

**Lao PDR  
Gender Integration Development Study  
Draft Final Report**

**March 2019**

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## Gender Integration Study

### Draft Final Report

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**Acronyms and Abbreviations**

|         |   |
|---------|---|
| ADB     | Asian Development Bank  |
| ADWLE   | Association for Development of Women and Legal Education                                  |
| BSP     | Benefit Sharing Plan (part of the ERPA)   |
| CEF     | Community Engagement Framework  |
| CFP     | Carbon Fund Program   |
| CSO     | Civil society organizations   |
| DAFO    | Department Agriculture and Forestry Office  |
| DOF     | Department of Forestry  |
| DOLA    | Department of Land Administration (part of Ministry of Environment and Natural Resources) |
| ER      | Emission Reductions   |
| ER-P    | Emissions Reduction Program   |
| ERPA    | Emissions Reduction Program Agreement   |
| ERPD    | Emission Reduction Program document   |
| ESMF    | Environmental and Social Management Framework   |
| FCPF    | Forest Carbon Partnership Facility  |
| FGDs    | Focus Group Discussions   |
| FLEGT   | Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade   |
| FLR     | Forest landscape restoration and management   |
| GAP     | Gender Action Plan  |
| GCA     | Green Community Alliance  |
| GCF     | Green Climate Fund  |
| GDA     | Gender Development Association  |
| GID     | Gender Integration Development  |
| GIZ     | German Develop Agency   |
| GOL     | Government of Lao PDR   |
| LCA     | Lao Census of Agriculture   |
| LFAP    | Land and Forest Allocation Program  |
| LFNC    | Lao Front for National Construction   |
| LNRA    | Love Natural Resources Association  |
| LPRP    | Lao People's Revolutionary Party  |
| LUP     | Land use planning   |
| LWU     | Lao Women Union   |
| MAF     | Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry  |
| MHP     | Maeying Huamjai Phattana  |
| MOU     | Memorandum of Understanding   |
| NCAWMC  | National Commission for the Advancement of Women and Mother-Child                         |
| NGO     | Non government organization   |
| NSAW    | National Strategy for the Advancement of Women  |
| NSEDP   | National Socio-Economic Development Plan  |
| NTFPs   | Non Timber Forest Products  |
| NUPD    | Northern Uplands Development Program  |
| PADETC  | Participatory Development Training Center   |
| PAFO    | Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office  |
| PMU     | Project Management Unit   |
| PRAP    | Provincial REDD+ Action Plans   |
| PULP    | Participatory Land Use Planning   |
| R-PP    | Readiness-Preparation Proposal  |
| RECOFTC | The Center for People and Forests (an NGO)  |
| SERNA   | Social and Environmental REDD+ Needs Assessment   |
| SESA    | Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment   |
| VCP     | Village Consolidation Program   |
| VFMA    | Village Forest Management Agreement   |
| VPA     | Voluntary Partnership Agreement (under FLEGT)   |

|    |            |
|----|------------|
| WB | World Bank |
|----|------------|



## Executive Summary

This Gender Integration Development (GID) Study has been commissioned by and funded by the World Bank (WB) as part of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility for the Lao PDR Emissions Reduction Program (ER-P) that is due to be implemented later in 2019 and is the direct outcome of the admission of the Lao PDR into the Carbon Fund Program (CFP) in July 2018. The WB decided that the Emissions Reduction Program Document (ER-PD) that was submitted to the Carbon Fund Meeting in Paris was generally deficient in analyzing and identifying how women in the ER-P Accounting Area could benefit from the ER-P. Therefore, what this GID Study represents is an analysis of the relevant socio-economic and environmental issues that impact upon women which can or could be addressed by the ER-P. The GID Study is not an exhaustive and holistic analysis of gender in the ER-P Accounting Area and has to be understood in the context for which it has been prepared.

There are twelve discrete actions based on the four components of the ER-P that will be implemented, ranging from negotiating an agreement on participatory approaches to ER-P implementation to identification to climate-smart agricultural interventions, women's management of NTFPs, and strengthening village legal rights to use of and benefit from forest land. These actions are time-bound over twelve months from the commencement of the ER-P and are estimated to cost approximately US\$862,350 (LKP3,501,008,067) with some of the funding to be sourced from the existing grant that is being used by the Lao PDR and advance payments to be made by the Carbon Fund. Specific details of each of the actions are included in this GID Study but are also subject to validation by the Lao PDR National REDD+ Committee and the agreement of the WB.

The socio-economic and environmental analysis on which this GID Study is undertaken is based on the re-written SESA of February 2019 and the draft ESMF that has been prepared in early March 2019. To better understand the arguments being utilized in this GID Study it is also necessary to refer to both those documents because they contain most of the empirical evidence from the six ER-P provinces. Additionally, the GID Study undertook its own field-based study as highlighted in the methodology it utilized and the tables that have been generated. It is not claimed that all the empirical data used is as updated as the GID Team would like but there were time and resource constraints but every attempt was made to utilize the most recent data. Where indicated in the GID Study there are sections, such as those that quantify the reduction per capita in size of agricultural and forestry land that have not been quantified before or quantifying young women's preferences for alternative livelihood activities that have not entered other narratives. In this respect the GID Study is a more systemic study of gender and forestry issues than other studies.

The GID Study has provided a relatively comprehensive assessment of land-based livelihood activities and how access to, use of, and control over both agricultural and forestry land is quite problematic for many women at the village level. It is argued unless such issues can be resolved it is quite problematic as to whether women will really benefit from the ER-P. Moreover, this is not the only issue as few women at the village level know anything about REDD+ in general and the ER-P in particular. Hence, they have little or no idea as to how or if they can benefit and the GID Study incorporates findings from the recently completed GIZ gender assessment for the Green Carbon Fund that makes a somewhat similar argument. But the GID Study has made an attempt to analyze whether other significant and related projects and programs have been more gender responsive. It has concluded that some projects or programs have made an attempt to highlight and mainstream relevant gender issues.

By utilizing data on how important land-based activities are to women in the villages the GID Study has focused on the primarily lowland Lao-Tai ethnic groups and the three other "upland" ethnic groups, the Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Mein and Sino-Tibetan to demonstrate that forestry-based

activities are generally more important to the latter three groups than the Lao-Tai. While this is quite well known it is still important to highlight the dichotomy between lowland and upland and understand what this implies both socially and environmentally. The GID Study also makes the salient point that many women in the ER-P villages that participated either directly or indirectly in the study are not wholly wedded to the rational embedded in the ER-P.

To use paradigms associated with Sustainable Forest Management resonate with the objective of the ER-P but at this juncture not necessarily with all or even many women irrespective as to their ethnicity. Socio-economic change is afoot in the ER-P villages that is not totally contingent on land-based livelihood activities. This is also why the social and environmental REDD+ needs assessment (SERNA) approach is being strongly suggested as it should highlight the relevant gender issues linked to past, present and possibly future livelihood-based activities. The GID Study stresses that non-land-based income generation presented by other forms of investment cannot be ignored.

To implement the Action Plan associated with the ER-P the GID Study discusses what stakeholder groups could or should be involved. Mention is made of the Lao Women's Union (LWU) but the GID Study concludes to date the LWU, at least at the sub-provincial level and especially at the sub-district level has not been very effective. The same could be argued about the Lao Front for National Construction (LFNC) but the GID Study is not wholly negative in this respect and suggests that the Lao People's Revolutionary Party (LPRP) be as actively engaged as possible because if the Lao PDR wants to use this ER-P to reduce the problematic access of village women to agricultural and forestry land an opportunity presents itself that might really benefit women.

While the GID Study has some serious reservations about whether women could benefit from the ER-P if the "status quo" is maintained it also paradoxically strongly suggests that there are possibilities for moving beyond the "business-as-usual scenario" and demonstrate that women can not only make a positive contribution but that the ER-P to be successful requires the active participation of women. It is argued that the Action Plan goes a long way to facilitating the greater empowerment of women, irrespective as to their ethnicity, to contribute positively to the ER-P.

# 1 Background and Introduction

## 1.1 *The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility*

The Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) is designed to assist developing countries in their efforts to reduce emissions from deforestation and/or forest degradation, conserve forest carbon stocks, and promote sustainable management of forests and enhancement of forest carbon stocks (“REDD+”). The FCPF has two separate but complementary funding mechanisms to achieve its strategic objectives:

- The **FCPF Readiness Fund** supports tropical and sub-tropical developing countries in preparing themselves to participate in possible future systems of positive incentives for REDD+; and
- The **FCPF Carbon Fund** is designed to pilot a performance-based payment system for emission reductions (“ERs”) to be generated through REDD+ activities under a host country’s ER Program.

A socially inclusive approach—one in which vulnerable or traditionally excluded social groups such as women, indigenous peoples, and other forest dwellers are treated as partners in the planning, operation of funds and the deployment of climate finance—has been a hallmark of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF) from the start. This is seen through various tools developed by the FCPF, including the Readiness-Preparation Proposal (R-PP), which highlights the importance of incorporating gender considerations into REDD+ readiness. The R-PP encourages countries to identify gender-based risks or unequal benefits. However, to this end, there has been limited reporting on gender, and only few countries have demonstrated intentions to practically address gender gaps in REDD+ interventions.

Therefore, there is real opportunity to address the gender gaps in aspects such as land and forest tenure, decision making process with regards to natural resource management, inequalities in benefit sharing arrangements etc. Furthermore, these gaps need to be addressed in a meaningful and participatory manner, through action plans tailored to national and subnational REDD+ strategies, with clear pathways towards outcomes and specific benefits and recognition of the critical role played by women in REDD+. Gender integration in the FCPF context is essential to advancing the fund’s goals of social inclusion, and is also in line with the World Bank Group’s 2016 Gender Strategy which looks to address gender gaps through the Bank’s work over the next six years.

As a partner country of the FCPF, Lao PDR is committed to addressing social inclusion issues, including women’s contribution to the forestry sector and to REDD+. To address the gaps that currently exist in the country’s REDD+ a gender analysis is needed to highlight the priority issues. In parallel to the national REDD+ Readiness work, the Government of Lao has prepared an Emission Reduction Program document (ERPD) and will present it to the FCPF Carbon Fund for future carbon finance operation that would be results-based (i.e. verified emission reductions resulting from curbed deforestation and forest degradation and enhanced forest carbon stock through better land use management). The ERPD contemplates a landscape level operation in 6 provinces in the North (**Bokeo, Houaphan, Luang Namtha, Luang Prabang, Oudomxay, and Sayabouri**). The annual gross deforestation and forest degradation in the ER Program area in 2005-2015 was approximately 72,000 ha compared to 181,000 ha for the national scale; approximately 40 % of the deforestation and degradation in the country took place within the selected six provinces. The proposed ER program includes a range of interventions ranging for: i)

an enabling environment for REDD+, ii) agriculture sector interventions, iii) forestry sector interventions, and iv) a program management and monitoring.

The program could generate emission reductions of up to 15.72 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub>e over a five-year period. The work outlined in this document has conducted such an analysis to inform the REDD+ emission reduction program currently being design in the EPDR and to ensure that gender considerations are incorporated during the implementation stages.

In July 2018 the Lao PDR successfully applied to be admitted into the Carbon Fund Financing Program supported by the World Bank but reservations were expressed at the time as to whether gender issues germane to the an Emissions Reduction Program Agreement (ERPA) being finally signed between the Government of the Lao PDR and World Bank were raised. Specifically, it was argued that the SESA did not adequately mainstream gender issues and as such the ER-P would be less gender inclusive than is the intention of the Forest Carbon Partnership Facility (FCPF). Thus, the WB requested that the Lao PDR develop a series of activities to ensure that gender issues, especially relating to the more active participation of forest-dependent women in ER-P related actions including being able to benefit from both carbon and non-carbon benefits in an equitable and transparent benefit-sharing process be integrated into the finally approved ER-P for the designated accounting areas in the six northern provinces of the Lao PDR. This as per this Gender Integration Report is what has been prepared although it will be noted that some of the actions proved unrealistic in the time allocated because of both the logistical and social complexities of the ER-P accounting area.

The overall objective of this Report is to ensure Gender Integration is considered and actualized/internalized in the design of any REDD+ mechanisms; and real benefits are realized by women, including and especially ethnic minority women and other stakeholders. It is imperative, to ensure that gender is effectively mainstreamed in the design and implementation of ER programs in Lao PDR. The aim therefore has been to conduct gender analysis in the ER program area that will provide baseline information on the different social, economic and political conditions that women face in REDD+ and identify opportunities and real benefits, through REDD+ interventions. The Analysis has been complemented by an Action Plan that identifies a roadmap of activities that will help to make REDD+ ER program and strategies more gender responsive. The analysis has also contributed to SESA and ESMF implementation in the ER-P Accounting Area and the anticipated outcomes are Gender-responsive REDD+ Strategies, with tangible benefits to women, and concrete action plans/roadmaps for addressing gender gaps and maximizing benefits and women's empowerment in the forest and landscapes sector.

A Gender Analysis using a results-based analytical and planning framework at the subnational level with particular emphasis on the ER-P Accounting Area has been undertaken as follows:

1. Conduct gender analysis in the ER-P Accounting Area. This analysis has included examining the interventions in the ER-P Accounting area and analyzing them from a gender perspective. The analysis has assessed how the access of women to benefits from forest resources and decision making differ in different forest management modalities, such as community forests, collaborative forests, protection forests, national parks, wildlife reserve and buffer zone community forests. It has also assessed how different modalities relating to ownership or access to and use and control of land among women from different ethnic groups impacts upon women's capacity to be empowered by the ER-P.
2. There has been an assessment of the training and capacity building needs of women's groups involved in the REDD+ programs in the ER-P area as per the management modalities/interventions.
3. The identification and highlighting of the capacity gaps/needs (in forest bureaucracy, community-based organizations, service providing NGOs and forestry private sector) in

implementing gender integration in REDD+ readiness activities as well as ER-P has been undertaken.

4. An analysis of the critical institutional, legal, regulatory, policy and capacity gaps underlying the key gender issues identified, notably does the Lao PDR's existing legal and regulatory framework include policies and legislation on gender equality and women's empowerment? Are land tenure policies and benefit sharing mechanisms gender sensitive? What are the institutional and cultural barriers that could prevent women's access to land, forest resources and benefit derived from the ER-P interventions? What are the good practices in forestry that have addressed gender issues and enhanced the role of women in decision making and supporting benefit sharing in favor of women?
5. Recommendations and a Plan of Action with realistic measurable indicators for results have been developed.

Where possible the gender analysis has drawn upon existing assessments and documentation for efficiency gains, and consultations have been undertaken country gender experts that are have a good knowledge of natural resource management issues and of equal importance the six ER-P provinces. The analytical work has been undertaken in close coordination with REDD Unit where possible bearing in mind the distance between Vientiane and the six ER-P provinces and World Bank Senior Social Development Specialist responsible for gender integration issues to the ER-P in the Lao PDR.

