of women beyond administrative support roles can be found at the Provincial and District level. This is likely tied to the factors explained in the sections on education and health.

Within the potential partners of the planned GCF programme, representation seems to vary between different ministries and departments, but generally the programme also faces a lower representation of female leadership throughout its activities. Forestry at the community level is highly “female” on the user side, with women collecting non-timber forest products (NTFPs) and making up a significant proportion of the small business workforce in the forest and timber sector.

The interviewed village women and men stated that women spend usually more time in the forests and have a more detailed knowledge of the status of the forest resources. The interviewed Government partners added that village women additionally also showed more intrinsic interest in protecting the surrounding forests. At the same time, none of the interviewed villages included women in the village forest management committee or any other existing form of decision-making over forest resources.

Accordingly, the lack of women’s representation at any decision-making level often results in a lack of consideration of women’s needs and potentials in in the forestry sector.

The land sector shows similar dynamics: whereas women and men have the same legal rights to land, women’s factual land tenure is still less secure than men’s. Women are also often not actively included in decision-making steps of land use planning (LUP). The subsequent forest management plan (if developed) is then seen as an even further specialized step which women perceive having even less access to. The provided reasons in the village interviews were lack of education, lack of technical knowledge and lack of confidence to participate in management decisions. Traditional gender norms of many ethnic groups further contribute to these dynamics.

## Education

The gender equality gap has narrowed at all three levels of education enrolment in Laos, but challenges persist in completing education.

Two key determinants drive the patterns of gender inequity in education: First, girls are more likely to be kept at home due to safety concerns and household responsibilities, especially if the secondary school is far from home. Second, parents do not place the same value on education for girls as they do for boys, especially if this view is part of their cultural tradition, or if the parents are poor, or have little or no education, especially the mother<sup>37</sup>.

The widest gap in gender equality is found among children from rural areas without road access, children from the non Lao-Tai groups, children of uneducated mothers and children of families in the poorest quintiles. This gap is much larger in secondary education: for example, in the appropriate age group of the poorest quintiles, 66 girls attend secondary school for every 100 boys.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>36</sup> The United Nations in Lao PDR 2015

<sup>37</sup> Compare United Nations in Lao PDR 2018

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

The majority of interviewed village women had no or very low education. This lack of education was named - by men and women alike - as the main reason for the absence of women in village decision-making committees and groups in general, and particularly with regard to the villages' forestry.

### Economic participation

The share of women in wage employment is low in all sectors, at 35 percent. Instead, among the unpaid workers for the family, about 70% percent were women in 2015, but only 32% are identified as "own account workers" – which suggests that women are less likely engaged in productive work with income they control<sup>39</sup>. This reality was mirrored in the interviewed villages: women and men agreed that women work longer hours in a day while men do less and/or focus more on physically-demanding tasks. Accordingly, men produce more tangible results and have more time available for management-related tasks. In the visited Akha village in Luang Namtha, the village authorities noted that the village women earned more money than their men but had no role in the village decision-making. Several women stated that they would strongly like to be involved in the management of forest resources.

An equal share of men and women make up the working population (77% each, as of 2015<sup>40</sup>), but women generally occupy the lower rungs of the labor market. Women are relatively more excluded from formal sectors and the social protection that this entails. Some 64 percent of workers in the elementary occupations and 63 percent of those classified as service, shop and market sales workers are women. On the other hand, men account for the majority of civil servants, professionals, technicians and other sectors.

The programme partners of the planned GCF programme reflect these proportions. As mentioned above, the Government has already set a 30% goal of having women hold positions in the conservations sector, but implementation lags behind.

The private sector is creating new opportunities for entrepreneurs in Lao PDR, and 30-40 percent of these new entrepreneurs are women. About 74% of small and medium enterprises in Laos are family-owned<sup>41</sup>, including the wood-processing sector which is influenced by the regulations and negotiations around the Lao FLEGT-VPA process, and potentially other regulations which will be supported by the planned GCF programme.

Even though men are often the more visible ones in these small family businesses, it is usually the whole family which is engaged and therefore equally impacted by regulations to their business.

Although women have significant roles in agriculture and forestry, they have less access to, and control of, farming and forestry-based inputs and outputs.<sup>42</sup> The village interviews showed the same tendency: the village women all stated that the key decisions on land and forest are usually taken by their husbands and the village authorities. Experience from other sectors, such as fisheries, shows that women's multiple roles in traditional, complex and lengthy value chains tend to diminish when value chains are modernised. This may also be true for the forestry sector, but the lack of data does not allow us a clearer picture.

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<sup>39</sup> Compare World Bank and Asian Development Bank 2012

<sup>40</sup> Human Development Index 2018

<sup>41</sup> Southiseng & Welsh 2010

<sup>42</sup> Compare United Nations in Lao PDR 2018

Women's rights to forest and tree products tend to be restricted to products that are not profitable or have little commercial benefits<sup>43</sup>.

Gender wage gaps are present, and women work longer work hours than men, as they spend 7 hours per day on productive and reproductive tasks (men: 5.7 hours).<sup>44</sup> Women's time poverty and physical safety concerns limit their wider access to, and use of, forest resources. In the case of the interviewed villages, it mainly hindered women from participating in forest management tasks, including decision-making.

Women can face discrimination in the market when marketing their produce directly, and also can be stymied by lack of language skills, access to information or training<sup>45</sup>.

Especially in the rural areas, women's lower income often also directly translates into a lower decision-making power in the family: the lower their income, the lesser their voice. Women with higher own-income possess higher decision-making power, but the final say is usually with the man as head of the household. Disadvantages from income disparities are therefore particularly relevant in combination with certain cultural gender norms.

This needs to be taken into account in all programme activities where behavior change and new income activities are promoted, or where regulations affect family businesses or access to forest resources.

Microfinance access has been shown to empower communities if the villagers are not amongst the poorest. In that case, microfinance is often seen as too risky. Women are often more hesitant to take on debts to protect their families, and use micro credits most often for health emergencies and children's education.

Village Development Funds are often managed by women, and many ethnic groups' women are responsible for the families' financial management. The interviewed villagers and local authorities agreed that access to micro grants as planned by the GCF programme would create more opportunities for the local communities to improve their income situation, including complementary micro investments into alternative, deforestation-free agricultural practices.

The change and volatility of market demand, increase of entrepreneurship and off-farm work opportunities leave many rural women rather intimidated, since they perceive their lack of education and skills, including their lack of knowledge how to reach and understand a non-visible market, as barriers to their potential for increasing their productivity or starting a business. Most women seemed afraid of starting something entirely new and tend to stick to familiar work such as agriculture and NTFPs, animal husbandry and weaving.

The interviewed local Government agencies and local villagers welcome private sector investment as long as it does benefit the communities in terms of higher income and less workload, as well as enhanced skills. All parties expressed the wish to have the Government strongly controlling such potential investments to limit risks for the communities. The interviewed women stated that they do not feel confident to participate in decisions over investments.

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<sup>43</sup> Climate Investment Funds 2017

<sup>44</sup> Compare United Nations in Lao PDR 2018

<sup>45</sup> Compare Climate Investment Funds 2017

## Implications for the planned GCF programme

The planned GCF programme will have great leverage to advocate for improving women's representation in forest management positions from the national to the local level.

At the national level, the political willingness to increase the number of female Government staff in conservation work exists. A consultation with DoF and RECOTFC could help to shed light on the known reasons for the lack of women in this sector. A gender-proofing of Human Resources procedures and internal career advancement processes could be advised. The programme could furthermore initiate a sector-based mentoring system to motivate superiors to promote younger colleagues, and to build the capacities of junior staff using internal resources.

At the Provincial and District level, the same principles apply, but one additional barrier hinders field teams to be more gender-balanced: it is more difficult to find female staff willing to travel to remote villages. This is even more relevant knowing that women living in remoter villages are often the ones who would open up most to female staff for reasons of culture and lack of confidence. Female staff barriers to traveling are usually safety concerns and family considerations. The GCF programme could investigate possible support measures in addition to building female staff confidence in technical areas through trainings. At the same time, the LWU should be supported both with technical trainings (REDD+ and gender, forest management and gender) and budget to travel and accompany planned community measures.

As the analysis showed, women are often the key knowledge carriers regarding the status of community forests and its resources. Since the programme plans to support the development of a National Forest Inventory and Monitoring system, it would make sense to explore the utilization of local women for community monitoring support. The interviewed women and men, and local Government partners, all agreed that such measure would be suitable to the local realities, and the local women were very supportive of this suggestion.

The influence of the education gender gap is also very relevant for the scope of work of the planned GCF programme: global experience shows that education has considerable power to help individuals reconsider environmentally harmful lifestyles and behavior<sup>46</sup>. Women's lower education levels can therefore influence the capacities of target communities to fully understand and support environmental protection measures and change of behaviors. Since the interviewed men and women agreed that women traditionally possess deeper understanding about the forest resources, spend considerable time in them as users, and – according to the interviewed Government staff – are more likely to show interest in forest protection, educational measures should particularly target women. Younger men and women can also play a key role in protection measures, since the interviewed villages revealed that the Lao Youth Union at community level is already assigned with forest protection tasks.

A lower education status is also often mentioned as the key reason for Lao women's low levels of confidence, which strongly effects their willingness to aim for leading positions in their communities and to be active change-makers in their families and villages. This was absolutely reinforced in the village interviews: all women groups showed high interest and willingness to

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<sup>46</sup> World Education Blog 2015

participate in forest management and decision-making much more than they currently do but felt insecure about their lack of education. The planned GCF programme therefore needs to install mechanisms to give men and women with lower education levels access to management positions. This can be achieved with the development and promotion of alternative requirement catalogues to qualify for management tasks, and targeted skills development activities.

Research could be commissioned by the planned GCF programme to identify and highlight what opportunities exist to strengthen women's roles as producers and processors, including support for financial services, financial management and business development services. The results of this research should influence any further analysis on new potential value chains promoting deforestation-free agriculture.

The planned GCF programme can consider accessing information about the impact of regulations on women in family businesses, and what measures could mitigate this impact, or create pathways for new income opportunities which consider cultural limitations and current change behavior. The interviewed women and men were keen to find alternative income paths, but also showed high risk-avoidance attitudes based on their currently vulnerable economic status and previous negative experiences with new crops and investors. Women are also interested in micro-finance, but targeted support is needed to enable them to build confidence to take on more prominent management positions in village management committees, and to strengthen their capacities on financial and business literacy. Such courses could build off of successful initiatives, such as the courses implemented by ILO together with LWU and other government departments to strengthen women's engagement in village banking called "Get Ahead for Women in Enterprise", a course designed for poor women who want to start or expand a micro business.<sup>47</sup>

It is further recommended to support gender sensitization for men and women, raising awareness about gender equality as well as the national legal and regulatory framework. In addition, LWU should serve as an important resource for rural women providing information on key services.