A detailed gender analysis report that has included the following: Gender Action Plan/Roadmap based on the analysis in the ER-P area. The action plan has addressed the issues raised in the gender analysis, with concrete activities for mainstreaming gender into the ER-PD and to the extent possible into the National REDD+ Strategy. The final recommendations have been made on how to:

1. Strengthen the capacity of government staff implementing REDD+ program to systemically integrate and apply gender assessment, planning and monitoring tools into their activities at national and sub-national levels.
2. Revise planning documents and integrate gender into results frameworks, indicators and related monitoring and results tracking systems.
3. Build capacity of gender task forces/working groups, women and women's organizations, and implementing partner organizations on gender and REDD+ issues as identified in the analysis. This may involve developing training materials, workshops for local women in the ER program area, having local, regional and national level forums, etc.
4. List measures to bridge the gaps identified in the analysis to support women's participation in design of REDD+ strategy and its implementation.
5. Develop a monitoring plan with indicators for implementation of gender activities/action plan.
6. Provide cost estimates for the implementation of the plan of action.

A Gender Action Plan for REDD+ in the ER Program area that incorporates the aforementioned components 1 – 5, and a showing actions and monitoring/measuring activities for the one-year period has also been developed.

## **1.2 *Proposed Emissions Reduction Program***

The proposed interventions of the ER Program correspond to each of the four main drivers of deforestation and degradation and are organized into four components, including: i) Interventions for an Enabling Environment for REDD+; ii) Agriculture Sector Interventions; iii)

Forestry Sector Interventions; and iv) Program Management and Monitoring component. As per the Action Plan prepared to ensure that gender is fully integrated into the ER-P (Emissions Reduction Program) this Gender Action Plan (GAP) has prepared a matrix with twelve discrete actions designed to ensure synergies between the four components and a gender responsive ER-P.

Under Component 1 on enabling conditions, at the core are; activities to strengthen and mainstream REDD+ into existing policies and legal framework; improved forest governance by building on the on-going FLEGT initiative to address illegal logging across the supply chain; development of programs and policies incentivizing deforestation-free investments through engagement of the private sector; and improved land use planning and compliance monitoring. Land use planning will target both broader strategic levels to apply integrated cross-sectoral and vertically-consistent planning, and at the local village level, following the broader master land use plans, ensuring participatory processes of implementable and equitable land use and forest management plans. Building capacity within Government (at all levels), as well as non-government actors (such as civil society, mass organizations, academe, private sector etc.) to mobilize the most cost-efficient arrangements for improving rural land use will be a significant part of this enabling conditions component. A system for monitoring implementation and conformance with plans will be institutionalized, and may be linked with incentive mechanisms that reward conformance. Component 1 will engage strongly with a number of sectors (all represented in the National REDD+ Task Force and Provincial REDD+ Task Force structures) including agriculture, forestry, land and investment promotion.

Under Component 2 on Agriculture and Sustainable Livelihoods Development, a market analysis for models adopting climate-smart agriculture practices will be conducted, and resulting models will be integrated into extension services delivered by local extension agents to rural farmers. Agriculture is the default livelihood of the rural population and the most direct pressure on forests. As such, the ER-P will offer direct measures for value chain integration, and agrotechnological solutions for improved yields. Engaging the private sector for climate-smart and responsible investments is critical for ensuring sustainable decisions on land use. Activities under this component aim to support a private-public dialogue on REDD+ and climate-smart agriculture, and to directly invest in scalable models that sustainably engage with local communities including ethnic groups, and supporting alternative livelihood options.

Under Component 3 on Forestry Sector Interventions, the ER-P will take a landscape approach to identifying and enabling resourceful land-use to maximize land potential and ecosystem values. The ER-P will place a strong focus on forest landscape restoration and management (FLR) including restoration of degraded forest lands, much of which are found in the "regenerating vegetation" land class largely associated with bush fallow areas. Forest protection activities will also be introduced, where village communities will be mobilized through a participatory forest management planning and implementation process of their „village forests". Instruments such as the Village Forest Management Agreement (VFMA) to strengthen the village's legal rights to use and benefit from forest land and resources will be promoted. Linking with the Component 2 this Component 3's activities will also mobilize private sector investments for long-term sustainable commercial forestry activities including in the timber and fiber industries.

Under Component 4 on Program Management and Monitoring a National PMU will be established in Vientiane and Provincial PMUs in each of the six ER-P provinces to provide support for the ER-P and ensure it is successfully implemented according to the ERPA signed between the Government of the Lao PDR (GOL) and the WB.

### **1.3**                    ***GID Study Methodology***

As part of the preparatory activities associated with the Inception Report the GID Team made the decision that good quality data rather than voluminous data of questionable quality should be gathered in the six ER-P provinces. While the GID Team sought to capture as much good quality data about gender and forestry from all ethnic groups that are residing in the villages of the ER-P provinces it was recognized that it had neither the time nor the resources to access as many villages as it would have liked to or discuss with as many women from each of the different ethnic groups all or most of the issues that have been raised in this Report. However, the fact that the GID Team was able to work with over 400 women (some 100 men also participated because this is a gender responsive study that also include men) over a period commencing the middle of July 2018 and conclude mid-January 2019 on an intermittent basis has provided the study with a series of actions to support the ER-P in the 12 months following the signing of the ERPA between the GOL and the WB.

The GID Team stated in the Inception Report that it would utilize a variety of tools and techniques including: 1) focus group discussions of which 18 involving 270 women were facilitated in the six ER-P provinces; 2) structured and semi-structured interviews primarily with women living in partial forest-dependent villages of any significance of which 475 interviews were undertaken (including 36 key informant interviews); 3) natural resource transects where possible of which 12 were undertaken involving 84 women; and, 4) ad hoc village, roadside, market and “coffee-shop aka restaurant aka bar” conversations were to be had (this differentiates the approach the GID Team adopted from most approaches that are more formalized in nature and somewhat less likely to glean “narratives” which more closely grasp actual reality: women and men told us what they wanted to rather than what we wanted to hear). Topics for the Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and questionnaire for the interviews are included in the Appendices.

Initially the GID Team sought to work with the REDD+ Coordinators in each of the six ER-P provinces, Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office, District Agriculture and Forestry Office, Kum Ban, Village Development Committee, the Lao Women’s Union, Lao Front for National Construction and the Lao People’s Revolutionary Party. While none of these stakeholders were explicitly opposed to working with the GID Team they were somewhat sceptical as to what could be achieved with the exception of Luang Prabang and to some extent Sayaboury because during the PRAPs as is evident from the original SESA, gender issues were either downplayed or simply ignored. Another issue was that all these stakeholders wanted to accompany the GID Team to villagers to observe and perhaps participate in the discussions but village women the GID Team canvassed about this approach told us that they were not very keen to participated in such “consultations” and certainly they would not participate in natural resource transects (especially Mon-Khmer and Hmong-Mien ethnic groups). Also, while the Study was reasonably well resourced it could not afford to cover honorariums, per diem or travel expenses for such a large entourage. This last point was made quite clear and in Houaphan and Luang Namtha were GIZ has been active and this was understood.

Nevertheless, there was no attempt by the GID Team to discourage officials attending and it was stated clearly from the outset that: 1) we wanted to listen to the voices of women themselves and not have their voices mediated by interlocutors whether village males or government officials (the initial response was that most of the ethnic minority women cannot speak the Lao language very well but all discussions were undertaken by the GID Team in the language of choice of each socio-linguistic group. The GID Team included three native Lao speakers, one who could speak Hmong fluently, and one with quite a good knowledge of several Mon-Khmer languages and we also employed younger, ethnic minority women who could speak Lao; 2) we sought to facilitate discussions at times that suited village women taking into account times during the day or early evening they were free (sometimes over Lao-Lao were happy to talk until the early hours of the morning); and, 3) we would not rely purely on a “formalistic” approach to working with local women. It was also stressed by the GID Team that it would use or at least consult Reports on

Gender and Forestry in the Lao PDR including those that might be critical of the GOL at the national, provincial and district level, and example being how many villagers lost control over natural resources because of investment in plantation agriculture and almost continuous logging and that these actions were facilitated at the policy and practical level.

The details of these series of consultations with different ethnic minority women of selected villages in each of the six ER-P provinces are included in the following Table 1 to demonstrate the depth and breadth of consultations that the GID Team facilitated with women:

**Table 1 Consultations with Ethnic Minority Groups**

| Province             | Lao-Tai   | Mon-Khmer  | Hmong-Mien | Sino-Tibetan |
|----------------------|-----------|------------|------------|--------------|
| <b>Luang Namtha</b>  |           |            |            |              |
| Saleuang             | -         | 15         | -          | -            |
| Chomsi               | -         | 10         | -          | -            |
| Harddao              | -         | 15         | -          | -            |
| Hardnalong           | -         | -          | -          | 15           |
| Tha Luarng           | -         | 15         | 15         | -            |
| Nam An               | -         | -          | -          | 15           |
| Namet                | -         | 15         | -          | -            |
| <b>Bokeo</b>         |           |            |            |              |
| Mu Nua Nam Lave      | -         | 15         | -          | -            |
| Paung                | -         | 15         | -          | -            |
| Lin                  | -         | -          | 15         | -            |
| <b>Oudomxay</b>      |           |            |            |              |
| Lao Phe              | -         | 15         | -          | -            |
| Na Houang            | -         | -          | 15         | -            |
| Denkon               | -         | 15         | -          | -            |
| <b>Luang Prabang</b> |           |            |            |              |
| Long Lao Mai         | -         | 15         | 15         | -            |
| Long Lao Gai         | -         | 15         | 15         | -            |
| Densavang            | -         | 15         | 15         | -            |
| Phonsavat            | -         | -          | -          | -            |
| Yang                 | 15        | -          | -          | -            |
| Hat Kam              | 15        | -          | -          | -            |
| <b>Houaphan</b>      |           |            |            |              |
| Buamphat             | -         | 15         | -          | -            |
| Ponexong             | -         | -          | 15         | -            |
| Long Ngua Pa         | -         | -          | 15         | -            |
| Nam Neun             | -         | 15         | -          | -            |
| Xa                   | -         | -          | 15         | 15           |
| Muang Hom            | -         | -          | 15         | -            |
| <b>Sayabouri</b>     |           |            |            |              |
| Sala                 | 15        | -          | -          | -            |
| Na Kok               | 15        | -          | -          | -            |
| Na Fai               | 15        | -          | -          | -            |
| <b>TOTALS</b>        | <b>75</b> | <b>205</b> | <b>150</b> | <b>45</b>    |

In relation to accessing villages the GID Team travelled by boat (e.g., from Ban Khonekham to Ban Saleuang in Lam Namtha) and where necessary on foot where it was even impossible to use a 4WD vehicle or motorcycle, and where possible over 40 % of the villages listed above do not have vehicular access for much of the wet season between mid-May and mid-October, except during the time of the actual field study many of these villages were inaccessible except on foot or by boat until late November 2018 because the wet season lasted longer than it normally does.



## 2 The Study Area

### 2.1 *Demographic Characteristics of Rural Households*

Based on the Lao PDR Agricultural Census (LCA) of 2010-11 just over 62.1 % of its population lived in rural areas there were 2,262,400 male household members in the Lao PDR of whom 36.7 % of these males were to be found in Northern Lao PDR rural households, which includes the six ER-P provinces and slightly fewer female rural household members of whom there were 2,238,60 members for the whole of the Lao PDR and of whom 36.3 % were to be found in the six ER-P provinces. Equivalent data for the past eight years is unavailable but there are likely to be somewhat fewer persons, especially younger females residing in rural households because unlike neighboring countries over 59.2 % of rural migrants to other places in the Lao PDR or to neighboring countries (from the six ER-P provinces unless Lao-Tai, who are more likely to seek work in neighboring Thailand because of cultural and linguistic similarities the other ethnic groups typically “migrate” to neighboring Vietnam) are females not males according to data collected by the Lao Statistical Bureau in 2016. Despite the rural nature of these six ER-P provinces there have been quite profound social and economic changes that have impacted upon many females living in these rural areas. These changes include a growth in non-forest-based livelihood activities associated with banana and rubber plantation agriculture, better access to local markets for goods and services hitherto unavailable or too costly to purchase, waged employment opportunities on a variety of physical infrastructure projects and improved access to health facilities and schooling facilities.

However, there have been other social and economic push-and-pull factors at work. For instance, among the Khmu women who the GID Team worked with Luang Namtha it was confirmed that many young Khmu women constrained by their status as women and members of an ethnic minority (although the Khmu constitute 25 % of the population in Luang Namtha) migrate to Vientiane to work in the service industries including the sex industry (this is not to imply that all Khmu women migrants are “sex workers” or that there are no other ethnic groups including Lao-Tai involved but rather what the GID Team has been told). These women state it is not their intention to migrate indefinitely but they expect to return to their village, get married, raise a family and contribute to land-based livelihood activities. They also hope to save sufficient money to open small enterprises as other village women have managed in the past and are currently managing.

This is not to argue that all ethnic minority women are embracing the same trajectory as these Khmu women, but visits to districts towns in all of the six ER-P provinces suggests that ethnic minority women who until a decade ago were largely domiciled in their villages of birth and had little or no knowledge of the outside the world are the exception rather than the norm on a contemporary basis. Older women, who can only converse in their own language and are unfamiliar with mobile phones and the greater connectivity that entails have been “left behind”, but the same cannot be argued for younger women or of course younger men. These younger women know that in neighboring Thailand, even if they choose not to work there, they can earn THB300 (about LKP81,500) per day (minimum wage) and also receive relatively good and inexpensive healthcare and education for their children and even themselves and in Vientiane they can earn at least LKP40,000 per day with better healthcare and schooling than upcountry. Thus, any interventions the ER-P proposes has to be cognizant of these changing social and economic realities.

It has to be recognized that the Lao PDR is one of the world’s most ethnically diverse countries, containing 49 ethnic groups speaking more than 200 languages. Based on ethno-linguistic

classification, these 49 groups have been classified into four main groups by the GoL: (a) Lao-Tai; (b) Mon-Khmer; (c) Hmong-Mien; and (d) Sino-Tibetan. The Lao-Tai groups account for 64.5% of the national population and are located in the agriculturally productive lowland areas around Vientiane Capital and along the Mekong Corridor, which includes those corridors in four of the six ER-P provinces. The Mon-Khmer groups account for 22.8 % of the national population and are found in both northern and southern Lao PDR, while the Hmong-Mien and the Sino-Tibetan groups that account for 12.7 % of the population are generally found in the Northern highlands and that includes the ER-P provinces.

Based on the most recent data available the GID Team (2015 Census not yet available) estimates that in the six ER-P provinces the Lao-Tai constitute 45 % (female: 51.2%) of the population, the Mon-Khmer 30 % (female: 50.2%), Hmong-Mien 15 % (female 48.5%), and Sino-Tibetan groups 10 % (female: 49.7%) but it needs to be borne in mind that these are “estimates” only. However, there is significant variation from ER-P Province to ER-P Province. In Sayaboury 71.5 % of the population is Lao-Tai while in Oudomxay 57.7 % of the population is Mon-Khmer and the Mon-Khmer (specifically the Khmu are found in every ER-P Province), whereas the Hmong-Mien are found in Oudomxay, Luang Prabang and Houaphan and the less numerous Sino-Tibetan only in Houaphan. Of these ethnic groups in the six ER-P provinces the Lao-Tai (that includes the Lao, various Tai ethnic groups, Kang, Khun, Lue, and Nung) and Mon-Khmer (consisting of Akha, Bit, Con, Khmu, Khuen, Kim Mum, Kiorr, Phong, Rmeet, Samtao, Tai Loi, and Yao) are generally considered indigenous ethnic groups whereas the Hmong-Mien (Hmong) and Sino-Tibetan (Lahu, Lao Pang, Phana, and Sila) ethnic groups are not considered indigenous ethnic groups. But it needs to be noted that the Lao PDR does not like to refer to categories associated with “indigenous” and non-indigenous” but rather “ethnic groups” and this is reflected in the Environmental Social Management Framework (ESMF) and Community Engagement Framework (CEF) for the ER-P.

The Lao Census of Agriculture 2010/11 provides a detailed account of the farm households with respect to their ethnic backgrounds and the extent of their engagement in various farming and related activities in the country. The census shows that approximately 61 % of farm households belong to Lao-Tai, followed by Mon-Khmer (30%), Hmong-Mien (8%) and other ethnic groups (1%). The average household size was highest for Hmong-Mien groups, at 7.2 members, followed by 6.0 members for Mon-Khmer 5.9 for Sino-Tibetan and 5.4 members for Lao-Tai groups. Average farm size was in the range of 2.2-2.7 hectares across these ethnic groups but this excludes access to and harvesting of NTFPs from forested areas for more forest-dependent households in upland areas. It also understates the fact that the Lao-Tai have access to and use of more productive agricultural cropping land than the other three major ethnic groupings in the Lao PDR and this includes both rainfed and irrigated agricultural cropping land. Households with access to rain-fed rice land in lowland areas of the ER-P Accounting Area have yields of up to 4.2 tons per hectare, if access to irrigated rice land in lowland areas 4.9 tons per hectare and if only upland areas, where most of the non-Lao-Tai groups are found 1.9 tons per hectare. Women also state that cultivating upland rice is more labor intensive and physically demanding.

A small number of farm households (8-10%) reported leasing farmlands, but the issue here is that most of this leased farmland used to be forested land that has been cleared for agricultural cropping purposes. In the ER-P Accounting area very little of this leased land was originally part of the swidden agricultural land. It is land that has been cleared in the past decade and then leased out. The proportion of land being leased was only around 6 % in most cases, except in the Hmong-Mien groups, where the percentage of leased land reported was slightly higher, at 10.2% of the total farmland utilized by Hmong-Mien farming households. However, only in Houaphan Province did the GID Team come across some Hmong-Mien households who were leasing land primarily for the cultivation of either rice or cassava. Until recent times even such households did not lease land and it should be noted that the leasing arrangements are quite loose. For instance, leaseholders are expected to provide 40 % of the crop harvested although where because of inclement weather actual harvest quantities fall below viable subsistence levels generally adjustments are made. But some of the Hmong-Mien women interviewed told the GID Team that

in such instances they are more likely to spend time harvesting NTFPs and male members of their households are contracted by logging intermediaries to undertake the felling of trees from the forests for transshipment to Muang Lat District in the neighboring district of Thanh Hoa in Vietnam. It should be noted that Hmong-Mien living in border districts of Houaphan are often related by kinship ties to the Hmong living in Muang Lat.

Also, interestingly much of the land leased out is of poor quality as it was previously forested land and after just only 3-5 years soil erosion has become an increasing problem, flash flooding during sudden downpours during the wet season, decreased fertility of the land resulting in lower yields, and increasing conflicts with neighbors including those living in contiguous villages of different ethnicity, are increasingly characterizing the daily lives of many of these women and their family members. Hmong-Mien women that were interviewed by the GID Team are well aware of these issues and in fact articulated very systematically and in-depth that they understand both the “causes” and “effects” of this type of upland agricultural cropping activity, but cogently argue what other choices do they have? They are told by local officials that logging is not permitted even though it occurs although more subtly and surreptitiously than in the past, but they also know that logging, legal or otherwise, is only a very short-term solution and in the longer run deforestation is deleterious for everyone that relies on the ecology of the forests.

What are these women looking at and unfortunately it could include a reversion to the cultivation of the opium poppy? The GoL and the UNODC (United Nations Office for Drugs and Crime) has noted that opium cultivation in Lao PDR (in 2015 43% of opium cultivated was in the ER-P Accounting Area) and the SESA does not consider opium poppy cultivation to be a major driver of deforestation, but in one village (the GID Team were requested by the village not to identify) the area planted in opium prior used to be approximately 10 hectares and by 2015 it had been reduced to approximately 3 hectares but by November 2018 it had been increased to approximately 7 hectares and there are plans to increase the area cultivated by perhaps another 5 to 8 hectares (thus in excess of 2015 levels). As women play an important role in the cultivation and harvesting although not transshipment of the harvested and refined opium this provides an important source of livelihood for those women involved. It leads local authorities to argue some/many Hmong-Mien women are not interested in sustainable forest management but only in growing the opium poppy.

However, the Hmong women interviewed deny this, but argue they cannot “eat the trees” and in actuality they would rather cultivate crops other than the opium poppy as they do not want to unnecessarily attract the attention of local authorities or reinforce stereotypes that these local authorities often have towards the Hmong. But of course, these women and their household members understand there is still a global demand for opium and in their own way, they have to undertake a “benefit/cost analysis” as they are very rational in this context.

Table 2 below provides a snapshot of the composition of farm households by ethnic groups and their engagement in farming operations, including livestock, fishery and forestry. Among the four major ethnic groups in the country, Lao-Tai and Mon-Khmer communities together constitute the majority (92%) of the farm households. The most striking aspect of the farming practices is that an overwhelming majority of the farm households (87%) grow the dominant variety of glutinous rice. This proportion is highest among the Lao Tai (92%) and lowest among the Hmong-Mien (54%). The Hmong-Mien farming households allocate the largest share of their holdings (59%) for growing non-glutinous rice varieties, produced mainly for self- consumption. Farm households belonging to other community groups reported growing as much as 19 % non-glutinous rice.

The overall proportion of rice holdings using irrigation facilities was 28 % across the country, with some differences across ethnic groups. For instance, the Lao-Thai, the majority of whom live along the Mekong River, report a relatively higher share of irrigated rice holdings (34%) compared with only 18% for the Mon-Khmer. This is not surprising because it is not only easier to develop irrigation systems along this river corridor but most of the investments in irrigation facilities have been targeted at villages in this corridor. The proportion of holdings growing dry

season rice seems to be much lower, at 11% nationally with differences across communities (16% for Lao-Tai and 4% for Mon-Khmer households).

**Table 2 Farming Activities in the Lao PDR by Ethnicity (2010-11)**

| Farming activities         | Lao-Tai       | Mon-Khmer    | Hmong-Mien  | Other     | Lao PDR        |
|----------------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------|-----------|----------------|
| Farm households ('000)     | 479.8 (61.3)  | 238.3 (30.4) | 63 (8.0)    | 1.7 (0.2) | 782.8 (100.0)  |
| Landholdings ('000)        | 474.3 (61.1)  | 237.9 (30.6) | 62.8 (8.1)  | 1.7 (0.2) | 776.7 (100.0)  |
| Area of holdings ('000 ha) | 1190.5 (63.7) | 510.6 (27.3) | 164.6 (8.8) | 4.6 (0.2) | 1870.2 (100.0) |

**A. Crop cultivation (% of household holdings)**

|   |      |      |      |      |      |
|---|------|------|------|------|------|
| Glutinous rice holdings                       | 92.0 | 84.0 | 54.0 | 81.0 | 87.0 |
| Non-glutinous rice holdings                   | 6.0  | 14.0 | 59.0 | 19.0 | 13.0 |
| Irrigated rice holdings                       | 34.0 | 18.0 | 22.0 | 30.0 | 28.0 |
| Dry season rice holdings                      | 16.0 | 4.0  | 1.0  | 11.0 | 11.0 |
| Improved rice seed holdings                   | 52.0 | 18.0 | 8.0  | 24.0 | 38.0 |
| Permanent crop holdings                       | 53.0 | 51.0 | 42.0 | 45.0 | 51.0 |
| Use of two-wheeled tractors                   | 77.0 | 34.0 | 40.0 | 48.0 | 61.0 |
| Use of chemical fertilizers (temporary crops) | 57.0 | 16.0 | 14.0 | 35.0 | 42.0 |

**B. Ownership of Livestock/Poultry/Fishery/Forestry (% of households)**

|                                  |      |      |      |      |      |
|----------------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Cattle                           | 39.0 | 31.0 | 61.0 | 31.0 | 38.0 |
| Buffaloes                        | 29.0 | 30.0 | 26.0 | 27.0 | 29.0 |
| Pigs                             | 28.0 | 55.0 | 63.0 | 30.0 | 39.0 |
| Local chickens                   | 60.0 | 64.0 | 78.0 | 52.0 | 62.0 |
| Livestock raised mainly for sale | 31.0 | 26.0 | 29.0 | 30.0 | 30.0 |
| Capture fisheries                | 69.0 | 72.0 | 38.0 | 71.0 | 67.0 |
| Forestry (% of HH Income)        | 2    | 13.0 | 7.0  | 7.0  | 5.0  |

Households may be engaged in more than one type of farming activity.

In total, 38% of the farm households reported using improved rice seed varieties. The proportion was the highest among the Lao-Tai (52%) and lowest in the case of the Hmong-Mien (8%). All the major ethnic groups devoted about half of their holdings to cultivation of permanent crops. The types of permanent crops grown, as well as the extent of area allocated to such crops by the various ethnic groups, will be examined in more detail in the section on land use and cropping pattern changes.

As shown in Table 2, a large proportion of the farm households across all ethnic groups engage in livestock, fishery and forestry-related activities. However, it was noted that a greater proportion (63%) of the Hmong-Mien farm households raised pigs, which is substantially higher than the national average of 39%. Mon-Khmer farm households obtained more of their household income (13%) from forestry activities compared with other ethnic groups but for instance as noted elsewhere this does not preclude some Mon-Khmer groups such as younger Akha women seeking out other income-generation opportunities. This is data from nearly a decade ago, but in the ER-P Accounting Area the GID Team found that 12.0% of Lao-Tai were deriving income either in cash or in-kind from forestry-related activities, the Mon-Khmer some 41.5%, the Hmong-Mien 28.2%, the Akha 35.0% and other ethnic minority groups approximately 20%.

Of course, the importance of forestry related income is also linked to location of villages with upland areas (excluding the plateau areas) yielding more income from forestry than the lowland areas or plateau areas. In almost all instances women contributed well over two-thirds of this forestry-based income either in cash or in-kind but the enumeration of household incomes excludes the imputed value of “illegal logging or hunting of wild animals”. Therefore, it is not possible to present as an accurate picture as possible, but it can be argued that women in the six ER-P provinces play a very important role in the provision of livelihood activities for the households based on the use of forest resources.

The following Table 3 quantifies the changes in sex and dependency ratios in the six ER-P Provinces and it can be seen in the decade from 1998 to 2011 that initially there were more females than males with the exception of Houaphan but by 2011 there were more males than females. Similarly, it can be seen that there is a very significant drop in dependency ratios between 1998 and 2011.

**Table 3 Changes in Sex and Dependency Ratios (1998-99 and 2010-11)**

| Province      | Sex Ratio* |         | Dependency Ratio** |         |
|---------------|------------|---------|--------------------|---------|
|               | 1998/99    | 2010/11 | 1998/99            | 2010/11 |
| Luang Namtha  | 93.8       | 100.5   | 77.8               | 59.8    |
| Oudomxay      | 98.9       | 101.9   | 91.2               | 69.0    |
| Bokeo         | 99.8       | 101.8   | 79.3               | 65.5    |
| Luang Prabang | 97.2       | 101.6   | 101.7              | 68.5    |
| Houaphanh     | 103.0      | 103.8   | 105.6              | 72.4    |
| Sayabouri     | 96.7       | 101.7   | 84.7               | 48.2    |

Why is this so for changes in sex ratios? Women interviewed argued more male children were being born in the past and there is an improvement in health and nutrition. People are less hungry now than they were in the past, but what they also mean is that it is easier to purchase foodstuffs than in the past. Whether these foodstuffs are as nutritious as foodstuffs from the forests is another matter. Demographers and other social scientists, especially anthropologists, economists, geographers and historians use the Demographic Transition Model (DMT) to explain these changing ratios, especially rapid social and economic change.

In the context of the Lao PDR what has been occurring in these six ER-P provinces has been quite rapid social and economic change since the late 1980s that is being reflected in the updated SESA and to a lesser extent in the work undertaken for the Green Carbon Fund. It can be seen from the above Table 3 that only in Houaphan has there not been the same change in sex ratio. In relation

to changes in dependency ratios the Lao PDR as a whole according to 2015 data has dependency ratios (overall, youth, elderly and potential) that are somewhat higher than the global ratios and significantly higher than either neighboring Thailand or Cambodia. This can be expected because even though the Lao PDR – and the six ER-P provinces are no exception to the rule – have been developing quite quickly both socially and economically it has still been at a slower rate than either Cambodia or Thailand. Nevertheless, it does illustrate there has been a significant decline in the dependency ratio in all six ER-P provinces. Unfortunately, for the GID Team could not robustly quantify these declines based on ethnicity nor gender alone, but the dependency ratio could be used as a baseline to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the ER-P to further reduce the dependency ratio because households with a lower dependency ratio auger well for liberating females from the “shackles of dependency”.

## 2.2 *Land Allocation in Selected ER-P Villages*

The Table 4 below provides some quantitative data in average land use in 18 villages that the GID Team were able to collect data. It should be noted that when the term “strictly preserved spirit forest land” is used on a contemporary basis it is no longer “strictly preserved” although the core of this spirit land has been maintained wherever possible. This is not simply about preservation for sustainable natural resource management but lies at the heart of the cultural and spiritual identity of at least the Mon-Khmer groups but it can also be noted that the Lao-Tai are not entirely dissimilar. Although generally there is an absence of “burial forests” (quantified in this table as “cemetery forest land”) for the Lao-Tai because their dead are cremated in accordance with the prevailing practices of Theravada Buddhism (both in the Mahanakai and Thammayut traditions) and both Hmong-Mien and Sino-Tibetan ethnic groups do not bury their deceased in forests but rather on the mountain sides. This table also quantifies community-use forest land, agricultural land, residential and social infrastructure land (primarily for use by health center and school), “tourism” (not all villages have land allocated for such purposes) and military land, the significance of which is discussed below.