## 6. Gender expertise necessary to the planned GCF programme

The planned GCF programme should employ at least one advisor with in-depth knowledge and implementation experience in gender equality and mainstreaming in the conservation sector. The vacancy should explicitly require such expertise.

To ensure sound integration into all activities, this position would ideally be with a senior technical advisor rather than with a junior position. This person would be most appropriate to also become the general Gender Focal Point of the programme to oversee gender mainstreaming efforts, including gender sensitization for both men and women.

It is important, however, to equally empower all team members to be able to mainstream gender into their work areas, especially the senior staff and the staff responsible for monitoring and evaluation.

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<sup>47</sup> For more information refer to: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_099876.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_099876.pdf)

If not all staff possess sufficient gender expertise, the programme should invest in a technical gender training aiming to enable the team to proactively and effectively integrate gender into all workstreams.

All standard procedures of the programme should be streamlined to review gender aspects throughout the course of the programme.

The GIZ Gender Strategy, GIZ Guidelines on Designing a Gender-Sensitive Results-Based Monitoring System, the Practical Guide to Gender-Responsive Programme Management and the Guidelines on Gender in Reporting provide useful guidance for the whole team.

Additional technical expertise to integrate gender into forestry projects is provided by FAO's Practical Field Guide, "How to mainstream gender in forestry"<sup>48</sup>.

## 7. Gender-sensitivity and Equal Opportunities in Partner Organizations

The main implementing partner of the planned GCF programme will be the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and the EPF (host of the National REDD+ Funding Window).

The majority of staff – especially at senior level – within the responsible departments and divisions, including the REDD+ desk, are men. Hence, there is a general gender imbalance at partner level. This imbalance becomes worse at the Provincial and District level. As mentioned above, the DoF is striving to hire and promote more women into its divisions to increase the number of women in conservation work to at least 30%. A current figure could not be obtained.

Representation in terms of numbers is one issue; the factual participation of female staff who are already working in the departments is another, as particularly female junior staff are often not actively participating in meetings. This was also observed in the Provincial DAFO/DOFI interviews.

The Lao Women's Union is not seen as a direct implementation partner but should be utilized by the programme as much as possible to compensate for the current lack of gender capacities and to ensure a continuous commitment to gender equality.

### Implications for the planned GCF programme

Besides supporting the partners in proactive and improved recruitment and promotion processes of female staff, the current gender capacities of all staff seem to be rather low. The GCF programme should emphasize the importance of gender mainstreaming clearly and from the design stage all the way through to evaluation of activities. Knowing that partners do particularly well in response to quantified analysis of the costs of gender inequality, the GCF programme could benefit substantially from a commissioned study used for partner communication and capacity development measures.

A gender training for all involved partners – including the LWU – should be supported, focussing on the gender dimensions of the forestry sector in general, and REDD+ in particular.

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<sup>48</sup> FAO 2016

## 8. Summary of stakeholder consultations on gender

### Summary of comments and recommendations from the stakeholder consultations

In general, the programme was well received by all consulted stakeholders. At the district and village level, many participants noticed that resources are becoming increasingly scarce and in poorer quality. Women, as the main collectors of forest products, know forests well and have seen the impact of deforestation and forest degradation on their livelihoods. As forests become increasingly degraded, women must either travel longer distances, or use less NTFPs for domestic consumption. Also, some stakeholders noted forest biodiversity has declined. In terms of agriculture, consulted women also noted that soil quality has been in decline. Some villages noted that initially they tried to use dung fertilizers, but then switched to some chemical fertilizers. While they can see the impact of some land use practices (e.g. shifting cultivation), they noted a major barrier for them to address this is the lack of available finances and knowledge of alternative “good” agriculture and land use practices. They further noted the need for support in marketing and identifying suitable opportunities (based on land use planning).

A summary of comments from the gender-specific stakeholder consultations and a brief description of how they have been incorporated into the programme and/or GAP is provided in the following Table.

Stakeholder comment and/or recommendation	How it has been integrated in the programme's gender action plan:	Related programme output/activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
<p>LWU is an important institution in supporting gender equality and gender-sensitive development in Lao PDR. Nonetheless, their capacities can be further strengthened to better enable them to support gender equality within both the context of the program, and in general.</p> <p>Implementing government agencies have weak capacities on gender.</p>	<p>The program will develop the capacities of line implementing Government agencies and the Lao Women's Union to provide gender-sensitive facilitation of programme activities in village communities. Implement targeted trainings on REDD+ and gender. Technical staff from DAFO, DOFI and DLWU will be trained in "REDD+ and Gender", as well as social inclusion.</p> <p>It will further support the capacity of female staff within government agencies to improve the gender balance within the forest and agriculture sector, and will aim to increase the number of women supporting the implementation of program activities.</p>	Cross-cutting/ all	(1) (4)
<p>Women's participation in meetings, trainings and committees is often limited. This is due to various factors (e.g. cultural norms, timing and location of trainings, education of women, among others). Targeted technical support is needed to strengthen women's participation in program meetings.</p>	<p>Encourage the active and effective participation of women in community meetings, through the following practices:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Building the capacities of LWU and government agencies on gender and social inclusion (see recommendations above)</li> <li>• Setting a quota of 40% participation of women in community meetings</li> <li>• Conducting a survey to determine if women felt actively included in REDD+ related meetings</li> <li>• Time and locate trainings taking into account women's work schedules and accessibility to ensure maximum participation and outreach, coordinate with LWU, LNFC, and local women's organizations to build on existing networks and best practices for outreach.</li> <li>• Ensure that village consultations regarding potential private sector investments in community-based agroforestry enable all villagers equally to participate in the investment decisions.</li> </ul>	Cross-cutting/ all	(1) (2) (3) (4) (8) (13) (14)
<p>Women and men are interested in stopping shifting cultivation, as it is labour intensive and difficult work, however they need suitable alternatives. Women's capacities are low, and they often have less access to</p>	<p>Activity 1.4 will support villagers with LUP, which will help identify suitable land use activities. Outputs 2 and 3 will provide technical and financial support to communities to adopt sustainable land use practices on agricultural and forested land. Participation in the program is voluntary,</p>	Activity 1.5, all Activities within Outputs 2 and 3	(1) (2) (3) (4) (8)



Stakeholder comment and/or recommendation	How it has been integrated in the programme's gender action plan:	Related programme output/activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
<p>extension services, trainings and information than men.</p>	<p>and based on participatory processes where villagers are able to identify practices that are suitable and of interest based on their local context. The program will support the development of women's capacities to adopt sustainable land use practices, and venture into the production, processing and marketing of new value chains. All training modules and extension materials will be reviewed by a gender specialist, all extension agents and trainers will be trained on gender equality and social inclusion (e.g. promotion of time-saving practices). In addition, the program will ensure close cooperation with LWU to reach the most women possible, and encourage their participation.</p> <p>Trainings for only women on "business skill development" will be implemented, to help women to improve their business literacy, build confidence and develop leadership skills.</p> <p>Assessments on targeted value chains will include gender assessments, to understand the key opportunities and challenges for women.</p> <p>Ensure that village consultations regarding potential private sector investments in community-based agroforestry enable all villagers equally to participate in the investment decisions.</p> <p>As for women's access to such services, see the additional recommendations in the row above.</p>		<p>(10) (11) (12) (14)</p>
<p>Women often have less access to decision making and planning processes, despite being the main users of forest lands.</p>	<p>The program will help empower women to become members of village forest management committees and other village decision-making bodies at the local level. The program will support the development of guidelines local village forest management committees to strengthen gender and social inclusion.</p> <p>It will further ensure gender is cross-cutting throughout all training modules and materials, and will encourage gender sensitization for men and women.</p>	<p>Activity 1.4, 1.5, all activities within Output 2 and Output 3</p>	<p>(13) (8)</p>

Stakeholder comment and/or recommendation	How it has been integrated in the programme's gender action plan:	Related programme output/ activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
<p>Women often know the forest better than men, but are often not involved in monitoring or law enforcement/ patrolling due to various reasons (cultural norms, unpaid labour/ household responsibilities, lower education). Nonetheless, women should be increasingly involved in these activities (if activities are safe, and close to villages). Women should be fully consulted on patrolling activities.</p> <p>Safety must be closely considered for forest patrols, as they are often dangerous activities, and may be far away from villages.</p>	<p>Review the potential for community-based women-led<sup>49</sup> patrolling groups, and support their creation with capacity development and awareness raising.</p>	<p>Activity 1.4, 1.5</p>	<p>(6) (7) 1) (2) (3) (4)</p>
<p>As with monitoring and law enforcement, despite women's in-depth knowledge of the forest, they are often not involved in monitoring activities. Women should be actively engaged and consulted on forest monitoring.</p>	<p>Capitalize on local women's extensive knowledge about community forests in making them an integral part of community contributions to the National Forest Monitoring System. This includes gender-responsive mechanisms for community monitoring within the National Forest Monitoring system.</p>	<p>Activity 1.5</p>	<p>(9)</p>
<p>It was mentioned in the consultations that women often know more about marketing than men, whereas men are often involved in more activities requiring 'heavier' labor. Thus, it is important for the value chain assessments conducted within the</p>	<p>The program will ensure that a gender assessment is integrated in every analysis for potential new agricultural practices and value chains utilized by the program. All feasibility studies for the development of new value chains or agricultural practices should review the estimated gendered impact of</p>	<p>Activity 2.1 and 2.2</p>	<p>(10)</p>

<sup>49</sup> Women-led implies that the groups are organized and led by women, however it does not mean that the participation is only women. These groups can be mixed patrolling groups, however, majority of the leaders and organizers of the group should be women.

Stakeholder comment and/or recommendation	How it has been integrated in the programme's gender action plan:	Related programme output/ activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
framework of the program that gender-related issues are considered within value chain assessments, including key opportunities for women to strengthen their roles and capacities.	the desired change (access, needs, barriers, potentials, work load, benefits).		

## 9. Outstanding gender gaps and recommendations to integrate them into the GCF programme

The following table connects the outstanding identified gaps (i.e. in addition to those identified in the stakeholder consultations and described in the previous tables), with regard to gender with proposed recommendations to act upon these drivers. The third column shows the integration into the existing outline for outputs and activities of the planned GCF programme, and the fourth column where they have been integrated into the Gender Action Plan.