**Table 4 Land Allocation in Selected ER-P Villages (hectares)**

|                                   | <b>Tai-Lao</b>  | <b>Mon-Khmer</b> | <b>Hmong-Mien</b> | <b>Sino-Tibetan</b> |
|-----------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Preserved Spirit Forest Land      | 865.10          | 1,060.75         | 253.45            | 150.00              |
| Community Use and Forest Land     | 910.00          | 436.75           | 534.00            | 484.25              |
| Cemetery Forest Land              | -               | 3.12             | -                 | -                   |
| Agricultural Cropping Land        | 102.05          | 34.52            | 97.25             | 85.78               |
| Housing and Social Infrastructure | 25.83           | 22.32            | 23.00             | 24.15               |
| Community Tourism Use             | 18.25           | 16.97            | 5.25              | 3.25                |
| Reserved for Military Uses        | 2.92            | 4.92             | 30.25             | 55.00               |
| <b>Totals</b>                     | <b>1,864.60</b> | <b>1,775.59</b>  | <b>943.20</b>     | <b>879.65</b>       |

It needs to be noted that the totals for both the Tai-Lao and Mon-Khmer are what is stated in the LUPs for each of these villages and during the visit of the GID Team, as per the quantitative data that has populated Table 4 above the average size of these villages is in excess of 40 % smaller

than the above data illustrates. However, what this illustrates is that the LUPs are clearly not an accurate quantification of specific land uses and indeed they are not even a relative approximation. Thus, we are presented with a melange of LUPs that bear little or no resemblance quantitative wise to the actual situation by the beginning of 2019.

However, what is interesting and useful from the above Table 4 is the percentage of land allocated to and used by the military. This ranges from a low of 2.92% in Lao-Tai villages to 55% in Sino-Tibetan villages. What is this land used for? Primarily this is forested land that the military can do with as it pleases including logging. This has reportedly provided the military with a quasi-legitimate source of funds that it would not otherwise have access to. Most women interviewed stated the military permitted them to harvest NTFPs from land under their control and also to collect firewood, but they were not permitted to “ring-bark” trees or remove trees damaged.

When the GID Team asked local military, officials quartered in either the district or provincial capital whether they would permit women without agricultural or forest land to have access to and use of this land if deforested or provide forest protection services it was told that this would be a matter for negotiation. The reason being that during the preparation of the PRAPs, which at least higher-ranking military officials are aware of, they were not canvassed by PAFO as to whether the military had a role to play in the ER-P. For their part the Provincial REDD+ Coordinators stated they did not want to impinge upon the military’s role as the “custodians of internal security”. The issue to be raised here is whether or not the military would allow women to access and use land that has been ostensibly allocated to the military via land use planning (LUP) processes?

### **2.3 *Problematic Land Access, Use and Control Issues***

It is, as the Strategic Environmental and Social Assessment (SESA) has cogently argued quite impossible to undertake an even moderately robust gender analysis of land access, use and control issues in the six ER-P provinces and the GID Team (which also included the specialist who revised the original SESA) feel it is necessary to contextualize these issues because they have been glossed over in the (Provincial REDD+ Action Plans) PRAPs and to some extent in the GAP prepared for the Green Climate Fund (GCF). Thus, this important section focuses on the “Non-Commodified Subsistence Guarantee” (NCSG) and smallholder and peasant farming in the Lao PDR, the dynamics of commercial investment, and how the political economy of land, including and of central relevance to the ER-P is in the process of being transformed in the Lao PDR and whether objectively the ER-P can do anything to reverse the more negative impacts of these transformative processes: not only for females, but for males as well. If this is impossible how can a more gender-responsive series of actions be embedded in these transformative processes that would benefit women?

It is argued to describe “smallholder farming” and “peasant farms” in the Lao PDR as though they are the typologies within which to subsume all or most of the non-urbanized population is actually quite an uneasy fit with the quite often extensive landholdings and overlapping resource tenure arrangements characteristic of many villages, where village territories can extend over 2,000-3,000 hectares. Such customary land is often organized into seasonally overlapping patchworks of household-based and communal access of use rights. In such contexts, forms of cash and non-cash “environmental income” (logging, NTFP harvesting, hunting and swidden agriculture) can be particularly important for livelihoods. This would be the ideal context the ER-P would be implemented. However, as the analysis will demonstrate the typological models are no longer as what may have existed in the Lao PDR before the early 1990s and are somewhat more nuanced.

“Turning land into capital and turning people into labor” has increasingly characterized access to, use of and control of land right across the board in the Lao PDR, but it has assumed different forms in Northern and Southern Lao PDR (Central Lao PDR along the Mekong Corridor has to a large

extent “escaped” this transformative process because of its centrality to food security especially for the lowland Lao-Tai rural and urban ethnic groups). In Southern Lao PDR Vietnamese investors are the main investors and agro-business companies have invested in large-scale plantation agriculture with very large land concessions being granted by the GoL.

In the ER-P accounting area it has been Chinese capital that dominates the commercialization of land mainly for rubber and bananas. However, unlike the Vietnamese investors in Southern Lao PDR the Chinese are or have been involved using what is referred to as the “3+2” model whereby they as the investors provide the technical knowledge, capital, inputs (high-yielding seedling varieties and agricultural chemicals and market access while individual farming households provide the land and labor. Most of these farming households the GID Team interviewed are from ethnic minority backgrounds. Based on interviews the GID Team had it was found that the Chinese also provide much of the labor, ancillary transport and other services and there are relatively few benefits for those people whose forest and agricultural land has been converted for such purposes. Whether this is strictly correct the GID Team found varies on the location, but as a generalized statement based on what women told the Team the argument appears not unduly exaggerated.

The GID Team also learned that during the process of commercial investment for state land acquisition for agribusiness and infrastructure projects) there were ostensibly important livelihood gains for many rural people but the “privatization” (or enclosure) of land “from below” – that it was not simply Chinese investors - through smallholder engagements in boom crops and village land leases and sales have led to a widespread squeeze in access to what were common property natural resources. From discussions with many women in almost all villages of Luang Namtha, Oudomxay, Bokeo and Luang Prabang the GID Team found that what was once customary or communal land was “expropriated” by largely better-off households with good connections with DAFO and the LPRP (and even the two mass organizations LWU and LFNC) at the district level and the sub-district level in order to participate in the new agribusiness value chains and emerging land markets.

Concurrently both PAFO and DAFO – who are very important players in land administration and the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment having administrative responsibility for land administration in the Lao PDR – were tasked with “finding” land for investors, either for plantations and other resource projects or for resettlement zones for those affected by such projects. In other instances, medium-sized land deals were negotiated at the provincial level without reference to central government or of course local villagers who were affected. Several DAFO officials told the GID Team that when they were tasked with finding land, they had little to no consultations with local women and the importance of the forests to these women for their livelihoods was not even considered. The LWU would find it difficult to find a voice in the process and it was probably that there was little in the way of more general consultation with local people. As many women said “we lost access to the forests because they were cleared for non-forest-based investment activities”. It was impossible for these women to raise their voices because no-one would listen to them. In the National Assembly and among Lao academe there were voices raised but civil society groups were largely mute.

However, the analysis also needs to include the impact of two very important programs that have impacted upon ethnic minority groups in at least five of the six ER-P provinces (Sayaboury is excluded because the impacts were of a lesser degree due to the absence of swidden agriculture by upland ethnic minority groups: Lao-Tai in this province are involved to some extent as the data elsewhere will demonstrate). The Land and Forest Allocation Program (LFAP) and Village Consolidation Program (VCP) were to stabilize “shifting cultivation” and amalgamate smaller and remote villages into larger villages to both provide a range of physical and social infrastructural services but also to exercise greater administrative control over these consolidated villages and more “modern” forms of production. But in effect what these two programs along with the Northern Uplands Development Program (NUDP) might have resulted in the devolution of rights but not ownership from local to central and village to state level, fundamentally transforming the



relationship between state and society. An extant question to be raised here is whether the ER-P can contribute to a situation where there is more transparency and the socio-economic impact on all villagers but especially women and other vulnerable groups can be quantified

The NUDP was designed to regularise and empower smallholders to work collectively to delineate village territory and designate areas of land for agriculture, settlement, forestry, forest protection and other uses. It appeared to provide an element of security of tenure over village land but on the other hand it proved to be a means of circumscribing smallholder's use of land and facilitating granting of concessions on areas outside of such land (in effect shrinking of the "commons"). Overall the semblance of security has reduced the area available for smallholders in the upland areas and this is why in some of the ER-P districts households are simply clearing land in both conservation and protection forests for agricultural cropping purposes. It is not these households, including women that voluntarily partook in deforestation activities but they perceive they had no other option: available land had been taken away from them as a result of the concessions. The state in the process via the NUDP (and the LFAP and VCP) has effectively disempowered and dispossessed smallholders because smallholders are reluctant to declare fallowed land because the GoL is seeking to bring swidden agriculture under control and 1) the former do not want to pay an iniquitous land tax on land they are not currently using; 2) the reduction of fallow cycles has impacted quite severely on food security; and 3) there has been a growing tendency for economic disparities to widen at the village level. Most women agreed with all three reasons.

Another extant issue raised here by the GID Team is to what extent can 1), 2), and 3) be addressed by the ER-P. The Action Plan based on the SESA and what has been incorporated in the ER-PD contains some positive but modest suggestions. However, the bottom line is that LUP that is generally not participatory in nature - and GIZ has been working in several of the ER-P provinces on Participatory Land Use Planning (PLUP) for quite some time - will not be useful at all to local villagers. By PLUP the GID Team mean all villagers are involved not just the "village elite", which of course results in "elite capture" of which there is plenty of that in many of the ER-P villages.

#### **2.4 Rural Households in the ER-P Provinces**

The following Table 5 provides salient characteristics of rural households in the six ER-P provinces disaggregated by the four broad ethnic groups and gender although in the case of gender the GID Team have not disaggregated by ethnicity, except Lao-Tai women have been excluded from being categorized as ethnic minority women because as argued elsewhere in this Study and reflected in the ER-PD, EMSF and safeguard documents they are not ethnic minority women.

**Table 5 Characteristics of Rural Households in ER-P Provinces by Ethnicity (%)**

| <b>Ethnicity of Household</b>  | <b>Lao-Thai</b> | <b>Mon-Khmer</b> | <b>Hmong-Mien</b> | <b>Sino-Tibetan</b> | <b>EM Women</b> |
|--------------------------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|-----------------|
| Farm Households with Livestock | 39              | 31               | 61                | 31                  | 50              |
| Buffalo                        | 29              | 30               | 26                | 27                  | 12              |
| Pigs                           | 39              | 55               | 63                | 63                  | 65              |
| Chickens                       | 62              | 64               | 78                | 52                  | 76              |
| Goats                          | 2               | 5                | 10                | -                   | 5               |

| <b>Ethnicity of Household</b>             | <b>Lao-Thai</b> | <b>Mon-Khmer</b> | <b>Hmong-Mien</b>              | <b>Sino-Tibetan</b>            | <b>EM Women</b>                               |
|---|-----------------|------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Average Number of Livestock per Household |                 |                  | EM Group Owns Cows Not Buffalo | EM Group Owns Cows Not Buffalo | EM Women with Exception of Mon-Khmer Own Cows |
| Buffalo                                   | 5.8             | 2.9              | 4.3                            | 3.5                            | 1.0   |
| Pigs                                      | 3.6             | 2.9              | 4.4                            | 3.5                            | 4.2   |
| Chickens                                  | 19.7            | 13.9             | 18.7                           | 17.7                           | 22.5  |
| Goats                                     | 5.0             | 8.2              | 6.1                            | 3.2                            | 4.0   |
| Main Sources of Income                    |                 |                  |                                |                                |   |
| Cropping                                  | 54              | 52               | 53                             | 53                             | 55  |
| Livestock                                 | 6               | 7                | 17                             | 9                              | 12  |
| Forestry                                  | 1               | 13               | 7                              | 1                              | 18  |
| Aquaculture                               | 2               | -                | -                              | 7                              | 1   |
| Other                                     | 38              | 28               | 24                             | 31                             | 14  |
| Use of Two Wheeled tractors               | 77              | 34               | 40                             | 48                             | 10  |
| Use of Mechanical Harvester               | 85              | 52               | 60                             | 48                             | 25  |
| Ownership of Powered Chainsaw             | 5               | 35               | 22                             | 1                              | 15  |

Source: Extrapolated from 2010-11 LCA and quantitative survey by GID Team in December 2018 in ER-P Provinces

Some interesting observations can be made here. For all four ethnic groups and ethnic minority women agricultural cropping is the most important source of income but for all ethnic minority women livestock and forestry are relatively more important than for all of these four ethnic groups and even though ethnic minority women seldom undertake logging they have a relatively high ownership of powered chainsaws compared to the Lao-Tai and the Sino-Tibetan ethnic groups in the six ER-P provinces. However, it can also be seen that ethnic minority women are less likely to use two-wheeled tractors or mechanical harvesters and are therefore forced to rely on both their own physical labor and that of any other adult household members of their offspring. The GID Team estimate that when allowance is made for all reproductive and productive activities (and to some extent community-based management activities) a typical woman's working day in most of the ER-P villages is 12-14 hours compared to 5-8 hours of most men. Although it has to be noted that this varies on a seasonal basis. But the implication for implementing the ER-P and actively involving women at the village level is that activities will need to be centred around the daily and seasonal work schedules of these women and not the PPMUs. To do otherwise results in the exclusion of women and undermines an important objective of the ER-P: that is to facilitate the empowerment of hitherto non-empowered women who will participate in the ER-P.

## **2.5 The Changing Face of Land Use**

Between 1998 and 2011 agricultural land in the Lao PDR used for temporary crops (primarily rice, maize and cassava) grew by an annual growth rate of 4 % but as a total of agricultural land use there was a decline of 7.2%, which is partly explained by an increase in productivity but also

because it had proven difficult as it does on a contemporary basis to find land that can be used for agricultural cropping purposes. This is relevant in the context of what livelihood choices are available to women and their families in the ER-P provinces because to use land for agricultural purposes it is often necessary to clear existing forest land. In the past with more widespread swidden agriculture it was considerably easier to leave land under fallow and allow it to regain nutrients lost during the period of cultivation. Now with the growth in population, even if from a demographic perspective it does not appear to be too significant many of the women interviewed by the GID Team stated they had no choice but to clear forest land. As it argued throughout this study if the ER-P can assist in making climate-smart agricultural interventions work for these women and their families they will support such interventions. However, what they want to know is what are “climate-smart” agricultural interventions as no-one has been able to define and show them what they are.

**Table 6 Major Changes in Agricultural Land Use in Lao PDR (1998-99 to 2010-11)**

| Land use category                | Agricultural land area ('000 ha) |               |                    |
|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|---------------|--------------------|
|                                  | 1998/99                          | 2010/11       | (%) Annual Growth* |
| I. Agricultural land             | 976 (93.1)                       | 1 623 (86.8)  | 4.3                |
| (a) Land under temporary crops   | 765 (73.0)                       | 1 230 (65.8)  | 4.0                |
| (b) Land temporarily fallow      | 112 (10.7)                       | 198 (10.6)    | 4.9                |
| (c) Land under permanent crops   | 81 (7.7)                         | 149 (7.9)     | 5.2                |
| (d) Meadows and pastures         | 18 (1.7)                         | 26 (1.4)      | 3.1                |
| II. Non-agricultural land        | 72 (6.9)                         | 247 (13.2)    | 10.8               |
| (a) Forest and other wooded land | 54 (5.2)                         | 122 (6.5)     | 7.0                |
| (b) Other land                   | 18 (1.7)                         | 125 (6.7)     | 17.5               |
| Total                            | 1 048 (100.0)                    | 1 870 (100.0) | 4.9                |

The Table 6 above shows that there was an average annual increase of 7% in forest area between the two periods. This increase could be attributed to the impact of policies of the Government of Lao PDR to increase forest cover by promoting forest plantations (including agro-forestry plantations), which are classified by the government as a type of forest. While teak and rubber plantations have been extensively planted by the smallholders in northern Lao PDR, Eucalyptus and Acacia plantations have increasingly been planted by multinational companies in the Central and Southern regions.

What this data has not been able to capture is that when the government was promoting agro-forestry plantations beginning *circa* 1998 the market for rubber was quite buoyant and all smallholders were tapping their rubber trees on a daily basis over 8-10 months. However, in the past three years world market prices for rubber have been very sluggish and some smallholders in the ER-P provinces have stopped tapping their rubber trees because they have found the costs of tapping far exceed the payment, they receive for tapping. This has affected women to a very significant extent as well because many in the ER-P districts where rubber is being cultivated were spending more time tapping rubber than harvesting NTFPs because they are able to generate higher cash incomes as a result. But when it became economically non-viable to tap rubber these same women found that when they returned to the forests to harvest NTFPs there were fewer NTFPs to harvest not because other women had over-harvested the NTFPs but the forest land they had once used for harvesting NTFPs was no longer there: the trees had been logged first to make way for the rubber plantations by themselves and secondly by “legal” logging by some households and “companies” who looked upon the development of smallholder rubber plantations as a “window-of-opportunity” to log the forests contiguous with the rubber plantations. Such loggers when interviewed by the GID Team stated they were engaged in “sustainable logging” and not

“deforestation” but nearly all women who were interviewed by the GID Team said that claim was incorrect and the problem was that local authorities, including DAFO turned a blind eye to such activities. It would be expected that if there could be closer collaboration between the local DAFOs and local communities such issues would be less contentious as a result of the ER-P outcomes.

The Table 7 below quantified back in 2011 the percentage of land that was being used for forestry purposes and it can be seen that only Luang Prabang has land used for forestry purposes in double digits (11.6 %) whereas at the other end of the spectrum Houaphan has only 0.61 % of land being used for such purposes. However, this is land being used for production forestry purposes (agro-forestry) and not land that was or still is natural or protected forests. But it does illustrate that agro-forestry is less important for many household’s livelihoods than would appear to be based on a visual observation. Although one of the other issues is that because of the problematic access to and use of such land, including very uncertain tenurial rights and even use rights that are often “usurped” by local authorities it is very difficult for local village households and even more difficult for women to seriously invest their own time and effort in such activities. This incidentally will pose some serious issues for those ER-P interventions that will include such production forestry land in the accounting area for carbon-benefit payment calculations. How, for instance are women and their families can benefit from such interventions - if they do not have clear title or the GoL would agree that they are entitled to the carbon benefits that accrue?

**Table 7 Agricultural and Forestry Land Use in the Six ER-P Provinces (2010-11)**

| Province      | Total Area of Holdings ('000 ha) | Total Agricultural Land ('000 ha) | Cropping Intensity (%) | Share of Crops (%) |           | Fallow Land (%) | Grazing Land (%) | Forests (%) | Other lands (%) |
|---------------|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------|--------------------|-----------|-----------------|------------------|-------------|-----------------|
|               |                                  |                                   |                        | Temporary          | Permanent |                 |                  |             |                 |
| Luang Namtha  | 56.56                            | 54.59                             | 104                    | 59.36              | 33.67     | 3.95            | 2.93             | 1.37        | 2.11            |
| Oudomxay      | 105.29                           | 94.62                             | 111                    | 70.78              | 14.33     | 14.65           | 0.21             | 2.39        | 7.74            |
| Bokeo         | 51.01                            | 47.79                             | 106                    | 70.11              | 18.61     | 11.08           | 0.19             | 3.46        | 2.84            |
| Luang Prabang | 163.18                           | 132.04                            | 123                    | 60.05              | 6.04      | 33.45           | 0.37             | 11.60       | 7.48            |
| Houaphanh     | 55.21                            | 53.37                             | 103                    | 91.60              | 3.68      | 4.61            | 0.11             | 0.61        | 2.71            |
| Sayabouri     | 172.02                           | 159.77                            | 107                    | 82.65              | 3.53      | 12.95           | 0.81             | 3.26        | 3.86            |

Table 8 below quantifies the extent of female work participation in rice-farming activities in the six ER-P provinces and are not very surprising because it typifies the Department of Land Administration (DOLA) that can be found elsewhere not only in the rest of Lao PDR but elsewhere in the Greater Mekong Sub-region. The key issue is that women are less likely to be involved in “technical” tasks associated with fertilizing, pest control and irrigation whereas they are somewhat more likely to be involved in labor intensive activities associated with land preparation, preparing seedbeds, transplanting, harvesting and threshing. Although the GID Team found that nowadays most harvesting and threshing relies less on human labor than mechanical means. However, few women it was observed are can operate harvesting equipment but most can operate a threshing machine. But in Luang Namtha both ethnic Nung women and men work on a collective basis during transplanting and harvesting based on practices that have been utilized for as long as the Nung can remember and they have no intention of abandoning this practice in favor of mechanization like elsewhere in the six ER-P provinces.

**Table 8 Extent of Female Work Participation in Rice-Farming Activities (2010-11)**

| Province | Land preparation | Preparing seedbed | Transplanting | Weeding | Fertilizing | Pest control | Irrigation | Harvesting | Threshing | Transportation | Farm HHs work on rice holdings ('000) | No. of employed persons ('000) |
|----------|------------------|-------------------|---------------|---------|-------------|--------------|------------|------------|-----------|----------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|
| Luang    | 43.8             | 44.3              | 58.5          | 50.1    | 36.5        | 31.9         | 34.2       | 49.7       | 48.0      | 46.9           | 94.21                                 | 83.57                          |

|               |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |         |         |
|---------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|---------|---------|
| Namtha        |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |      |         |         |
| Oudomxay      | 45.0 | 45.8 | 51.3 | 49.9 | 40.2 | 31.6 | 37.2 | 49.7 | 48.9 | 49.0 | 155.59  | 140.62  |
| Bokeo         | 39.4 | 43.7 | 55.2 | 48.9 | 31.4 | 13.0 | 32.2 | 49.5 | 47.6 | 39.9 | 88.21   | 78.24   |
| Luang Prabang | 45.8 | 41.9 | 50.5 | 50.0 | 26.6 | 28.1 | 30.1 | 49.9 | 48.1 | 47.9 | 184.98  | 173.91  |
| Houaphanh     | 42.2 | 36.3 | 49.1 | 49.0 | 35.6 | 28.9 | 36.9 | 48.7 | 48.3 | 47.8 | 154.96  | 129.25  |
| Sayabouri     | 41.6 | 45.4 | 52.6 | 49.1 | 40.8 | 31.6 | 40.1 | 49.0 | 47.5 | 42.4 | 218.36  | 200.48  |
| Total         | 38.3 | 44.2 | 52.1 | 50.9 | 37.8 | 27.8 | 38.0 | 50.2 | 47.4 | 43.5 | 2783.59 | 2509.64 |

By way of contrast based on the quantitative data contained in Table 9 the GID Team was able to collect (such data is not included in official statistical databases in the Lao PDR) village women in the six ER-P provinces are far more active in the harvesting of NTFPs and selling of NTFPs that they do not use themselves largely locally at either the village or district level and in some instances at the provincial level or across the border in neighboring provinces Chiang Rai, Nan and Loei in Northern and Northeastern Thailand or Yunnan Province in Southwestern China. It is also not surprising that women are far more likely to be involved in the collection of firewood than men because women use firewood on a daily basis for household purposes than men. Similarly, women are somewhat more likely to be involved in crop cultivation within the actual forests than men even if the latter have been responsible for clearing the forest land in the first instance. However, hunting animals is largely the domain of men although in some instance when whole families are living on a temporary basis in the forest's women will accompany men on "hunting" trips but as the table also indicates women are only tangentially involved in "illegal logging". This does not mean that these same women as the GID discovered are necessarily against "illegal logging" undertaken by male members of their households because they provide financial resources that would not otherwise be available. But what this does indicate and has positive implications for the successful outcome of the ER-P is that if tenurial issues can be resolved and more participatory forms of collaboration which would also involve the participation of women from all ethnic groups it would not be impossible to improve upon the situation that appears to exist at present in these six ER-P provinces.

**Table 9 Women's Involvement in Forest-Based Activities**

| Province      | NTFP Harvesting | Firewood Collection | Crop Cultivation | Hunting Animals | Hunting Birds | "Illegal" Logging | Selling NTFPs | Harvesting | Threshing |
|---------------|-----------------|---------------------|------------------|-----------------|---------------|-------------------|---------------|------------|-----------|
| Luang Namtha  | 83.5            | 90.2                | 75.0             | 10.0            | 15.1          | 1.0               | 98.2          | 49.7       | 48.0      |
| Oudomxay      | 81.0            | 89.0                | 72.9             | 7.2             | 12.0          | 0.5               | 95.0          | 49.7       | 48.9      |
| Bokeo         | 72.5            | 86.5                | 68.5             | 6.0             | 15.2          | 0.1               | 96.6          | 49.5       | 47.6      |
| Luang Prabang | 87.2            | 92.5                | 81.0             | 6.2             | 13.0          | 2.5               | 97.0          | 49.9       | 48.1      |
| Houaphanh     | 84.4            | 82.5                | 79.0             | 8.9             | 11.5          | 1.5               | 95.6          | 48.7       | 48.3      |
| Sayabouri     | 83.2            | 83.5                | 59.1             | 5.0             | 13.0          | Nil               | 92.1          | 49.0       | 47.5      |
| Total         | 81.9            | 87.3                | 72.5             | 7.2             | 13.3          | 0.9               | 95.4          | 50.2       | 47.4      |

It is once more highly relevant to point out that the ER-P if it is also premised on the active participation of locally forest-dependent households, including and especially women and other vulnerable groups (the GID Team is of the conclusion that the Mon-Khmer, Hmong-Mien and Sino-Tibetan ethnic women are significantly more vulnerable than the Lao-Thai ethnic groups even if for instance as in the case of the Mon-Khmer an ethnic group such as the Khmu has a kinship system with a matrifocal bias) that reflects not only the SESA prepared for the ER-P but the ER-PD that the Lao PDR successfully submitted to the Carbon Fund in July 2018. It also needs to be

stressed that this is in line with the objectives of REDD+ and establish the linkages between the social and physical dimensions of the ER-P.

## **2.6 *Role of Livestock Development, Gender and Ethnic Equality and Human Nutrition***

Information obtained in the LCA 2010/11 shows that women and ethnic minority groups play a large part in pig and poultry production. Both males and females aged 15 and over are almost equally engaged in livestock activities; 32 % of males and 27 % of females spent more than one hour per day on livestock activities. This is consistent with other evidence that women and children provide significant labor inputs as the primary caretakers of households' pigs and poultry. On average, a typical Hmong household had 4 chickens and 19 pigs while Mon-Khmer households had 3 chickens and 14 pigs and other ethnic groups at least the same number of chickens but fewer pigs than the Hmong but more pigs than the Mon-Khmer.

It is difficult to determine specific linkages between development of livestock and improvement in human nutrition. However, improvements in livestock productivity on small farms can increase the supply of meat for household consumption, thereby providing much needed micronutrients and dense calories as well as higher incomes from selling to expanding markets (Delgado, 2003). A recent survey on risk and vulnerability among households in Lao PDR showed that 28 % of children between the ages of 48 and 59 months were underweighted and 51 % of the children in this age group were stunted in growth. This was true despite the fact that 54 % of households reported consuming poultry and 52 % reported consuming pork at least one day per week. The link between livestock development, particularly small livestock such as pigs and poultry, and rural farm household nutrition is an important area for further investigation.

## **2.7 *Changing Forest Landscape and its Importance***

Lao PDR has a rich endowment of forests but there has been substantial loss of forest cover over the past several decades due to a number of factors: fire, unsustainable wood extraction, shifting cultivation, agricultural expansion, industrial tree plantations, mining, hydropower, infrastructure development and urban expansion. The total forest area in the country reportedly declined from approximately 17 million hectares (70% of total area) in the 1940s to 11.6 million ha (47% of total area) in 1982, and further to 9.6 million ha (40.3% of total area) in 2010.

**However, the area under forest plantations has increased during the period 2006-2011, as shown in**

Table 10. This increase ostensibly reflects the shift in approach towards forest conservation over the past two decades. This shift is supported by policies and programmes on forest categorization and demarcation, law enforcement and governance, sustainable forest management, and forest regeneration and reforestation.

**Table 10 Trends in Forest-Planted Area in Lao PDR, 2006-2011**

| Year | Forest-planted Area ('000 ha) |              |             |              |
|------|-------------------------------|--------------|-------------|--------------|
|      | North                         | Central      | South       | Lao PDR      |
| 2006 | 20.21                         | 10.56        | 4.48        | 35.25        |
| 2007 | 14.31                         | 10.57        | 6.91        | 31.79        |
| 2008 | 81.39 (85%)                   | 29.53 (21%)  | 55.99 (8%)  | 166.90 (76%) |
| 2009 | 478.94 (97%)                  | 165.50 (89%) | 130.18 (5%) | 774.62 (95%) |
| 2010 | 613.48 (97%)                  | 158.76 (95%) | 114.09 (6%) | 886.33(96%)  |
| 2011 | 130.10 (87%)                  | 127.12 (73%) | 62.89 (7%)  | 320.11 (82%) |

*Table Note: Figures in parentheses indicate the share of reforested area in the total forest area.*

Forest plantations have been increasingly encouraged as a measure to reduce pressure on natural forests as well as to augment local wood availability and meet processing capacity requirements. In addition, plantations of bioenergy products, such as *Jatropha*, as well as valuable trees, such as *Aquilaria*, Rubber (less so at present), Agarwood, Teak and Eucalyptus are also being promoted by involving local and foreign investors and encouraging farmers to convert their fallow lands into such plantations. What such measures look relatively attractive many women interviewed by the GID Team argue without clear and secure title to such land that is converted, arbitrarily or on a voluntary basis, the benefits for them are nowhere near as significant as touted by advocates of these measures. However, as argued elsewhere in this Study plantation forestry has not really benefited most households and the real winners have been those who can “expropriate” land for such purposes.

## 2.8 Non-Timber Forest Products

Farm households in the Lao PDR depend to a large extent on non-timber or non-wood forest products for their livelihoods. It is reported that an overwhelming majority of the villages have access to village/community forests, which mainly include village protection forests (along water sources, river banks and roadsides), village conservation forests (spirit and cemetery forests) and village production/use forests. The village use forests are mainly used for timber harvesting for village infrastructure construction and household use, including collection of non-timber forest products (NTFP) for own consumption and sale, as per the approved management plans and village regulations. It is reported that, on average, a rural family in Lao PDR consumes NTFPs worth USD 280 per year, which is significant given that the per capita GDP of Lao PDR was about USD 880 in 2009. Charcoal and fuel-wood remain the dominant source of energy in Lao PDR, even in the cities.