They are not listed according to priority. They should be integrated as much as possible throughout the course of the programme, starting with the funding proposal, the Log-frame, the operational planning, and monitoring and evaluation systems.

Furthermore, it is strongly recommended to review this analysis and the effectiveness of the suggested activities on a regular basis, and to include it in the required on-boarding documents for new programme staff.

Identified gender gap	Recommendation	Related Programme Output and Activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
The current Forestry Law draft and PRAPs do not reflect upon gender aspects in the land use sector.	<p>The program will support the elaboration and revision regulations and guidelines to implement gender-sensitive SFM, FLR and village forestry under the revised Forestry Law and the PRAPs. The program’s safeguard, gender and M&amp;E specialist and if necessary other gender experts will revise the regulations and guidelines.</p> <p>As a result, new/ revised laws, regulations and guidelines will explicitly consider gender (e.g. in the context of stakeholder roles, institutional responsibilities, resource access and benefit-sharing</p>	1.2 1.3	(5)
The current capacities of Government staff at all levels to actively integrate gender and ethnic considerations into their management and implementation approaches are very limited, and the majority of staff are male. Ethnic languages are often a barrier of communication which is not actively addressed. This strongly affects inclusiveness at the ground level, where women are often left out of planning and decision-making activities if not actively encouraged to participate.	<p>The program will train all concerned Government staff, including Lao Women’s Union (LWU) and the REDD+ Funding Window management, on gender, REDD+ and social inclusion It will further implement targeted trainings to support the capacity development of female staff for all implementing Government agencies at all levels to improve the gender balance within the forest sector.</p> <p>Communication materials on forest protection, REDD+ and other awareness-related activities should be gender-sensitive, user-friendly and in different ethnic languages whenever possible. All communication and information materials will be revised by a gender specialist.</p>	Cross-cutting/ all	(1) (3) (4)
The consultations showed that women are considered the main users of forest resources and possess vast knowledge of their surrounding natural habitats and their status of degradation, but rarely participate in forest management and	The program will support the development of guidelines local village forest management committees, and set standards of to ensure such committees are accessible for women, members of diverse ethnic groups and the poor, including a quota of at least 30% of female members per committee. The by-laws should also provide alternative pathways for people	1.3 2.1 3.1 3.2 3.3	(13) (1)

Identified gender gap	Recommendation	Related Programme Output and Activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
monitoring due to lack of education and traditional norms.	to fulfill the necessary requirements to become committee members (e.g. minimum education standard OR passing of a standard oral test). LWU will support consultation processes to help strengthen gender equality in program implementation.		
The consultations at village level showed that environmental awareness is still very limited. The greatest motivation for villagers to engage in protection measures is found when they see immediate effects on their livelihood through diminishing resources (less income, less food). Exchange with other villages is commonly seen as a very effective tool to initiate change, but women are often prevented from traveling due to traditional norms and lack of transport.	The program will promote awareness-raising campaigns through the use of interactive tools and gender-/ethnic-sensitive communication materials which consider existing motivation factors. All major communication materials and awareness raising campaigns will be reviewed and approved by the program's safeguard, gender and M&E specialist  The program will further enable female villagers to participate in exchanges and meetings outside the village through direct campaigning through LWU and Government staff, and provide allowances and means to travel if necessary.	1.4 2.1 3.1 4	(17) GAP budget considers DSAs for villagers, and will provide support to access trainings.
There are currently no specific women groups active in forest management. The Lao Women's Union (LWU) is usually the only active organization which can influence decision-making at all levels.	The programme needs to utilize the LWU as much as possible to represent and reach women, and it is recommended to allocate budget directly to the local LWU offices to enable them to responsibly co-facilitate programme activities.	Cross-cutting/ all	(1) (17)
The current Law Enforcement Actions Plans do not consider gender aspects and are therefore not considerate of the potentials of women's role in forest use and protection.	The program will support inclusion of women in law enforcement measures (e.g. patrolling).	1.4	(6) (7)
Legally, women and men have the same rights to land. Reality shows, however, that women's land tenure is still less secure than men's. Women are also often not actively included in decision-	LUP processes supported by the programme will be vigilant in actively including all women and men in the target villages (separate meetings; women meetings led by female staff).	1.5 3.1	(13) (8) (2) (1)

Identified gender gap	Recommendation	Related Programme Output and Activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
<p>making steps of land use planning (LUP). The subsequent forest management plan is then seen by local men and women as a specialized step which women are even less part of. Reasons provided are lack of education to assume responsibility for “technical” tasks, lack of confidence to participate in management decisions, and traditional norms of many ethnic groups.</p>	<p>Quotas will to be set to encourage women’s inclusion in village management committees (at least 30%).            Quotas will be set to encourage the participation of women in meetings, and targeted support (e.g. business skill training, training of program staff on gender equality and social inclusion) will be provided to strengthen the effective engagement of women.            Again, LWU can function as a facilitator and skills developer for village women, if budget is allocated accordingly.</p>		<p>(3) (4)</p>
<p>There is currently no National Forest Inventory System in place. The development of it, as planned by the programme, should utilize women’s roles in forest use and access.</p>	<p>The developed National Forest Monitoring system will feature effective gender-responsive mechanisms for community monitoring.            It will further support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A small feasibility study on the potential of developing a women-centered approach for community-based patrolling</li> <li>• Gender-proofing all related capacity building and trainings efforts, forest-inventory planning, field data collection and data entry/analysis/reporting, quality control, communication/ documentation and dissemination activities.</li> </ul>	<p>1.6 3.2</p>	<p>(9) (17) (16)</p>
<p>Women and men in the villages are willing to make the shift away from shifting cultivation and other land use systems contributing to deforestation, towards deforestation-free agriculture as long as the shift provides more income and considers the high work loads of villagers. Women traditionally work longer hours</p>	<p>As mentioned in the stakeholder consultation recommendations above, the programme will conduct studies on potential alternative production practices which are considerate of potential impacts on workload and cultural practices. Community-based learning and consultation activities, as proposed by the programme, need to ensure that women and men can openly express these concerns (separate</p>	<p>2.1 2.3</p>	<p>(10) (11)</p>

Identified gender gap	Recommendation	Related Programme Output and Activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
per day, whereas men's work is physically of higher intensity.	meetings, grievance mechanisms considerate of gendered barriers).		
Women's and men's access to local markets strongly depends on road access. Women's access is further limited by safety concerns, traditional norms and higher workload in the families which prevent them from venturing out. Regarding general market access, women feel less confident and knowledgeable to venture beyond women's traditional products (handicraft, weaving, NTFPs).	<p>Extension and training for agriculture and forestry interventions will be closely monitored by the program's safeguard, gender and M/E specialist. All training modules and materials will be reviewed and approved by the specialist prior to approval.</p> <p>All extension agents and trainers will be trained by the safeguard, gender and M/E specialist on gender equality and social inclusion within the framework of the program.</p> <p>Women-only business skills courses to be conducted for kumbans</p> <p>Gender-responsive monitoring will be conducted, that permits active management and learning throughout program implementation.</p> <p>Budget will be provided for the provision of translators and the translation of materials into local languages, as necessary.</p>	<p>2.2</p> <p>2.3</p>	<p>(10)</p> <p>(11)</p> <p>(12)</p> <p>(16)</p> <p>(17)</p>
How to ensure women can access finance? Women are often less able to access loans from larger financial institutions (e.g. may not have land titles), and may be more reluctant to take loans.	<p>Village banking in Lao PDR has been successful in strengthening access to finance for rural women in Lao PDR. Over 1,650 Lao Village Credit Associations exist, having been strongly promoted by international donor agencies as well as the Lao Women's Union. LWU has as one of its main objectives increasing access to credit and finance for women.</p> <p>Village management committees must consist of both men and women, and have stringent requirements for representation. Lao Women's Union also plays an important role in supporting village banking across the country.</p> <p>The programme will support the channeling of small grants through village banks for the adoption of sustainable land use</p>	<p>1.1 (design of funding window)</p> <p>2.3</p> <p>3.1</p> <p>3.2</p> <p>3.3</p> <p>1.7</p>	<p>(1)</p> <p>(2)</p> <p>(3)</p> <p>(4)</p> <p>(5)</p> <p>(10)</p> <p>(11)</p> <p>(12)</p> <p>(13)</p> <p>(14)</p> <p>(15)</p> <p>(16)</p>



Identified gender gap	Recommendation	Related Programme Output and Activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
	<p>practices by local men and women. This will follow existing guidelines and best practices for integrating women and ethnic peoples in management committees. Training will be provided for village committee members on managing finance, and ensuring socially inclusive and gender-equitable best practices are applied.</p> <p>Guidelines for the creation of local village forest management committees set standards of requirements accessible for women and the poor, and a quota of at least 30% of female members per committee.</p> <p>In addition, additional trainings will be conducted for women on financial literacy and business development (within Activity 1.7, as described in the GAP).<sup>50</sup> These trainings build on best practices, and further address comments raised in the consultations that women may have more fears about lending risks and lower education and require targeted trainings and education on financial literacy and business planning. Nonetheless, women in Lao PDR are often responsible for household finances, often considered '<i>family bankers</i>' and thus many villages have had positive examples in developing village banks and having women directly benefit from such micro-finance institutions.<sup>51</sup></p>		(17)

<sup>50</sup> Builds off of positive experiences, such as those conducted in the ILO training courses "Get Ahead for Women in Enterprise", which were designed for poor women who want to start or expand a micro-business. For more information refer to: [https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms\\_099876.pdf](https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---asia/---ro-bangkok/documents/publication/wcms_099876.pdf)

<sup>51</sup> E.g. see studies by Siebel and Kunkel (1999) – Microfinance in Laos: A Case for Women's Banking; GIZ (2012) – Microfinance in Rural Areas – Access to finance for the poor; ILO (no date) – Banking as a solution: How microfinance can help reduce the need for young people to migrate for employment and thus diminish their vulnerability to human traffickers.