The major NTFPs that are commonly extracted include: (a) food products, such as game and other wildlife, fish and other aquatic animals, fruits, vegetables (green leafs), tubers, mushrooms, bamboo shoots and honey; (b) fiber and bark products, such as khem grass and paper mulberry bark; (c) condiments and medicinal products, such as cardamom and malva nuts; and (d) inputs for the chemical and perfume industries, such as benzoin, *peuakmeuak*, resins and oleoresins, and *lamxay* (MAF, 2003). Several studies on NTFPs conducted in the late 1990s and early 2000s also reported that food gathered from the wild provided important aspects of dietary diversity in terms of both macro- and micronutrients. However, as a result of shifting patterns of agriculture, land tenure and access to land, the share of food foraged and gathered from the wild declined from 36.6 % to 25.9 % during this period.

A large number of medicinal plants (mostly trees, climbers and herbs) that are also reportedly collected by households are widely used in the production of traditional and modern medicines. As a result of the indiscriminate harvesting of these products, conservation of medicinal plants in the country has been severely constrained by the lack of awareness about the potential of these plants. Some plants and herbs are still to be defined in terms of their medicinal properties and economic value, as well as their status as plants which may be endangered or threatened with extinction. Along with the increasing awareness about the importance of conserving NTFPs, there have been significant efforts to improve the stock of village/community forests in the country. The recent trends in seed collection and planting of saplings during the period between 2006 and 2011 show that, on average, about 116 tons of seeds are collected per annum and about 72 million saplings are planted as part of the ongoing reforestation programme, which is likely to have a positive impact on sustaining the NTFP base in the country. However, the country tendencies described here do not appear to be as pervasive as is suggested but of course as argued in this Study they are still important: more so to some households than other households.

## 2.9 Household Dependency on Forestry

Table 11 below based on the 2011 Lao Census of Agriculture (LCA) reveals that while in 2011 the share of households in the ER-P Accounting Area was the highest in the Lao PDR at 13.5 % and had increased by the highest average of 8.3 % between 1988/99 and 2010/11 the average size of holdings of 0.78 hectares was the smallest in the Lao PDR. Thus, it needs to be accepted that household dependency on forestry is nowhere near as economically important as might be suggested by the REDD+ Program. Although that does not mean it is not important because this will vary from village to village and whether it is located in the lowland, upland or plateau areas of each district.

**Table 11 Details of Forest Lands Owned by Farm Households, 1998/99 and 2010/11**

| Households/area                              | Census period          | North | Central | South | Lao PDR |
|--|------------------------|-------|---------|-------|---------|
| No. of farm HHs ('000)                       | 1998/99                | 238.4 | 285.9   | 136.0 | 668.0   |
|  | 2010/11                | 288.9 | 336.4   | 157.5 | 782.8   |
| Farm HHs with forest holdings ('000)         | 1998/99                | 16.1  | 29.2    | 9.4   | 54.8    |
|  | 2010/11                | 39.1  | 37.1    | 18.2  | 94.3    |
|  | (%) Increase per annum | 7.7   | 2.0     | 5.7   | 4.6     |
| Area of forest in holdings ('000 ha)         | 1998/99                | 11.8  | 33.1    | 9.0   | 54.1    |
|  | 2010/11                | 30.6  | 72.6    | 19.1  | 122.3   |
|  | (%) Increase per annum | 8.3   | 6.8     | 6.5   | 7.0     |
| Share of HHs with forest holdings (%)        | 1998/99                | 6.7   | 10.2    | 6.9   | 8.2     |
|  | 2010/11                | 13.5  | 11.0    | 11.5  | 12.0    |
| Average size of forest land in holdings (ha) | 1998/99                | 0.73  | 1.13    | 0.96  | 0.99    |
|  | 2010/11                | 0.78  | 1.96    | 1.05  | 1.30    |

Farm households reported a high level of dependence on public forests for the collection and use of various products, including for sale. For instance, at the national level, 69 % of all farm households accessed public forests in 2010/11, with relatively more doing so in the ER-P Provinces of 87 %. The main forest products were fuelwood (with almost all households accessing



public forests for fuelwood), fruit and vegetables, mushrooms and bamboo. The proportion of households selling various products accessed from public forests was 38 % at the national level, with a higher proportion in the Northern provinces (45%). It was observed that more upland farm households exploited public forests in 2010/11, compared with those in lowland areas. As Table 12 demonstrates there were some differences among the various size groups of households with respect to the use of public forests for sourcing different products, both for their own consumption and for sale. Farm households that owned at least 0.5 ha of land used public forests more than either the landless or those with very small (<0.5 ha) holdings.

**Table 12 Use of Public Forests by HH of Different Landholding Sizes, 2010/11 (%)**

| Land class (ha) | Use of public forests | Timber | Fuelwood | Bamboo | Mushroom | Fruits & vegetables | Sale products |
|-----------------|-----------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|---------------------|---------------|
| No land         | 40.6                  | 3.8    | 88.1     | 49.1   | 71.2     | 63.0                | 33.2          |
| Below 0.5       | 55.4                  | 4.7    | 91.6     | 61.6   | 78.5     | 68.5                | 33.5          |
| 0.5 to 1        | 67.8                  | 3.6    | 94.0     | 64.7   | 78.4     | 74.7                | 36.7          |
| 1 to 1.5        | 70.0                  | 4.8    | 93.8     | 64.2   | 79.3     | 72.6                | 39.3          |
| 1.5 to 2        | 71.9                  | 4.6    | 94.0     | 66.6   | 80.1     | 73.5                | 40.5          |
| 2 to 3          | 70.8                  | 6.0    | 92.3     | 64.6   | 80.2     | 69.1                | 38.3          |
| Above 3         | 70.6                  | 5.7    | 90.7     | 63.1   | 81.5     | 68.6                | 38.6          |
| Lao PDR         | 68.9                  | 5.1    | 92.5     | 64.1   | 80.0     | 71.0                | 38.3          |

Household utilization of public forests also showed some differences across different types of villages depending on their locations as demonstrated in Table 13 below:

**Table 13 Household Use of Public Forests by Types of Villages and Geographical Locations in ER-P Accounting Area, 2010/11 (%)**

| Villages           | Use of Public Forests | Timber | Fuelwood | Bamboo | Mushroom | Fruits and vegetables | Sale products |
|--------------------|-----------------------|--------|----------|--------|----------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Urban              | 53.6                  | 3.2    | 91.2     | 56.3   | 72.0     | 65.8                  | 32.9          |
| Rural with road    | 71.7                  | 5.0    | 92.9     | 64.9   | 81.8     | 71.9                  | 38.4          |
| Rural with no road | 78.2                  | 8.1    | 91.5     | 69.2   | 78.2     | 70.9                  | 45.1          |
| Lowland            | 63.7                  | 4.3    | 90.6     | 54.7   | 86.4     | 66.5                  | 34.7          |
| Upland             | 77.7                  | 6.5    | 95.3     | 75.2   | 73.6     | 76.8                  | 44.8          |
| Plateau            | 69.6                  | 4.9    | 93.0     | 68.8   | 75.8     | 72.1                  | 36.2          |
| Mixed              | 86.2                  | 1.7    | 88.8     | 66.2   | 66.6     | 73.7                  | 74.8          |

| Villages | Use of Public Forests | Timber Fuelwood | Bamboo | Mushroom | Fruits and vegetables | Sale products |
|----------|-----------------------|-----------------|--------|----------|-----------------------|---------------|
| Lao PDR  | 68.9                  | 5.1 92.5        | 64.1   | 79.9     | 70.9                  | 38.3          |

As would be expected, farm households located in the urban villages generally reported lower utilization of public forests (54%) compared to those in rural villages, and most of them used such forests to meet their consumption requirements rather than to gather products for sale. Farms in the lowlands also reported somewhat lower utilization of public forests, which is also not surprising given their greater focus on seasonal agricultural food crops and to some extent plantation forestry.

Table 14 below presents data from the 2011 Lao Census on Agriculture for the six ER-P Provinces – updated data is unavailable – that provides details province by province. It can be seen that average size of forest holdings varies from a low of 0.22 hectares in Houaphan to a high of 1.09 hectares in Luang Prabang. But in compared to the average size in the Lao PDR the forest holdings were in 2011 significantly smaller in the ER-P Provinces. However, in four of the ER-P Provinces (Houaphanh, Sayabouri, Oudomxay and Luang Prabang) the change per annum was significantly above the national average.

**Table 14 Details of Farm Households with their own Forest Holdings, 1998/99 and 2010/11**

| Province      | No. of farm HHs ('000) |         | HHs with forest lands (%) |         |                | Area of forest lands on holdings ('000 ha) |         |                | Average size of forest lands on holdings |         |
|---------------|------------------------|---------|---------------------------|---------|----------------|--|---------|----------------|--|---------|
|               | 1998/99                | 2010/11 | 1998/99                   | 2010/11 | % change/annum | 1998/99                                    | 2010/11 | % change/annum | 1998/99                                  | 2010/11 |
| Luang Namtha  | 19.78                  | 26.24   | 5.96                      | 6.28    | 0.44           | 0.72                                       | 0.77    | 0.5            | 0.61                                     | 0.47    |
| Oudomxay      | 33.37                  | 44.60   | 5.12                      | 9.94    | 5.7            | 3.45                                       | 2.52    | -2.6           | 2.02                                     | 0.57    |
| Bokeo         | 18.84                  | 24.76   | 9.65                      | 12.44   | 2.1            | 0.77                                       | 1.77    | 7.2            | 0.43                                     | 0.57    |
| Luang Prabang | 55.72                  | 59.50   | 15.29                     | 29.22   | 5.5            | 5.06                                       | 18.93   | 11.6           | 0.59                                     | 1.09    |
| Houaphanh     | 36.94                  | 42.30   | 0.92                      | 3.66    | 12.2           | 0.08                                       | 0.34    | 12.8           | 0.22                                     | 0.22    |
| Sayabouri     | 49.40                  | 63.14   | 4.86                      | 13.23   | 8.7            | 1.67                                       | 5.62    | 10.6           | 0.69                                     | 0.67    |
| Lao PDR       | 668.00                 | 782.84  | 8.22                      | 12.05   | 3.2            | 54.07                                      | 122.27  | 7.0            | 0.99                                     | 1.30    |

**However, the GID Team undertook its own survey in July 2018 and the results are contained in**

**Table 15 below, which demonstrate in the context of the ER-P the extraction of timber is the least important (in part because it is “illegal” and such activities are more closely monitored than for other products) but also because the other harvested or collected NTFPs are either required on a daily basis (such as firewood), or for a combination of household consumption and sale either within the village, district or province. This**

Table 15 is important as a baseline monitoring table because it will be necessary to quantify changes in harvest or collection patterns (if any) by women of NTFPs.

**Table 15 Household Use of Own Forest Holdings for Various Purposes (%)**

| ER-P Province | HHs use of own forest | Non-Timber Forest Products (Harvested) |          |        |          |                      |                  |
|---------------|-----------------------|--|----------|--------|----------|----------------------|------------------|
|               |                       | Timber                                 | Fuelwood | Bamboo | Mushroom | Fruit and Vegetables | Sale of Products |
| Luang Namtha  | 68.5                  | 12.1                                   | 80.9     | 39.8   | 46.9     | 44.5                 | 49.0             |
| Oudomxay      | 46.9                  | 19.8                                   | 72.5     | 26.8   | 25.0     | 43.6                 | 43.7             |
| Bokeo         | 54.8                  | 15.0                                   | 78.4     | 37.9   | 31.4     | 37.0                 | 35.5             |
| Luang Prabang | 51.8                  | 18.7                                   | 85.8     | 49.9   | 45.5     | 40.6                 | 46.8             |
| Houaphanh     | 39.9                  | 14.0                                   | 88.6     | 47.6   | 23.2     | 63.5                 | 25.4             |
| Sayabouri     | 40.1                  | 9.6                                    | 84.0     | 49.5   | 62.9     | 46.6                 | 44.7             |
| Lao PDR       | 57.8                  | 13.7                                   | 90.1     | 44.4   | 64.2     | 50.1                 | 42.0             |

## 2.10 Loss of Agricultural and Forest Land

The Table 16 below demonstrates how much land on average villages in the six ER-P provinces lost access to and use of over the decade between 2005 and 2015. Taken as a net percentage loss for all village land in Luang Namtha the average loss was 17.78%; Oudomxay 18.86%; Bokeo 16.52%; Luang Prabang 23.91%; Houaphan 19.98%; and, Sayabouri 28.82%. Such quantifiable losses are highly significant when comparison is not only made with agricultural and cropping and grazing land that was lost but also “Village” designated forest land or at least forest land that villagers thought had either been allocated to them or was part of their customary forestry land. Moreover, when the focus is shifted to per capita land that was able to be utilized after 2015 in Luang Namtha it is 1.81 ha compared to 2.75 ha in 2005 or 34.18% less land; 1.53 ha in Oudomxay compared to 2.73 ha in 2005 or 43.95% less land; 1.64 in Bokeo compared to 3.36% in 2005 or 51.19% less land; 2.74 ha in Luang Prabang compared to 3.05 ha in 2005 or 10.16% less land; 3.82 ha in Houaphan compared to 5.39 ha in 2005 or 29.1% less land; and, 1.47 ha in Sayabouri compared to 2.62 ha in 2005 or 43.89% less land.

**Table 16 Loss of Agricultural and Forest Land in ER-P Provinces**

| ER-P Province | 2005                            |                                 | 2015                            |                            | Net Loss from 2005-2015                |                                  |
|---------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------|--|----------------------------------|
|               | Average Village Population Size | Average Total Village Land Area | Average Village Population Size | Average Total Village Land | Agricultural Cropping and Grazing Land | “Village” Designated Forest Land |
| Luang Namtha  | 382                             | 1050.82                         | 483                             | 875.25                     | 115.25                                 | 68.32                            |
| Oudomxay      | 452                             | 1235.00                         | 653                             | 1002.00                    | 85.00                                  | 148.00                           |
| Bokeo         | 410                             | 1378.50                         | 700                             | 1150.75                    | 72.10                                  | 155.65                           |
| Luang Prabang | 476                             | 1452.23                         | 574                             | 1105.00                    | 210.25                                 | 136.98                           |
| Houaphan      | 358                             | 1932.05                         | 403                             | 1546.00                    | 198.00                                 | 180.05                           |
| Sayabouri     | 695                             | 1826.72                         | 883                             | 1300.25                    | 250.25                                 | 276.22                           |

Source: Lao PDR Population Census 2005 and 2015 and GID Team’s Estimates

Now the issue is how did these households cope with this loss of agricultural and forest land? As is being explained in this Report not all households were affected equally and indeed some households “expropriated” land without any clear legal title (Land Use Certificated (LUC) were not issued except in Houaphan where the GIZ project was able to ensure “temporary LUCs” that included the names of both spouses were issued to over 70% of households that participated in the LUP project it was supporting) for what the GoL has referred to as “modern agriculture” or primarily smallholder commercialized agriculture. By-and-large women who headed households did not benefit from such actions because they were among the most vulnerable of households in the village and more often than not their voices were not heard. However, as a result of such actions many households, including those who were involuntarily resettled either for the purposes of amalgamating villages or because of physical infrastructure projects (especially in Sayabouri because of hydropower projects on the Mekong River and more recently the road network improvement projects and the rail link between Southern China and the Lao PDR border with Vientiane) decided that they had no choice, but to further encroach upon forested areas (both conservation and natural forests). This, women told the GID Team was one of the few land-based means to try and restore their livelihoods although by 2015 longstanding village households were competing with new arrivals from villagers that were abandoned as a result of GoL directives.