Identified gender gap	Recommendation	Related Programme Output and Activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
<p>Improved access to micro-grants could lead to a risk in the escalation of domestic violence.</p>	<p>Women play an important role as family bankers, and while finances are often managed by women – decisions are often made jointly in many communities. It is not expected for the programme to lead to an escalation of domestic violence. Early experiences with micro-finance and village banks in Lao PDR have demonstrated that it has led to mostly positive impacts for women, with main concerns voiced by women to include:<sup>52</sup></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Dominant role and decision making of men</li> <li>- Limited capacities of women (financial literacy and business planning), and</li> </ul> <p>Gender equality and social inclusion will be cross-cutting throughout all consultations, and trainings, as well as program activities in general. Gender sensitization should be conducted for both men and women, including different age groups (e.g. youth, adults, elderly).</p> <p>Training will be held for men and women to understand their rights and relevant laws, while also discussing the importance of men and women to have access to finance and trainings, as well as other issues related to gender-equality. In trainings and consultations, representatives from Lao Womens Union will be present, and can support awareness raising on womens rights and available resources.</p> <p>For instance, at trainings for women on financial literacy, information will also be provided on women’s rights, and available resources in the instance of gender-violence. LWU will be an important institution to support such trainings, and</p>	<p>Gender sensitization and equality cross-cutting in all Activities;</p> <p>1.7 (GAP)</p> <p>2.2 (Financial trainings)</p> <p>3.1-3.3 (access to micro-finance)</p>	<p>(1)</p> <p>(2)</p> <p>(3)</p> <p>(4)</p> <p>(5)</p> <p>(10)</p> <p>(11)</p> <p>(12)</p> <p>(13)</p> <p>(14)</p> <p>(15)</p> <p>(16)</p> <p>(17)</p>

<sup>52</sup> GIZ (2012) – Microfinance in Rural Areas – Access to finance for the poor

Identified gender gap	Recommendation	Related Programme Output and Activity	No. of corresponding measure in GAP
	<p>provide key information – including disseminating the number for the Lao Womens Union Counselling and Protection Centre for Women and Children, and discussing other services provided by LWU. There are often limited CSOs and resources in rural communities working on topics related to gendered-violence, and thus LWU remains one of the main focal points for disseminating information and providing support to rural women.</p>		
<p>Both local Government agencies and local villagers welcome private sector investment as long as it benefits the communities in terms of higher income and less workload, as well as enhanced skills. All parties expressed the wish to have the Government strongly controlling such potential investments to limit risks for the communities. The interviewed women stated that they do not feel confident to participate in decisions over investments.</p>	<p>Village consultations about potential private sector engagement need to separate villagers from village authorities and men from women to ensure that all villagers feel safe to express their views and ask questions.</p>	<p>2.2</p>	<p>(15)</p>

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## Annex 1: List of consulted stakeholders

<b>Names</b>	<b>Government office/village</b>
Mr. Kim Thoummala	Deputy Director General of PAFO Houaphan
Ms. Phengvanh Sermkhamlar	Deputy Director General of LWU Houaphan
Mr. Lar Khamvongsa	Technical Coordinator PAFO Houaphan
Mr. Singthong Phanthavongkham	Deputy Head of DAFO Sam Neua
Ms. Kongkhammany Lorlakhang	Deputy Head of LWU Sam Neua
Ms. Phoungseng Oudommyxai	Deputy Head of LWU Sam Neua
PAFO & POFI team	PAFO/POFI Luang Namtha
PLWU team	PLWU Luang Namtha
DAFO team	DAFO Luang Namtha
DLWU team	DLWU Luang Namtha
15 female villagers	Ban Yard, Houaphan, Sam Neua
13 male villagers	Ban Yard, Houaphan, Sam Neua
27 female & 8 male villagers	Ban Nam Mad, Luang Namtha
4 female, 10 male villagers	Ban Nam Dy, Luang Namtha

## Annex 2: Transcripts of stakeholder interviews

GCF/GIZ, GoL interviews: PAFO & PLWU Houaphan

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

**1. What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?**

Supporting the CLIPAD activities

**2. From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?**

Collection of NTFPs.

**3. How are women already part of REDD+ mechanisms?**

PAFO: Women should be part of REDD+ activities but in fact are not yet, except of women's participation in village meetings (PRAP etc.). Awareness-raising campaigns on forest laws and regulations also targeted women. Capacity-building activities on District level also focus on gender in REDD+ activities (trainer from PAFO, participants LWU, DAFO, DoNRE, police, DIndCommOffice). More trainings will follow in every District (supported by FCPF).

**4. How could they be more part of it?**

Higher levels (Provincial and national) need to be trained further so that they can support building the capacities of the Districts. Also, activities in the villages need continuous effort to reach out to women.

**5. Which challenges do you see when it comes to remoter areas, women, ethnicity?**

80% remoter, mountainous communities, so change of livelihood will take time and a multi-sector approach. If women are not understanding the activities and goals, change will not happen. Challenges in having women truly participating: lack of understanding and education esp. amongst remoter living ethnic groups; changes to their lifestyle need lots of awareness raising first; if women are not convinced of the suggested change (lifestyle, livestock & agriculture changes etc.), it usually does not happen in the communities.

Note: Village Development Funds (VDF) are mainly used by women (livestock projects mainly).

**6. Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection**



**forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?**

NTFPs & firewood are usually collected and sold by women (often to Chinese marketers), so the benefits include them.

Forest Management Plans help to determine roles and responsibilities in villagers' forest use.

**7. What women groups are currently involved in forest management modalities?**

Women groups are usually less active in forest management activities, but the LWU is part of the Livelihood Improvement Group, and women are mainly responsible for the VDF management.

**8. How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality?**

PAFO: Our knowledge and experience to support gender equality are not sufficient, despite the many projects we have implemented. We need trainings in management, procurement, accounting, and finance, and other technical trainings including livelihood improvement and gender, implementation and agriculture-related technical trainings. Study tours to other countries are useful to understand practical implementation, even between villagers (peer-to-peer learning between different villages from different Provinces).

**9. How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are? How much are REDD+ and gender aspects of it integrated into the SEDP?**

Clipad implementation has improved our understanding about gender issues and women's participation. (Note: Interviewees did not understand the question.)

**10. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?**

Decree PM, LWU law, SEDP all suggest the equal participation of women. This must be mentioned in the regulations as well, and integrate these existing laws into the new regulations, even if only in the programme area first as a pilot. The laws for equal participation are in existence – but it's upon regulations to make sure it is happening.

**11. How can women be part in law enforcement measures?**

We have a Law Enforcement Action Plan until 2020 (responsible: Dep. Of Forestry Inspection, POFI), but it is very generic, no mentioning of women's participation. We should think of ways to include women in law enforcement measures. If they would like to go on patrolling, they should be supported in that.

**12. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

LUP before forest management plan, so it paves the path to equal participation. The plans should be very specific (giving %, at least 20% suggested) how many women have to participate in which land & forest use & management.

So far, LUPs have only been done for areas, not for individual HH, so it's hard to draw conclusions on the factual land tenure security from that. Having both names of husband and wife on land titles will guarantee women's and men's equal and tenure.

**13. Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?**

Note: Question was not understood correctly.

**14. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices: Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

Agricultural Strategy leads the way. Cash crops promoted for Houaphan: coffee, Chinese cardamom, pilot projects are already running (too early to draw conclusions). One main difficulty is the lack of markets.

**15. Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?**

Key problem is the general lack of markets, not the production. PSEDP tries to address the market gaps and production needs. Rice is not identified as a commercial crop in Houaphan, only for domestic consumption.

**16. Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?**

LWU: Micro finance is a very essential mechanism to promote women's economic activity. However, MFI are hard to access for people, only a few Village Banks exist /through VDF). PAFO & PLWU think it would be essential to increase access to microfinance/village banks in Houaphan to promote people's confidence in new production methods etc.

**17. How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fiber industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?**

Investment are a huge potential but need to be tailored to the different potentials of the Districts, e.g. Livestock in Houameuang and Sam Neua, Viengxay for fruit trees,

etc. Ecotourism as huge potential for the NPA areas. The potentials are already assessed and written into their strategy.

GoL has to support with careful study of the impacts on local communities – if the investment is not beneficial and does not create increased income for people, we cannot allow such investment.

#### **18. Any other remarks?**

LWU: national laws & strategies, as well as leadership position quotas are in place – the gap is on the implementation level, where we need very concrete guidelines, with details on gender equality, participation figures.

Women lack knowledge because of lower education levels, young marriage an issue, lower roles in society despite laws stating equality. Just setting quotas does not help if it is not combined with awareness raising on all levels (incl. villages); needs trainings for GoL officers dealing with villagers; LWU is present in all villages but needs stronger utilization in village management

Women can play a huge role in deforestation-free agriculture, e.g. silk worm farms & silk production, cotton could be female-driven productions. Now too much import from Vietnam, but we could support the development of these value chains in Houaphan. Textile industry is very inclusive, since it does not require high education and also disabled women can work in it.

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

**1. What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?**

Districts/DAFO are key implementers of REDD+ mechanisms. Roles: planning process, hotspot and potential analysis,

**2. From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?**

Women are main users of forests, so they need to get involved in all activities and facilitated by all sector agencies incl. LWU

**3. How are women already part of REDD+ mechanisms?**

Involvement of women in the planning processes very limited, since mostly only the head of HH participate.

**4. How could they be more part of it?**

We have to have more women participating already from the planning process in villages onwards. That starts with awareness raising for the women (DLWU key responsibility, in collaboration with DAFO and other line agencies).

**5. Which challenges do you see when it comes to remoter areas, women, ethnicity?**

Language barriers; kumban level meetings usually include travel which women cannot do, so only men attend.

Solutions: hire more ethnic staff in District teams. Keep either meetings to the village level only, or allocate resources and organize pick-ups for women to be able to travel.

**6. Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?**

Women have little access to decision-making and planning processes on forest resources, but are the main users of the same (NTFPs collecting & marketing/selling). In regards to benefitting from that work in the form of shared decision-making, families definitely discuss purchases and investments jointly, but the final decision is with the husband as the traditional head of the HH.

**7. What women groups are currently involved in forest management modalities?**

No women groups except of LWU.

**8. How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality?**

Still need CB; new technology which needs more training and staff fluctuation are challenges; need more training on gender issues, plus regular opportunities to discuss and exchange on implementation experiences.

**9. How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are? How much are REDD+ and gender aspects of it integrated into the SEDP?**

Insufficient integration on implementation level. Suggestion of study tours between villagers (learning exchanges), and integrate a gender perspective into these exchanges

**10. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?**

The Forest Law is too general, so regulations need to be based on the reality of Districts and Provinces. For the creation of the regulations, it would be best to include both District authorities and villages in the consultations. Bottom-up approach.

**11. How can women be part in law enforcement measures?**

Villagers incl. women first need to understand why the laws are relevant, so enforcement starts with encouraging villagers' support to adhere to the laws.

**12. Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?**

Women could be part of NTFP monitoring, but needs a lot of initial support and follow-up.