A possible rejoinder to this is that with access to higher-yielding seed varieties, fertilizers, herbicides, insecticides and more “modern” farming techniques what households lost be way of good agricultural cropping land and to a lesser extent grazing land could be made up by increased productivity, which is partially correct. Also, with more effective animal health remedies livestock were in better condition and able to be marketed more readily, which is also partially correct and even more so when villagers concentrated on pigs and chickens because of greater numbers of progeny and shorter breeding and raising periods (and with chickens’ protein on a daily basis) for either domestic consumption or sale. Buffalo many households, especially Mon-Khmer wanted to continue raising because they are also important culturally but it appears that most Mon-Khmer households found ways-and-means to adapt: Mon-Khmer women found that their workload increased because they had to collect more fodder than in the past when the buffalo were able to graze more freely.

The GID Team talked to women about the past and it was agreed that despite the net losses that women experienced as reflected in the following table there is little now that women at the village level can do about what transpired in the past. They will continue to encroach on the forests or what is left of them but they also know that land-based activities *per se* are not *ipso facto* going to sustain the livelihoods of themselves and their families. Whether the ER-P can address all of the extant issues or at least some of the major issues remains to be seen although the series of actions proposed in Action Plan could be an important entry point. Over 12 months once the ERPA is signed it will be highly useful to assess whether these actions will benefit women in the ER-P villages but the GID Team argues it is unhelpful to simply document the “mistakes” of the past and not at least look at some of the possible ways-and-means to leverage the ER-P to start afresh and learn from the past.

Obviously the most strategic way forward and also the most practical is to sort out the land tenure issues – access, control and use – as they impact upon women, facilitate more collaborative approaches to forest management, and try and determine what climate-smart agricultural interventions are agronomically possible. But this also has to be coupled with what women themselves want and it is absolutely pointless trying to tell women what they want or need. Instead they have to be listened to and this is the essence of effective stakeholder engagement with the women in the ER-P villages, something the GID Team would like to reiterate has not to any significant extent being actualized.

**Table 17 Net Reduction in Agricultural and Forestry Land Resources of Women by Ethnicity in ER-P Provinces (%)**

| ER-P Province | Lao-Tai | Mon-Khmer | Hmong-Mien | Sino-Tibetan |
|---------------|---------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| Luang Namtha  | 10.5    | 18.0      | 7.8        | -            |
| Oudomxay      | 4.2     | 20.8      | -          | -            |
| Bokeo         | 4.0     | 13.2      | 2.5        | -            |
| Luang Prabang | 8.1     | 10.5      | 5.0        | 0.5          |
| Houaphan      | -       | 6.9       | 13.5       | 6.0          |
| Sayabouri     | 9.0     | 5.1       | 0.5        | -            |

Source: Estimates of GID Team Based on Analysis of Randomized Survey Results in December 2018.

### Box 1 Voices of Akha Women

When the Khumban took our land from us to give to others who were sent to our village we were told that the land did not belong to us; that while we were growing crops and grazing livestock it was us that had logged the natural forest in the first place. We were told we broke every law in the Lao PDR but were not punished and that we made lots of money from illegally logging these native trees and selling them the logs across the border into either China or Vietnam. At the same time the Khumban told us that we were over-harvesting the NTFPs because we were now selling products of monetary value to “outsiders”: that indeed we never loved the forests and now we are over-exploiting them.

No matter how hard and often we complained – we were told as women we should not complain but please our husbands – no-one wanted to listen to us. Even the LWU was not very good because it too benefited from how our land was taken away from us. The local LWU representative told us “this land belongs to all of the people of the Lao PDR not just the Akha who are living in Luang Namtha”. When we asked her so, could we go to Vientiane and secure some land for our personal use her reply was “no, this is land that belongs to private persons because they were issued with the right by the local authority to own, occupy and use this land”. Of course, the Akha women did not dare complain any further because as they said, “her husband is the district secretary of the LPRP and her uncle is the LFNC chairperson in Luang Namtha”. Thus, this was a “contest” the village Akha women could not possibly win and none of the people representing the local authorities had any interest in a “win-win” outcome.

The GID Team asked these women what was a roadmap that could work for them and the latter replied at the very least could we have security of tenure over what agricultural land we are using for cropping and grazing and could the local authorities be more lenient with the quantities of NTFPs that are collected. The women pointed out that now it is no just they that are harvesting NTFPs but people from elsewhere but they are being blamed for over-harvesting whereas in actual fact they claim they are not overharvesting.

Thus, there are claims and counter-claims by all stakeholders as to what is happening on a contemporary basis but the GID Team still argue the genesis lies in the partial commodification of agriculture and to a lesser extent forestry in the ER-P Provinces.

The Table 17 above demonstrates that Mon-Khmer women in four of the six ER-P Provinces lost more land they could access and use for agricultural and forestry purposes than the three other ethnic groups and thus it is this ethnic group that the ER-P in the interest of equity and transparency and also gender-responsive needs to pay considerable attention. However, this table also demonstrates that it is not just upland or plateau women in the ER-P Provinces that saw a reduction in land-based resources but also somewhat significantly in Luang Namtha and Luang Prabang. It is often argued that Lao-Tai women even if living in close proximity to upland areas still have access to water bodies that provide fish, which contributes very significantly to protein

intake but also food security. That the GID Team partially accept but not all Lao-Tai villages living in the ER-P villages (those in the river valley’s yes) have quite the access that is suggested. Stated simply it is easier to harvest edible NTFPs than it is to catch fish or let livestock graze in the forests. Immediately below is a summary of an FGD facilitated by the GID Team in Luang Namtha with a group of Akha women who are “unhappy” with the turn of events in their own village between 2005 and 2015. Such stories unfortunately appear to be widespread in the ER-P Provinces as explained in the revised version of the SESA.

## 2.11 *Understanding of REDD+*

The Table 18 demonstrates that few women know much about forestry related programs in the six ER-P Provinces. The province with the greatest awareness of REDD+, Forest Laws, Understanding for Benefit Sharing Plan (BSP), collaborative management, and other forestry programs is Luang Prabang and the province with least awareness of Oudomxay: the women the GID Team discussed the ER-P with had never heard of REDD+, which clearly indicates the Provincial REDD+ Committee has not been able to reach out to local communities either in person or via other forms of dissemination (GID Team was told it lacked the resources). However, the GID Team found out anecdotally that at the provincial level, as is mentioned also elsewhere in this Report that there is little or no commitment to reach out to village women. There has not been the necessary direction from the national level in Vientiane – and this is evident in most of the despite the fact that some MAF staff do have a good knowledge of gender and forestry issues and there have been a range of reports both at the strategic policy level and the practical project and program implementation level which have addressed such issues. It is pointless developing a Stakeholder Engagement Strategic Framework that appears to be quite participatory in nature but in actuality is not utilized or under-utilized for all intents-and-purposes. The SESA has clearly stated as indeed this Action Plan will that forest-dependent women MUST be consulted and not just as passive participants.

**Table 18 Women in ER-P Provinces Aware of Forestry Related Programs (%)**

|               | <b>Knowledge of REDD+</b> | <b>Familiar with Forest Laws</b> | <b>Understanding of BSP for Forests</b> | <b>Awareness of Collaborative Management</b> | <b>Knowledge of Other Forestry Programs</b> |
|---------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Luang Namtha  | 10                        | 5                                | -                                       | -  | 15  |
| Oudomxay      | -                         | 1                                | -                                       | -  | 5   |
| Bokeo         | 5                         | 8                                | -                                       | -  | 5   |
| Luang Prabang | 20                        | 15                               | 5                                       | 2  | 25  |
| Houaphan      | 12                        | 10                               | 5                                       | 5  | 15  |
| Sayabouri     | 8                         | 9                                | 8                                       | 5  | 12  |

ut to women such as the ones who

From Kokloaung Village in the District of Houayxay in Bokeo Province we have a very positive story on how local communities can collaborate with local authorities and private sawmillers to plant, grow and harvest high-value teak wood on what was hitherto degraded forest land. Initially, most households planted teak because they heard that there would be the possibility of selling logged teak trees as high prices. However, few households actually knew how to grow teak and they discovered that when they sold the logged teak sometimes, they would get paid and often they would not. Sawmillers at the time realized unless households had ownership certificates, they had no legal resource. This changed when the Provincial PAFO in conjunction with the District DAFO and the Village Head decided it was necessary to seek certification because the supply chain required the process whereby the teak needed to be certified by the GoL.

PAFO provided training to DAFO and the Village Head and other males but women also wanted to participate in the training and the local LWU sought to convince both DAFO and PAFO that women also should receive training on how to plant, grow and harvest teak. Initially there was some reluctance but when women were able to demonstrate they could also create databases (for the “illiterate” this involved pictorial and other symbolic databases) and undertake tree measurement and the requirement for adequate spacing to ensure more rapid maturation and intercropping in the initial stages to ensure a modicum of additional food security they were warmly welcomed. As DAFO claimed later “women can do everything men can do when it comes to deriving sustainable livelihoods from the forests!”.

DAFO with the informed consent and agreement of all village households growing teak (some 75%) negotiated with the private sawmillers to secure prices via a more organized supply chain than hitherto existed. The most significant change was that instead of households harvesting mature trees to support their livelihoods they could not sell by cubic meter (volume) using techniques such as tree-thinning and because through this process women could actively engage in harvesting it meant men had to respect women to a greater extent. As most women argued they were “empowered” by this seemingly non-complex process supported by DAFO and of course PAFO.

It was also observed by the GID Team that these households were able to benefit from the private sawmills using “finger-joint” equipment, which joins small pieces of wood together and prevents wastage. Prior to these small pieces of teak were being used for firewood rather than being valorised.

Apart from greater levels of gender empowerment village women (and men for the most part) now say” 1) they have more confidence in local authorities and are generally more positive towards the private sawmillers; 2) more waged employment opportunities have been created including for women and thereby stemming the flow of seasonal migration to neighboring Thailand; 3) households have more money to spend on goods and services that make their lives more comfortable; 4) their children and especially girls can now stay at school longer and attend on a more regular basis; and, 5) the teak plantations because they are now better managed can be inherited by the next generation.

In relation to the ER-P both women and men in this village and DAFO, PADO, LWU and private sawmillers are very confident that all stakeholder groups because they also are socially inclusive of women could successfully collaborate to ensure that not only in the context of plantation forestry but also with natural forests it would be possible to generate results demonstrating that CO<sub>2</sub> emissions could be reduced. Indeed, they suggested that why does the ER-P not commence its activities in a village such as theirs’ and assess what will work?

are the “cornerstone” of this Report and fulcrum of the Action Plan then it is going to fail abysmally in the context of empowering local forest-dependent women and contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions. It is not too late to commence an outreach program and this should be associated with the actions outlined in the Action Plan that should be commenced as

### **Box 2 A good story from the field**

soon as the ERPA is signed in up to 3 villages in each of the 6 ER-P Provinces or a total of 18 villages. The GID Team noted that existing REDD+ visual materials could be improved upon by a good graphic artist with an understanding of both broad gender issues and ethnic diversity in these ER-P provinces. Visual materials produced by the National REDD+ Office are alright in a generic sense but not very effective – that is – they fail to communicate the objectives of REDD+ and of course the ER-P.

It also noted that a BSP has yet to be developed even though Section 15 of the ER-PD outlines the generic BSP and there has been no buy-in anywhere in the ER-P provinces although in some villages they are aware of how BSP can work as is illustrated in the narrative below. Of course, this is difficult to develop an awareness of unless there is a determined attempt to engage local stakeholders and frankly speaking few GoL officials have any experience with BSPs but where they have such as the Nam Ngum 2 hydro-electric power scheme or a few smaller natural resource projects they have been quite good. Putting this in context it is not simply an issue in the Lao PDR but in any of the FCPF-REDD+ countries where there is little practical awareness of how BSPs should be implemented. Even the WB and other providers of ODA have existential problems grappling with how BSPs in the forestry sector should be implemented. As for collaborative forms of management, even on a truncated basis the SESA has argued there is still quite some way to go because the “political culture” of the Lao PDR is largely a non-contestable and limited participatory model: much more so than some of the FCPF-REDD+ countries such as Nepal, Ghana, Costa Rica, Chile and Fiji. But once more the GID Team wants to stress what is doable, not what is impossible and it is extremely negative to argue that the Lao PDR cannot rise to the occasion and utilize a Stakeholder Engagement Strategy to embed ER-P activities. The GID Team considers this is a very good suggestion and argues that of the ER-P could bring together local communities, ER-P governmental stakeholders and the private sector, at least in the context of production forestry this would be an excellent outcome for the ER-P. It is acknowledged that in relation to the sustainable management of conservation and natural forests the ensemble of social relations is somewhat different but achieving a “win-win” outcome is not impossible.

### **2.12 *Young Women Seeking Alternatives***

One of the very important issues the GID Team identified was the necessity to engage with younger women, especially women and under 20 years of age who were still unmarried or if married had not yet become of mother, because such women are the future generation that will reside in these villages (or will they be is also an existential question) and typically women (and men) of this age are not actively consulted by teams investigating economy and society in rural areas for projects and programs. The Lao PDR is absolutely no exception and, in many respects, it exemplifies approaches where the voices of young people in general let alone young women have simply not been heard and recorded. The Table 19 below captures the livelihood preferences of the young women who participated in some of the FGDs facilitated by the GID Team. While the FGDs do not rely on quantitative data to demonstrate the degree of robustness that is required for quantitative surveys a decision was made to encourage all young women participants to not only raise their hands but actually speak to their reasons as why they articulated specific preferences. That every single FGD participant was able and willing to do so and the data speaks for itself.