**13. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

LUP did only allocate land on a village level so far, but most of the times, no land titles have been issued yet. That put women in disadvantage because the key decisions in LUP were and are taken by the (mostly male) village authorities and heads of HH. Future LUPs need to be more specific in regards to land use, and half-completed LUP processes need to be completed. No land tenure security on the current basis.

**14. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices:**

**Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

Needs in-depth village-by-village potential and risk analysis. Funding to invest needs to be available. People are already willing to stop shifting cultivation but currently don't have alternatives.

**15. Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?**

Lack of financial resources, plus lack of confidence to risk investments. Markets are local, and many villages are too far off the markets and cannot access them.

DAFO suggests creating a form to monitor which products are produced where and sold where, so that market assessments become possible, and prices can be regulated for the benefit of the farmers (who usually don't get paid enough). Creation of this form could come from the Provincial Office for Industry and Commerce, collection of data by their District offices.

**16. Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?**

They would probably benefit from that if there would not be the immense risk to lose investments (e.g. when livestock diseases kill the animals they purchased from borrowed money). Also, the interest rates need to be low so that poorer people can access MF, e.g. in Village Banks.

**17. How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fibre industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?**

Proposals will go through PAFO which will review the benefits for the villagers carefully. Consult with the villagers, and do an area survey. Monitoring and follow-up by DAFO.

**18. Any other remarks?**

Plans need to be realistic in terms of budget. Use regular village visits to raise other than usual topics (e.g. gender issues in the frame of livelihood improvement, something tangible for the villagers). Make meetings more attractive for villagers, making clear what the benefit for them is in attending.

DDG DAFO: target the senior men in a village if you want to promote gender equality,

and keep it simple and interesting (videos, games etc.).

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

**1. What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?**

FPIC and VDF implementation and management; no direct implementation responsibility for REDD+, e.g. village forest management agreement as part of FPIC process

**2. From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?**

LWU contribute to legal dissemination and mobilization of women in the villages to aid forest protection.

**3. Which challenges do you see when it comes to remoter areas, women, ethnicity?**

Knowledge and understanding in women low which affects meetings and participations significantly: low education rates esp. amongst women in remote areas

**4. Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?**

Forest Management Committee has LWU member, but usually not more women (7 members total) – so women's decision-making power is very limited. It is difficult to find more women for this task because most don't feel educated enough to do the technical tasks related to that responsibility.

**5. How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality? Are there activities in the planned program they think they will/would like to support but would need more in-depth knowledge for?**

Once District Steering Committee is in place, conduct a gender training for them and us focused on the kind of activities which will be implemented on the village level.

**6. How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are?**

The implementation is usually not gender-sensitive, very few people understand gender equality.

**7. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?**



Regulations and all legal documents should include aspects of gender equity, which build the basis for implementation. Create a specific guideline on gender for the implementation of programme activities. Add to the guidelines that line agencies have to send at least local language-speaking staff to the villages to ensure that everyone understands the activity and is able to participate.

**8. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

Challenge to follow through now with jointly signed land titles for wife and husband. LWU is part of LUP committees in the villages and tries to engage female villagers in the discussions.

**9. Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?**

Forest Management Committee of all villages have already one fixed female member (the LWU member), so she could support women's support to monitoring the forest.

**10. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices: Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

Promoted alternatives need to make sure that tasks in the production can be fairly distributed between men and women so to avoid increased work load for either, esp. women. Alongside promotion of more equitable share of domestic work (awareness raising campaigns).

**11. Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?**

MOIC has to support the identification of new markets. Markets now are too far away for most remote villages. Sometimes villages produce a lot (e.g. vegetables) but markets are too far away to bring it there and sell it.

**12. Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?**

MF can aid women to start businesses in handicraft, livestock, agriculture. Main customers of MF institutions are currently women. Combine access to MF with business trainings for women. In case of cash crop promotion, provide such training before the introduction of new cash crops, so that women are prepared and more confident.

More hands-on trainings to learn new skills are needed (e.g. handicrafts). Also not only talking about how to access markets, but organize learning tours for villagers to

markets.

When creating access to MF: Conduct educational trainings on MF which are sensitive to women's fears and insecurities regarding risk and lower education levels.

- 13. How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fiber industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?**

Concession & labor fees should go to villagers, land goes back to village. Technical knowledge should be provided by the company to the villagers.

## **GCF/GIZ, GoL interviews: PAFO Luang Namtha**

### Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

#### **1. What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?**

Preparing new structure for REDD+ implementation right now; PRAP finalized but awaits signing. Consulted with Provincial REDD+ task force. Activities budgets are currently prepared, five core activities: REDD dissemination, forest regulation dissemination, scaling up PRAP activities & training, admin budget

#### **2. From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?**

No separation from GoL side. VDF or conservation fund oftentimes are more lead by women and are seen as key players in management and accounting. Patrolling is traditionally done by men, even though it is not specified to be like that. As long as forests are close to the village, women could also do that task.

#### **3. How are women already part of REDD+ mechanisms?**

Women could have many roles – because they are more careful and considerate of the natural resources. Women often have more valuable additional work, like handicraft/textiles. NTFP collection. Rubber harvest done more efficiently and successfully by women.

#### **4. How could they be more part of it?**

We are aware that we need to involve especially women when it comes to the dissemination of forest-related information to village women. We will separate in women and men discussion groups because otherwise women will not speak out. Women are also important educators towards their children.

#### **5. Which challenges do you see when it comes to remoter areas, women, ethnicity?**

Women are the key persons in collecting NTFPs etc, but in ethnic villages, it is mostly men who take all decisions. We need to increase our awareness raising to these communities regarding equal decision-making.

Lack of Lao language skills makes it difficult to communicate with ethnic villagers, esp. the women. They often only talk to the Naiban. But many ethnic groups, including Akha improved their Lao significantly in the last ten years, so it is getting easier to access them.

#### **6. Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection**

## **forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?**

Women as money-keepers of the family possess higher benefits from the resources. In many ethnic minorities, men however have often the “last word” in decision-making. Not the case in the cities, where women usually have higher decision-making power.

Men have more access to forest resources management. We need to get more women into the forest management. Women are usually the money keepers in Lao culture, so if women see the “cash value” of forest resources and their management, they will naturally want to become more involved.

### **7. What women groups are currently involved in forest management modalities?**

LWU only as a group. VDF has promoted a lot of women in managing roles, especially in regards to SME development. Ecotourism activities have promoted women into management positions.

PAFO has some women in natural protection section (3 out of 8), forestry section (13 in total, 6 women).

### **8. What are their capacities, what would they need to improve?**

PAFO female staff has same capacities, but child birth puts them behind. Two female patrollers in Long District who work together with POFI as part of law enforcement.

### **9. How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality?**

PAFO has two-three gender focal points, men and women, who is often involved in setting up activities and sometimes goes to the villages. Also, LWU is the go-to structure to implement any specific activities.

A specialized training on REDD+ and gender would be useful before implementation starts. Also a training on improved facilitation and presentation skills for the staff to improve village work.

### **10. How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are? How much are REDD+ and gender aspects of it integrated into the SEDP?**

Women were very much involved in the planning process of the current REDD\* plan. The overall gender-sensitivity is hard for us to assess.

### **11. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?**

Not necessary to mention gender specifically in the regulations, but instead bring more women into the implementation. In some cases there is already a balance, but not everywhere. On Provincial level, balance is fine, but not in most villages, so focus there.

**12. How can women be part in law enforcement measures?**

Patrolling is accompanied by PAFO, DAFO, DOFI together with militia and police. Not possible without villagers' involvement. Villages often request GoL support. Work can be dangerous (hunters, loggers). Some women might have the capacity, but not in general.

**13. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

LUP has majorly completed except of villages with lots of immigration which makes it difficult for authorities to update the necessary information to allocate land. Sustainable LUP needs to think more long-term than it previously has. Sing-District has particular immigration issue due to fast development (pull location for many people). In terms of gender equality, LUP has so far benefitted everyone equally. Participation in forest-related decisions was very equal, and women and men feel equally involved.

**14. Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?**

Women know the forests well and should be largely involved in their monitoring. They are also viewed as more reliable and honest than men in providing this kind of information.

**15. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices: Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

Cardamom, tea, NTFP. A negative point: in order to plant cash crops, small trees are often cut down. So the balance for agrobiodiversity is not perfect, leads to decreasing biodiversity. If we amp up cash crops, this also often means disturbance of wildlife, so we should find ways to limit disturbance.

Shifting cultivation needs extensive labor, so any change from that to cash crops is likely positive in regards to people's work load.

In village consultations, women should be particularly targeted, esp. also with technical knowledge to empower them, and to utilize their role as their children's educators.

**16. Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?**

In the promotion, it is often good to discuss potential work divisions needed for a new product (e.g. men do planting, women harvesting etc.).

Women usually know more about market access than men, and also what prices certain products get. That can be utilized in trainings.

**17. Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?**

Microfinance institutions are often a high barrier for people to use as starters for a new value chain/product etc. because people are afraid of the interest rates and paying back the money on time, and might therefore not use it. Microfinance institutions possess very valuable technical knowledge though which can be useful for the villagers to learn how to identify sources for investment themselves, so a cooperation would be best.

**18. How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fiber industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?**

Lessons learned from the past: organized study tour for villagers and provided them with seeds to empower them to start a new product, and PAFO made sure that a company buys the product (mak dao). In some cases, the companies provided the funds for these activities, sometimes PAFO if they have the budget for it. Another example: a paper company was built, so PAFO trained villagers how to plant bamboo to sell to that company.

Both are running well, but they don't feel these are sustainable solutions because price fluctuations tend to heavily impact the villages, often leading to deforestation because villagers rapidly need to plant other crops to earn additional income.

If more companies are interested to invest, maybe agricultural land can be directly allocated to them.

## **GCF/GIZ, GoL interviews: PLWU Luang Namtha**

### Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

#### **1. What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?**

PAFO usually coordinates with PLWU about forest-related activities, and vice-president and one technical staff are assigned to join all REDD+ consultations, including on the village level. Also join SUFORD activities on village level. Also gender-sensitive information dissemination to villagers.

#### **2. From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?**

LUP has been improved, many stopped shifting cultivation, jobs were created

#### **3. Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?**

#### **4. What women groups are currently involved in forest management modalities?**

LWU is not a key implementer but coordinates with all sectors to ensure gender equality. We wish more women to be part of the management also on village level. We need to mobilize women in the villages, and ask the village authorities to make sure that women equally attend. It is always a problem if only the head of the HH are called into meetings, because then only men join. Customary practices and too much house work hinder women further from attending. Education is lower for women, so they feel less confident in participating. All these factors need to be taken into account when planning village activities.

#### **5. How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality?**

We had some trainings as introduction into the sector but would appreciate more in-depth trainings on REDD+ and how to support the programme activities best.

#### **6. How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are? How much are REDD+ and gender aspects of it integrated into the SEDP?**

It was good that PLWU was involved in all consultations towards formulating REDD+ activities in the last year, so they feel it improved the gender-sensitivity of the process.

**7. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?**

LWU should be involved in the development of these regulations and guidelines. The Forestry Law has not been reviewed by them yet, so they don't feel like they know enough. They want to improve their understanding once the law has been improved in the National Assembly.

**8. How can women be part in law enforcement measures?**

Women are parts of different committees in the forest and should be systematically trained to also take part in law enforcement measures including patrolling.

**9. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

No specific challenges by gender, rather the general challenge that LUP has not been completed in some areas.

**10. Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?**

Women know the forests better than men and should therefore be strongly involved in the monitoring of forest resources, esp. NTFPs.

**11. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices: Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

New crops need a gender-sensitive analysis before introduction if that crop would benefit everyone in the village and does not give women more work.

Community-based learning and consultation activities need to separate women and men to make sure that all voices are heard equally.

**12. Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?**

Make women more confident in starting a new crop/value chain. LWU and other sectors should be included in educating them several times and support them in identifying markets and promote their access for women to these markets. For example, this year cardamom suddenly did not sell well which scared many villagers away from trying out new products in fear of financial problems. We need a thorough documentation of lessons learned like this, and find sustainable solutions together.



**13. Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?**

Having microfinance support is better than nothing but not the sole and optimal solution. For some women, this might help to get started. Very poor HHs do not take the risk in the first place, so microfinance alone is not the solution.

**14. How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fiber industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?**

Village consultations for such potential private sector investments need to ensure that village women's voices and concerns are actively taken into account (only-women meetings etc.).

**15. Any other remarks?**

LWU should always be involved in village level activities because they can easily access village women. So they recommend to make the responsibility very clear that LWU is responsible to implement all activities related to REDD+ and gender. This way it is ensured that gender is always an integral part. They feel ready to fully support the project.

## **GCF/GIZ, GoL interviews: Luang Namtha, District Lao Women's Union**

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

### **1. What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?**

DLWU is usually invited by DAFO to join forest-related activities. No specific implementation experience in REDD+ activities so far but the Deputy Head of DLWU has participated in consultation meetings for ICBF (by KfW), and bamboo projects.

### **2. From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?**

Women take part in forest management and protection, especially in regards to NTFPs. In the ICBF project, there are always also women in the village steering committees (usually the village LWU representative).

### **3. How are women already part of REDD+ mechanisms?**

### **4. How could they be more part of it?**

### **5. Which challenges do you see when it comes to remoter areas, women, ethnicity?**

Language, traditions, lower education. Early marriages in many ethnic groups. Children are living so close to nature and traditional life that they don't want to go to school. In some ethnic groups and villages, not even the LWU can get the village women together: when they call for a women's meeting in an Akha village, the men send their women away and attend the meeting themselves instead of their women. It's very difficult to overcome their traditions.

Also, road access and remoteness (in combination with lack of proper vehicles) is a barrier for staff to reach these villages. The District offices try to support each other with vehicles and in joining in activities together.

What they do to overcome these barriers: information dissemination to both women and men, through women's law information integrated into gender issues.

Traditional gender norms which led men and women to believe that women are worth less than men are the biggest barrier to women's inclusion in activities. Also, staff needs to adapt to villagers' schedules. E.g., Akha women are not at home throughout the day, so if you want to meet them, the team needs to be flexible and wait until evening and sleep in the village. Also, changing traditions takes time – projects need to plan for repeated activities and flexible time frames to trigger change.

### **6. Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?**

Women are the key collectors of forest resources but most of the time are not given the opportunity to participate in anything related to village politics, including forest management.

**7. How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality?**

They feel they need more technical training on REDD+ and its gender implications to be able to fully support the new program.

**8. How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are? How much are REDD+ and gender aspects of it integrated into the SEDP?**

Very little. Gender is not an integral part of these planning processes and consultations.

**9. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?**

The LWU Law should be consulted when drafting those guidelines and regulations. Opportunities for women to participate need to be actively integrated into any guideline, otherwise it will not happen. Also, include that the LWU should always by standard be involved in planning and implementation activities, and any consultations. That would also then include that the LWU gets budgeted support to do this.

**10. How can women be part in law enforcement measures?**

LWU would like to be part of forest law enforcement measures. Village women should be part of the village steering committee where decisions about forest management and law enforcement needs are taken.

**11. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

Women and men have the same rights according to the Law but women are often not having the same opportunity to decide about their land use in comparison to men. That starts with a more equal and active participation of women in LUP village meetings which is often not realized. Women especially need to think about having only their own name on property which they inherited. Shared property can have both names, but since women are still often at disadvantage when it comes to local legal procedures, they often lose their land, e.g. when their husbands die and the women remarries, and the land right was not clearly with the woman – the land usually then goes over into the men's family.

**12. Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?**

Whenever village conditions allow, both men and women should partake in forest resource monitoring efforts, including patrolling if the traditions allow that. Whenever an active monitoring would not be possible for villagers (too far away, no vehicles, too dangerous, too much other work), they should at least always be consulted regularly.

- 13. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices: Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

See next answer.

- 14. Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?**

LWU is often asked by projects to identify markets specifically for women which is necessary to do when introducing a new value chain. Many projects support women-typical income activities such as weaving/textile production but if there is no market and promotion of women's market access, then the new value chain is not improving women's lives

- 15. Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?**

Beneficial for women, village women should be included in the management of these banks at village level from the start. DLWU in Luang Namtha is not involved in microfinance. Difficult to assess for them if microfinance access would in fact empower women to start new products/businesses, but the DLWU would support this potentially beneficial activity to make sure that women are part of the management and implementation.

- 16. How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fiber industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?**

They don't see potential for Luang Namtha District since there is no area for that. There is already a lot of rubber plantations. People don't have funds to start such endeavors themselves, and there is no market to sell the new products. So any potential investment would have to analyze these challenges and keep sustainability and ongoing benefits for the involved people in mind.

**17. Any other remarks?**

DLWU Luang Namtha would be more than willing to implement own parts of the programme because they are usually only consulted. So a budgeted sub-implementation would be their favorite solution, or at least involve them in the steering committees for the program.

**GCF/GIZ, GoL interviews: Luang Namtha, District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO) and District Office for Forest Inspection (DOFI)**

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

**1. What is your role in REDD+ mechanisms implementation?**

Deputy DAFO head usually joins REDD+ consultations, but they feel they still have only limited knowledge of REDD+

But DAFO's key role is to protect forests and their species, as well as general biodiversity/wildlife protection and emission reduction, and the adherence to laws and regulations, patrolling, deforestation.

**2. From your point of view: what are women's specific roles in forest and land use, and in forest protection?**

Forest protection on village level, women have more roles and responsibilities because women usually go to the forest for NTFP production/collection and vegetable collection. Men mainly do dissemination and enforcement of regulations; only a few women are part of that level of protection/resource management.

**3. How are women already part of REDD+ mechanisms?**

In general, all activities aim to benefit all villagers equally. But especially in many ethnic groups, women are participating less in activities due to traditions.

**4. Which challenges do you see when it comes to remoter areas, women, ethnicity?**

Language, education, understanding of regulations and laws is very low. Use modern communication tools like posters, videos shown by LCDs to engage all villagers and to convey messages more playfully.

**5. Do you feel women have the same access to benefits from forest resources and their management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities, like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests?**

In some villages, women are already part of village and forest management committees. DAFO thinks that the local LWU representatives are the best choices to systematically place into the forest management committees because they usually possess better education.

**6. How do you assess your current capacities to support the planned program in regards to gender equality?**

Implementation-wise we are ready, but always appreciate additional specialized

trainings to improve our work, especially when the program requires certain knowledge and technical skills. We have sufficient staff and capacities to implement the program. Study tours to other Provinces are very useful learning tools for them.

**7. How gender-sensitive do you think the current REDD+ mechanisms are? How much are REDD+ and gender aspects of it integrated into the SEDP?**

The activity is still too new for them to be able to assess that.

**8. The programme will support the development of regulations and guidelines based on the new Forest Law: from a gender perspective, what needs to be thought of?**

The Forest Law is gender-neutral because law is law, and both men and women equally need to follow it once approved. Guidelines can be supportive in setting standards for village participation. Of course we also have to keep realities in mind – some ethnic groups just won't let women participate, and even on the District Government level, we often struggle finding enough suitable female candidates to work with us.

Since women are naturally already seen as the “protectors” of the forests, the development of guidelines can be a chance to foster this role for women.

**9. How can women be part in law enforcement measures?**

Women are much more reliable and committed to forest protection. They protect, men destroy. So we need to find ways to support women's natural protection efforts. Women need to be formally part of law enforcement units. If it is not formalized beforehand, the village authorities will just take over. Instead of approaching the village head (naiban), approach village LWU first. Could be entry point for PLWU/DLWU. Also, if women are more systematically placed in village steering committees, they will also be more part of any law enforcement measures.

**10. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

Women's and men's names are both on land use titles now, so the legal status is equalized. Same for LUP.

The challenge is within internal decision-making power relations in HHs which are harder to address. Land titling is not very advanced in the remoter areas of Luang Namtha.

**11. Development of a National Forest Monitoring System: how can women contribute?**

If such system is developed, formalize women's support and contribution to that from the beginning. Women need to be part of that because they are main users and protectors of the forests.

**12. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices:**

**Which implications will that have on women's work load? People's livelihoods? What would that mean for the extension services provided? Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

If we want to stop deforestation, the focus needs to be on income-generating activities, including NTFP conservation, sustainable use of NTFPs, value-added products.

Government needs to partake in village consultations since they will be part of the implementation.

**13. Promotion of deforestation-free value chains and access to markets: what are women's greatest challenges to develop such value chains now, what are their barriers to access markets now?**

It is essential to focus on market demand when developing new value chains, but all in the frame of local traditions (e.g. Akha: textiles) to make it valuable and realistic for the villagers.

Government needs to be part of the negotiations to ensure monitoring and support.

**14. Access to microfinance for these new value chains: how are women benefitting from that?**

Luang Namtha has only limited experience with microfinance. It could be very beneficial for people though to empower them to start new production methods, products etc.

Besides microfinance, the DOFI sees VDF are great ways to empower especially women in leadership and management. Introducing village-managed funds for forest protection would empower women to take over that role.

**15. How do you see the potentials and challenges in inviting private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests, including in the timber and fiber industries? Do you think villagers will be benefitting from such investment? How could the GoL ensure that the investments are benefitting the villagers?**

In Luang Namtha, rubber plantations are one of the drivers of deforestation. This needs to be taken care of, and avoided to do the same mistake again with another potential investment promotion.

Government needs to be part of the negotiations to ensure monitoring and support.

**16. Any other remarks?**

Feasibility studies of every village are necessary before activities are decided upon because every village is different.

Road access/improvement is a huge issue for program implementation – many villages where deforestation is an issue are remote and hard to reach. So small



infrastructure improvements should be part of the program.  
DAFO staff needs vehicles to access more remote areas.

**GCF/GIZ, Village interviews: Houaphan, Sam Neua, Ban Yard (Khmu & Hmong) – WOMEN GROUP (15 women)**

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

**1. Tell us something about how your life is like.**

Weaving, selling in Sam Neua, sometimes they have traders who regularly buy their weaving, shifting cultivation, paddy fields, livestock.

**2. What are women's and men's specific roles in forest and land use?**

Forest:

Demarcation boarder clearing both, natural regeneration activities both (esp. youth); Men lead demarcation group, patrolling, timber harvesting for domestic construction, firewood collection (together with women), hunting  
Women collect vegetables, NTFP & tree fruit & bamboo shoots

Land: work together, paddy fields, garden

Livestock: poultry, everything near the house – women; further away (bigger animals): men

**3. ...and in forest protection?**

Small planting activities; plantations of trees (rubber) inside the forest cover; adhere to the different forest management modalities according to LUP

**4. Do you feel like the work related to forest and land use are distributed fairly between men and women?**

Women are having higher work load than men because they take care of all the “less hard” tasks; men do the heavy tasks like plowing the field. This makes women busy over the course of a whole day.

**5. Do you know of REDD+ mechanisms and why they are existing?**

Not of REDD+ as such, but about Environment Protection, climate change, forest protection and that we have to take care of it.

**6. From your knowledge of the forest and land: did you see any changes over the years? E.g. Less resources, NTFPs etc.?**

Resources becoming less and less over the last years. Since they started forest protection area, the trees recovered and to them it seems like there are more trees again. NTFPs got less. Women don't want to walk too far away from the village (time

constraints), so they have less NTFPs for domestic consumption. Soil quality went down, trying to use dung to fertilize but with little effect so far. No chemical fertilizers so far.

**7. Do you feel like you benefit from forest resources? How?**

Not balanced within the village depending on how much you can collect and sell. Within HH, equal benefits.

Women take care of finances. Decision-making about finances: small things sole decisions, bigger investments are discussed and decided jointly.

**8. What kind of forests do you have access to? Examples: community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests.**

Village use forest, protection forest, forest for NTFP collection

**9. Do you feel you are participating in forest management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities (like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests)?**

Have a Forest Management Plan. Committee has 9 members total, 3 women. Women participate in the discussions very well, esp. the LWU member who has higher education and is from the city and can bring lots of knowledge into the discussions.

**10. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

The existing LUP had positive effects for the villagers, esp. in regards to forest restoration and protection. No more conflicts about land since LUP, but as a suggestion it could be done for forest allocation/upland land as well because there are still conflicts between villagers.

Land security did not change since LUP. They feel empowered and land-safe enough to negotiate with potential investors.

**11. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices: How do you hope this will change your livelihoods? What are your fears? Note: Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

They hope to get more income, and to be able to construct a village meeting hall (and other things to develop the village). Interested in: vegetables to export to the markets, livestock, weaving, fish pond.

Fears: if full financial support by the project, they are ready to give up shifting

cultivation. They just still do it because of lack of alternatives and financial resources to do the shift.

**12. The programme wants to make the villagers an active part of forest management (village forest management planning & agreements, forest planting, restoration activities) and monitoring (incl. patrolling): what do you think of that? Where do you feel women and men should be part of?**

If women can work in groups, they would get involved in forest monitoring & patrolling. The programme could train them how to do it, and they would like to get involved in that kind of forest management. In the committee, they already feel represented.

**13. What are your barriers to access markets? Which support would you need to access them?**

Poor families because no transport to reach markets, and also because they often only produce very small amounts. Road condition is bad, esp. in rainy season (barely access then), so that should be the first thing to be changed. That would also change livelihoods in regards to health care access.

**14. What do you think of microfinance to start a business/invest in a new agricultural practice etc.?**

Want Village Bank, would be best to access money on the village level and use it to do small investments. For what exactly, they would like to work with the programme in joint discussions and develop a plan together.

**15. The programme wants to invite private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests. What do you think of that?**

They always support having new projects in the village, but are very careful with private sector involvement. It must be completely ensured that the activity in the village will benefit everyone and is creating alternative jobs and increased income.

**16. Any other remarks?**

Priority on road improvement, increase paddy rice area, improve school building, irrigation systems, small village infrastructure like village hall, office. Small road to the paddy area would improve patrolling as well. Financial support for forest management esp. for fire prevention (clearing forest line), patrolling, surveying, replace demarcation signs.

**GCF/GIZ, Village interviews: Houaphan, Sam Neua, Ban Yard (Khmu, Hmong) – MEN GROUP (13 men)**

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

**1. Tell us something about how your life is like.**

Unity between men and women. Very poor living conditions/poverty. Low education, few jobs.

Mainly work paddy fields, agriculture on shifting cultivation plantations.

Deforestation decreased. Water supply good. Road access is at least there, so better off than other villages, but could still be improved. HH try to develop step by step.

Some families don't have enough rice throughout the year. Village has primary school. Compared to more remote villages, we feel we are having better conditions, but still many things to improve. Need to improve housing, commercial trade products. Some HH raise livestock to increase their income, but not too successful yet. Challenges in the village (Naiban) also include that the village is divided into two ethnic groups and villages which makes coordination and meetings harder. Road access improvement necessary for health care access. Improve school building. The Hmong group does not have enough paddy fields. They dug a road access to their fields with their hands. More forest land is available but too far away from their village (30km). For secondary school, the kids walk about 6km to the neighboring village.

**2. What are women's and men's specific roles in forest and land use?**

Forest: men and women work together

Land: Work together (harvest, fencing, paddy fields)

**3. ...and in forest protection?**

Fire prevention, restoration.

Patrolling currently done by men, but they feel women could also do that job if they want to do that.

They also do watershed protection patrolling.

**4. Do you feel like the work related to forest and land use are distributed fairly between men and women?**

Men work more than women outside the harvest season because men check all the time on the fields whereas women are working at home & weaving. Naiban adds: men work harder but women work more. Men feel the main pressure to provide for their families is on men, and have to take on tasks and jobs which generate more income. They also feel like they always have to think ahead as much as possible to ensure their families' income and well-being.

5. **Do you know of REDD+ mechanisms and why they are existing?**

Never heard of REDD+, but of climate change, environmental protection etc. (activities by Clipad). Since the programme (2016), they started to protect their forest and created a Forest Management Committee which regularly reminds the villagers to take care of the forest.

6. **From your knowledge of the forest and land: did you see any changes over the years? E.g. Less resources, NTFPs etc.?**

Fruits on the trees increased because of the forest restoration measures, as well as bigger trees due to protection measures. Wildlife increased for the same reason. Good forest results in good/lots of mushrooms. NTFPs decreased. They also observe that the climate is changing: rainy season has more rain, more flooding, but the programme (Clipad) helped to control the flooding.

7. **Do you feel like you benefit from forest resources? How?**

Depends on how much work a family puts in, and how many family members contribute. But on average, all villagers benefit equally from the forest resources. Within HH, equal benefits, even in consumption.

8. **What kind of forests do you have access to? Examples: community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests.**

Agroforestry area, NTFP. Protection forest is mentioned only after mentioning by programme team.

9. **Do you feel you are participating in forest management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities (like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests)?**

They feel women and men are both part of forest management, because they share tasks and have both men and women in the Forest Management Committee.

10. **LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

No more conflicts about land with other villages any more since LUP, which they are very happy about. Forest protection measures are showing positive impact already (except for NTFP decrease).

Recommendation: agricultural area should be divided by HH as well (DAFO came but still in the negotiation process with villagers in conflict; for housing, areas are allocated already).

Naiban: For the Forest Management, they still need funding for fire prevention (clearing forest line), patrolling, surveying, replace demarcation signs.

- 11. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices: How do you hope this will change your livelihoods? What are your fears?  
Note: Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

Villagers lack experience and knowledge on agricultural methods, and we have nothing to export to markets so far. So we need both technical and financial support to change to alternatives. Also, land analysis needs to be done to determine what cash crop would be suitable. We need support to do this analysis, as well as how to access markets. We want to be involved in consultations and decide together, and we want to feel sure that this change would improve our living conditions and income.

- 12. The programme wants to make the villagers an active part of forest management (village forest management planning & agreements, forest planting, restoration activities) and monitoring (incl. patrolling): what do you think of that? Where do you feel women and men should be part of?**

Villagers are already an active part in forest management and are very keen to keep doing that, and take over new tasks if they feel it makes sense for the village.

- 13. What are your barriers to access markets? Which support would you need to access them?**

They feel like there are already a lot of vegetables on the Sam Neua market, so the transport costs are not worth the market trip.

They would like to develop new value chains, new products (e.g. dried food which stores longer and is more unusual, so more people would buy it).

- 14. What do you think of microfinance to start a business/invest in a new agricultural practice etc.?**

In the past, when funds were provided to villagers, they did not know how to use the money. So if access to finance is provided, then jointly with business plan development.

They feel taking loans is risky for the villagers in case they cannot sell their products. If analyzed carefully, MF/Village Banks would be great for the village. The village developed a lot in the last years, but with MF access they could start doing the investments into livelihood improvement as mentioned above.

- 15. The programme wants to invite private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests. What do you think of that?**

Private sector investment would be very welcome because they would create more

jobs and infrastructure in the village. They see potential for ecotourism with the nearby waterfall.

Investments would need to be tightly controlled by the Government though to ensure that the villagers benefit from the cooperation because we lack the experience and capacity to control the cooperation ourselves. If a cooperation would change too much infrastructure in the village, they would not want it.

**16. Any other remarks?**

Allocation of HH agricultural land needs to be continued.

All programme activities should aim to increase people's income through distinct products (similar to One District One Product),

Road and school improvement will create better access to health care & markets, and education.

Hmong representative repeats that they need road access to their fields and forest area.



**GCF/GIZ, Village interviews: Luang Namtha District, Ban Nam Mad (Akha ethnic); participants: 8 men, 27 women)**

**Notes:** the interview was conducted with a mixed group of women and men of all ages. A separation by gender was impossible to get organized since the villagers had celebrations ongoing and decided that they would rather have one joint discussion. The discussion with the women also needed a lot of additional translation (Akha-Lao-English).

**Further observations:** the village is located only a few kilometers outside main town Luang Namtha. The access to the city had significantly improved people's access to health centers and markets. On the other hand, the trash problem of the village is immanent in every corner of the village. Environmental education has not been provided, and people's understanding of the necessity of proactive environmental protection is basically not existing. Only the women showed a basic understanding of the correlation between their actions and the swindling resources.

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

**1. Tell me how your life is like.**

Women: Harvest rubber in the morning, evening bamboo, rattan, broom grass, firewood & vegetables. Lot less work since women have road access & motorbikes & access to a rice mill. Getting up early to prepare rice and breakfast, feeding animals, washing. Women work more than men.

Women earn more money than men, because men are lazy. Women are the money-keepers.

Men: bringing harvest/rice down from the upland fields, now by tractor (until recently by foot or motorbike). Shifting cultivation, no paddy rice.

Rubber trees: share the work, depending on family

**2. What are women's and men's specific roles in forest and land use?**

See answer above.

**3. ...and in forest protection?**

**4. Do you feel like the work related to forest and land use are distributed fairly between men and women?**

Depending strongly on family, all variations exist in this village. Generally, women work longer and more, while men do physically more straining work.

**5. Do you know of REDD+ mechanisms and why they are existing?**

Since 2012 no timber harvesting regulation in place. 1mio LAK fine is to be paid per

m2 harvested.

**6. From your knowledge of the forest and land: did you see any changes over the years? E.g. Less resources, NTFPs etc.?**

More people in the village, so the forest resources are getting less. Some people are harvesting continuously without giving the forest the chance to recover.

**7. Do you feel like you benefit from forest resources? How?**

Women benefit even more than men from the forest resources because they harvest everything from the forests and keep the money (and often earn more than their men).

**8. What kind of forests do you have access to? Examples: community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests.**

Nearby is a natural protected forest area; land and forest allocation was only done between different villages so far.

**9. Do you feel you are participating in forest management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities (like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests)?**

Mainly village authorities are taking decisions about all village decision, including forest management. No women in the village committee. Some women are ok with that, others not (but they don't challenge the decisions).

Note: After repeated attempts of getting the women to speak about their potential involvement in forest management, one woman speaks up stating that she would like to be an active part of the village forest management. Then the women start a discussion on what ideas they have to support forest recovery, and how beneficial it would be if they could be part in decision-making. This discussion shows the importance of persisting in men-led discussions to hear women's voices. The accompanying LWU member was helpful in explaining and encouraging women to speak – which showcases the important role the LWU is still able to play in village facilitations.

**10. LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

No LUP or titling yet, only zoning. Process needs to be continued. Demarcation borders don't mean much to them and the nearby villages – no one is really controlling the use.

**11. Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices:**

**How do you hope this will change your livelihoods? What are your fears?**

**Note: Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

Shifting cultivation is very hard and lots of work, so they would very much like to change to alternative crops. Rubber plantations meant less work for everyone, at least after the initial period (young trees need more care).

- 12. The programme wants to make the villagers an active part of forest management (village forest management planning & agreements, forest planting, restoration activities) and monitoring (incl. patrolling): what do you think of that? Where do you feel women and men should be part of?**

Women want to be part of the forest management, restoration activities, planning. Villagers want to increase patrolling in the future because currently, everyone is using the forest as they want and they see the resources decreasing.

- 13. What are your barriers to access markets? Which support would you need to access them?**

They keep some for their own consumption, and sell the rest on markets in Luang Namtha town nearby and a market in a nearby village. Rubber is sold to a company which is either coming to pick up harvested rubber or the villagers transport it to the company.

- 14. What do you think of microfinance to start a business/invest in a new agricultural practice etc.?**

The village has no experience with any form of microfinance yet. With access to small amounts to borrow, the men would start small shops, the women would like to increase their handicraft and textile production and create a small business.

- 15. The programme wants to invite private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests. What do you think of that?**

The village would be open to a collaboration with the private sector, if the land is suitable.

- 16. Any other remarks?**

They would like to have access to the VDF, a bridge (requested since 10 years). They had built the school building by themselves but need more furniture for it. They feel like they are often requesting for things but rarely anything happens.

**GCF/GIZ, Village interviews: Luang Namtha District, Ban Nam Dy (Lanten ethnic group, natural tourism site; 4 women, 10 men)**

**Note:** villagers asked for one joint meeting because they felt too busy to organize separate meetings.

Implementation of the Lao PDR Emission Reductions Program through Improved Governance and Sustainable Forest Landscape Management

**1. Tell us about your everyday life.**

Naiban: rubber plantation care, paddy rice fields, some HH do shifting cultivation, livestock (pig, chicken, ducks, goats), few HH have small shops; paper production and textiles & handicraft mainly done by all women. Started to be tourism site in 2003 (officially opening in 2007 when they also received funding support for that by ADB, today New Zealand's Fund for Community Tourism Development is supporting with funding until 2020), upon the idea of one of the villagers (a man). 7 villagers created the tourism site. When funding ends, the village plans to keep maintaining it themselves. 60% of the income from the site stays with the village, rest goes to Provincial Tourism Office and Tourism Fund and others. Villagers take care of it in rotation (cleaning, maintenance, ticket selling). No women in the management committee for the site because village women who stay in the village have low education (no literacy and calculation skills).

The Naiban recognizes that they need external support to find ways to include women more in the management structures of the village. Women usually don't want to participate in meetings.

Women: they join meetings if they feel they can learn something. They feel shy, not educated enough, and as if they cannot contribute much.

**2. What are women's and men's specific roles in forest and land use?**

Villagers don't use the forests much as the forest area is very small. Also see answer above.

**3. ...and in forest protection?**

Only individual measures, nothing systematic.

**4. Do you feel like the work related to forest and land use are distributed fairly between men and women?**

Work is equally divided in our village: women do handicraft, paper, textile and clothing; men do construction, paddy rice care  
Cooking, animal raising, rubber plantation care are done by everyone jointly

5. **Do you know of REDD+ mechanisms and why they are existing?**

Some families have little awareness about forest protection and watershed protection. They did not hear about REDD+ so far, but about deforestation, environmental protection, and they try to educate villagers who contribute negatively to that.

6. **From your knowledge of the forest and land: did you see any changes over the years? E.g. Less resources, NTFPs etc.?**

10-15 years ago the biodiversity was significantly higher, now they perceive a stagnation.

7. **Do you feel like you benefit from your forest/natural resources equally?**

Income and benefits are shared equally within the HHs.

Women: normally, the families keep the earned money together, but some men spend too much money on alcohol, so the women try to keep it together.

8. **What kind of forests do you have access to? Examples: community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests.**

LUP completed. Protected forest and use forest.

9. **Do you feel you are participating in forest management/decision-making? Is that different for different forest management modalities (like community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserves, and buffer zone community forests)?**

Women: we don't have enough education to partake in any decision-making, and we are not strong enough. We would like to be part in decision-making, but don't fulfill the requirements. The few women who have education either leave the village to the city or don't want to be part in village management.

10. **LUP and improved tenure security: what are the current challenges esp. for women, what needs to be improved?**

Need to improve the existing LUP enforcement. When villagers don't adhere to the LUP and cut down protected areas, they are called to the village office and have to pay a fine, and the District office is involved. But once the villagers do it again, no further consequences happen, so the villagers don't take the protection areas serious enough. So enforcement is the key issue for our village.

If the population is growing as expected, the LUP will also need to be adjusted and they will need more agricultural land.

11. **Programme wants to promote deforestation-free agriculture, away from shifting cultivation practices, and promoting alternative cash crop production practices:**

**How do you hope this will change your livelihoods? What are your fears?**

**Note: Programme will also include community-based learning and consultation activities with participating farmers/villages.**

Villagers want to be involved in the consultations. Consultations teams need to be very clear that they want women to participate in meetings. Less than 10 families do shifting cultivation, so it is not seen as a big problem. We see that rubber prices are falling right now, so we need to think of alternative crops.

- 12. The programme wants to make the villagers an active part of forest management (village forest management planning & agreements, forest planting, restoration activities) and monitoring (incl. patrolling): what do you think of that? Where do you feel women and men should be part of?**

See answer to question 9.

- 13. What are your barriers to access markets? Which support would you need to access them?**

Rubber is currently the village's main income source and bought by the only rubber company (Yunnan), which is trying to lower the price. Villagers are afraid that they lose income because of that monopoly soon.

Handicraft and textiles are sent mainly to a center in Luang Prabang, and some to the Luang Namtha Tourism shop. They requested the Provincial Tourism Office to establish a connection, and the New Zealand Fund connected them and established a regular business. This is, however, just an additional income for the village, they are more dependent on rubber.

- 14. What do you think of microfinance to start a business/invest in a new agricultural practice etc.?**

They have a village bank which made it easier for the villages to take small loans. They need more training for the village bank steering committee though, because financial literacy and understanding is still low.

Women: most women do not take loans because they don't know what kind of business/new product they could invest in. So a training and support in market demand analysis would be appreciated by both women and men.

The village started their own VDF one year ago, and the money will be used for small infrastructure projects in the village.

- 15. The programme wants to invite private sector investments in community-based agroforestry in national production forests. What do you think of that?**

In the past, we had a company approaching is to plant crops for biofuel but in the end, no one bought it. So a thorough market demand analysis is needed, and a diversification of crops and products to secure income despite market fluctuations.

Their dependency on rubber is too high, especially with the existing monopoly by Yunnan which already has huge concessions.

**16. Any other remarks?**

The funding support for the tourism site is ending soon, so the villagers are afraid what will happen then. The site already needs more maintenance than they can afford to provide. They also need funding and technical assistance in developing the site because many tourists just come to take photos of the village and the handicrafts but don't go to the site. They have the idea to develop the site with accommodation for tourists, and other interesting features like in other sites (swing etc.).

They would also like more traders coming to the village and buy handicrafts – if that would happen regularly, many women would potentially be interested to take small loans to develop their handicraft businesses.

Agricultural practices need to be improved, and market access beyond rubber.

Watersheds are shared with other villages, so it is very polluted due to rubber pesticides. So even though villagers live at the stream, they experience severely limited water access.