**Table 19 Livelihood Preferences of Young Women in ER-P Villages (%)**



|   | <b>Lao-Thai</b> | <b>Mom-Khmer</b> | <b>Hmong-Mien</b> | <b>Sino-Tibetan</b> |
|---|-----------------|------------------|-------------------|---------------------|
| Seeking to Work in SEZs in the Lao PDR                  | 35              | 25               | 10                | 5                   |
| Temporary Labor Migration to Neighboring Countries      | 65              | 50               | 70                | 85                  |
| Prepared to Work in Vientiane or Other Larger Towns     | 50              | 85               | 30                | 15                  |
| Develop Own Agricultural Cropping Land and Agroforestry | 45              | 20               | 10                | 10                  |
| Derive Local Livelihood Primarily from the Land         | 25              | 15               | 30                | 20                  |
| No Clear Ideas at Present but Not Satisfied with Life   | 35              | 15               | 30                | 15                  |

*Table note : During the FGDs participants were afforded the opportunity to provide more than one option and also to state whether they had clear ideas to their preferences as expressed to other participants*

What the GID Team did was to select the best response from a representative of each of the ethnic groups that best reflected the consensus of these young women and ensure that these responses were accepted by the other FGD participants. However, in making this point the GID Team do not warrant that these same young women would state the same preferences with some other facilitators especially if the latter were seen to explicitly embrace “official” narratives for whatever reason. Nevertheless, the GID Team as argued above states unequivocally that an Action Plan for the ER-P that totally ignores or downplays the perspectives of younger women is neither heuristically or practically useful for the GoL.

The Lao-Tai position during the FGDs (Lao ethnicity) was and is that the village is their home. That this is where they were born and have lived with their families since birth although in some instances as a result of either infrastructure projects or government attempts to amalgamate villages they were unwillingly forced to relocate. But in general, it has been the village that has provided them with the resources to live and as such it is necessary to be grateful to the kindness of nature and their ancestors for preserving what they could of the natural resources including the forests. However, they do not want to spend all of their lives in the villages unlike their mothers, their aunts and their older sisters. Rather they also want to experience life outside the village in places like Luang Prabang or Udon Thani or Bangkok where life is more exciting and interesting than just never leaving the village. Living in the village without knowing the outside world is like being a “frog in the well”. Therefore, “yes” by all means the forests should be protected but no-one should expect us to spend all or even part of our time simply doing this. Therefore, the priorities of young Lao-Tai women are not based around the forests but partaking in other non-land-based livelihood opportunities.

Young Mon-Khmer FGD participants (Khmu ethnicity) love the forests and the landscapes are not those with too much concrete, asphalt, dust and mud: so of course, we want to protect our forests. Should the forests disappear entirely we will lose not only an important source of livelihood but also our cultural identity. It is impossible for the Khmu to imagine they could be a Khmu without the forests, livestock and upland agricultural crops. But they want more than this because they know there is another world they should also experience. That is the world where they can work in comfort, get paid on a regular basis, and also be excited with life. Harvesting NTFPs with one’s friends is a joyful experience but it is not quite the same as experiencing tasty food we cannot eat in the village, drinking some strong alcohol and listening to “modern music”, dressing up and going out, and texting our friends on our mobile phones. However, a Khmu woman will never forget where she comes from and will always return to the village. So, yes in the end Khmu women will always support any activity that does not destroy the forests that our families rely on.

Young Hmong-Mien FGD women (Hmong ethnicity) note that “everyone claims we Hmong women do not care about the forests: that all we are interested in is clearing the forests to make money from logging, raise livestock and destroy the forests and harvest all the NTFPs without thinking

for even a moment about what is happening to the forest. We know that if we destroy the forest the quality of water will worsen, eroded soil is not productive agriculturally, and there is the danger of mudslides, flash flooding and forest fires that threaten the lives of all villagers". Therefore, of course these young Hmong women will support any activities that ensure the forests are not destroyed but not at the expense of their own livelihoods. Like other young women from other ethnic groups "we want to have experiences outside our villages. Although for us young Hmong women it is a little different because the males in our clan try to restrict our movements but they are happy to receive whatever money we can provide them". Stated briefly "we are not sure we can be directly involved in the ER-P but some of us want to be trading intermediaries between women from other ethnic groups who harvest NTFPs and wholesalers, retailers and individual purchasers of NTFPs. Therefore, we stand to benefit if NTFPs are not "over-exploited" by those women who harvest the NTFPs".

Sino-Tibetan FGD participants (Yao ethnicity) state they rely on and spend less time in the forests than most other ethnic groups but this does not mean they do not derive some of their foodstuffs from the forests (fruit and vegetables and sometimes pigs, rats, and birds) and also firewood and even more rarely a very small cash income. However, young Yao women state that if they rely on the forests alone, they would be "hungry all the time". As they told the GID Team you should know we are the "poorest" people in the district but the GoL does not believe is or target us except to try and forces us to live in larger villages because they claim we go to the school and get access to healthcare, which of course is correct. The GoL is not criticized for this fact but the fact that each household has lesser access to land than in the past. In this respect we are like the Hmong and we simply do not understand the policy of the GoL and ask how are we to benefit? Can the GoL answer our question? The answer is no! Yao young women do not see how their livelihoods can improve unless they can get access to and control over more land for agricultural and forestry purposes. Perhaps other ethnic groups can derive some real benefits but we do simply do not know as the GoL treats us as though we are "stupid". What we really want to do is to work for wages on projects in Laos or across the border in China. Why China? As Yao people we can get away with being a "national minority" there whereas they cannot in Thailand or Vietnam because there are many more Yao who can speak our language in China than either Thailand or Vietnam: and that after all is where "we" the Yao originally came from.

Thus, what the GID Team was faced with is an understandable lack of commitment or even willingness to engage in the ER-P because young women: 1) fail to see any material (economic and financial benefits); 2) symbolic (empowerment or improvement in status); or 3) transformative benefits (trans-generational changes) no matter how "rudimentary" and "unsophisticated" has been the way they articulate themselves. While it can be demonstrated based on highlighting the most informative narratives from representatives of four different ethnic groups that only the Lao at 45 % of participants actually consider they do not need to or want to seek opportunities outside their own home village and hence are more likely to have a greater commitment to the ER-P than other three ethnic groups the existential fact is that less than 20 % of young Khmu women and less than 10 % of both the Hmong and Yao articulate this same possible commitment. Of course, it can be argued that GoL rural development programs and those supported by providers of ODA have been biased or at least skewed in favor of Lao-Tai ethnic groups and thereby the young Lao women that offered their responses were largely indicative of them being targeted to a greater extent than other ethnic groups.

However, all young women complained to the GID Team that more non-land-based waged employment opportunities should be offered to young women like themselves rather than people from China who are employed on almost every investment project in the Lao PDR but in particular those projects financed by Chinese investors. If these young women have any cogently consistent criticism of the GoL is that it has not imposed tougher conditions on these Chinese investors. Their argument is that people living in the Lao PDR should get first priority. This type of understanding more than likely befuddles some of the stakeholders in the Lao PDR ER-P but the GID Team is arguing very clearly that is simply misplaced to expect younger women in the ER-P Accounting

Area to respond to the ER-P the same way that older women will or may respond. No matter what “theory-of-change” is driving the ER-P it is impossible to ignore the “modernizing” socio-economic changes that are impacting upon younger women currently living in the ER-P villages.

**Table 20 Significant ODA Projects Largely in the ER-P Area**

| Project   | Province                    | Gender Action Plan   | Status  | Main Activities and any Potential Issues   |
|---|-----------------------------|--|---------|--|
| Climate Protection through Avoided Deforestation (CLiPAD)               | Houaphan                    | No specific GAP was prepared but all project documentation states that by supporting REDD+ initiatives women have been systematically targeted.  | 2009-19 | Mainstreaming efforts have been designed to ensure that women benefit equally from the knowledge of new practices and are encouraged to join in project activities. Through involvement in SFM, for instance, they learn to collect NTFPs and firewood. The project also supports VDFs that can be accessed by women to finance activities such as weaving. Problem with this design is that women know how to collect NTFPs and firewood but the extant question is are they really “over-harvesting” or “over-collecting” these NTFPs.   |
| Land Management and Decentralized Planning (LMDP I and II)              | Houaphan, and Luang Namtha  | No specific GAP was prepared that would enable Gender Tagging but there is data that has been disaggregated by gender and ethnicity but not poverty.   | 2015-19 | Participatory Land-Use Planning undertaken in 67 villages across 8 districts where more than 31,000 plots of land were registered and of those registered 70% are now in the name of a woman or with conjugal ownership. However, only 21,000 or 67.7% of these land plots are considered to be “secure” based on the existing Land Law in the Lao PDR that is in the process of being revised to ensure security of tenure.   |
| Forest Law Enforcement, Governance and Trade FLEGT                      | Multiple                    | No specific GAP was prepared but it was agreed that an assessment should be undertaken to understand obstacles for women in the forest sector  | 2013-21 | 8 village forest communities have been targeted to ensure common access to the Voluntary Partnership Agreement (VPA) in the Lao PDR. An assessment is currently underway to address regulatory barriers and other obstacles facing women in forest product value chains and provide opportunities to develop support mechanisms and capacity building that actively support women’s engagement in the forest sector.   |
| Integrated Conservation of Biodiversity and Forests (ICBF)              | Luang Namtha and Bokeo      | No specific GAP was prepared but the Project recognizes the importance of gender in the sustainable management of forests but takes a somewhat limited overall livelihood approach                   | 2015-22 | Women in the project villages are being supported in their attempts to promote family planning, improvements to village water supply systems and more sustainable management of NTFPs. These activities are being supported based on the priorities to village women rather than simply being extracted from the project design documents.   |
| Sustainable Forest Management and REDD+ Support Project (F-REDD)        | Luang Prabang and Oudomxay. | JICA did not prepare a specific GAP nor was it entirely explicit when the project was first launched but in the last 18 months it has become more sensitive to gender mainstreaming issues           | 2014-25 | Training sessions of REDD+ and the role of women in not only the sustainable management of existing forests but the positive contribution they can play to the reduction of carbon emissions through being actively involved in ER-P activities.   |
| Scaling-Up Participatory Sustainable Forest Management Project (SUPSFM) | 4 provinces                 | The WB did not prepare a specific but instead a CEF that was designed in part to over the exclusion of village women from the project initially and ensure that benefits would also accrue to women. | 2013-19 | Among the main activities that were designed was support for the Participatory Land Use Planning, Community Action Plan and Forest Management Plan that would also benefit women, especially ethnic minority women. One of the significant issues that that SUPSFM had to address was the consequences of village amalgamation involving different ethnic groups and the fact that often these different groups did not recognize GoL appointees. SUPSFM decided where such issues could not be resolved it would not implement the project in that village. This may well also be a potential issue for the ER-P. |

| Project  | Province  | Gender Action Plan  | Status                        | Main Activities and any Potential Issues  |
|--|---|---|-------------------------------|---|
| Agriculture Competitiveness project  | Sayabouri                                       | The WB prepared a GAP with tangible targets and monitoring indicators designed and mainstreamed into the PRF, PAD and SPF.  | 2018-25                       | This project is designed to enhance irrigation services and water productivity, support agriculture commercialization, and enhance climate resilience. There are three main components: 1) improvement of irrigation structures; 2) establishment and reorganization of WUAs; and 3) capacity development on irrigation O&M. Small numbers of ethnic minority women are targeted but this project is located primarily in lowland areas close to the Mekong River and the primary beneficiaries will be Lao-Tai women.                      |
| Second Lao Environment and Social Project LENS II  | Part ER-P                                       | As part of the CEF the WB has designed a series of actions to ensure that women receive similar benefits to those of men including restoration of livelihoods where access to natural resources has been or will be restricted.             | 2014-21                       | Women in the project-area-of-impact have been or will be consulted and their concerns addressed, trained on chosen livelihoods that would restore their income, participate in community group meetings, FGDs, and planning and implementation processes, and represented equally on Grievance Redress Committees.  |
| Partnerships for Irrigation and Commercialization of Smallholder Agriculture (PICSA)                           | Part ER-P                                       | IFAD did not prepare a GAP or similar but in design documentation states very clearly that women also have to be targeted and a result should be somewhat more empowered than they are at present. Assumes LWU will play an important role. | 2020-26                       | The project is designed to ensure there are equal opportunities for women and men, that women should be increasingly empowered in the context of decision-making, and there should be training in family nutrition and technical and business skills. The cornerstone of this project from a gender perspective is Nutrition Sensitive Agriculture and Rural Development interventions.   |
| Sustainable Rural Infrastructure Watershed Management Sector Project   | Part ER-P<br>Luang Prabang, Houaphan, Sayabouri | ADB did not prepare a standalone GAP for this Project and instead classified it as an Effective Gender Mainstreaming Project as per its Initial Social and Poverty Analysis   | Yet to be approved by the ADB | Largely based on civil infrastructure development facilities in the watersheds of forested area but has been designed to ensure equality of project benefits and opportunity sharing, systematic approach to reduce gender inequalities in the project areas, targeted approach for women, collection of gender disaggregated data, and increased representation of women in decision-making at all levels. Problem is that what the ADB is “defining” as “opportunity sharing” is not the same thing as “benefit sharing” as per the ER-P. |
| GCF Implementation of the Lao PDR ER-P through improved governance and sustainable forest landscape management | Whole ER-P<br>28 priority districts             | GIZ in late February 2019 submitted its newly designed GAP to the GCF. It has not been designed quite the same way that the WB designs GAPs but there are synergies between what the GIZ Team has undertaken and GIZ.                       | 2019 -                        | Generally, funds and supports the ER-P components and activities. IFC project SGs generally conforms with the WB but may require an MOU as implemented with GIZ assistance and funds and other donor funds (BMZ, JICA and private sector) Joint approach on project implementation with ADB and IFA project noted above. GIZ and the Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) will sign a Financial Agreement according to GIZ standard operating procedures for the EPF, in its capacity to act as a project Executing Entity                   |

### 2.13 *The Green Climate Fund*

Because GIZ is a key stakeholder and has been tasked with securing financing from the GCF it is necessary to examine what it has proposed to the GCF. Thus, to this end the GIZ Team has reviewed most of the main issues GIZ has identified to ensure that there are synergies where possible between the ER-P Action Plan and the GIZ GAP. 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.

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.

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 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". Of course, men in the ER-P provinces also have "traditional knowledge" that should be worth keeping. The real issue is that is whether or not technical forestry experts know of, understand fully or even partially, or are even prepared to accept the efficacy of this "traditional knowledge". Experience suggests less well-trained technical forestry experts with very limited knowledge and exposure to social forestry issues tend to ignore "traditional knowledge" with what the GID Team prefers to refer to as "indigenous" or "local" knowledge because use of the term "traditional" can result in the disempowerment of ethnic minority groups whose socio-cultural universe is not thoroughly integrated with that of the dominant cultural narratives.

With regard to the MoU on ASEAN Cooperation in Agriculture and Forest Products Promotion Scheme, Lao PDR 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 the broad potential to be taken up, but do not form part of any guiding principles of the Club or the agreement itself. However, the Lao PDR cannot be singled out for lack of gender responsiveness in this respect because none of the other ASEAN countries take gender and forestry issues very seriously either.

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. This unfortunately is the present situation with the ER-P because it is a requirement of the Carbon Fund and the WB that Lao PDR demonstrate how it has embedded gender-responsive measures into its ER-P.

The Lao PDR 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 ethnic 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. In a 2018 gender analysis, the GIZ-FLEGT project 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. A gender imbalance at decision-maker levels, combined with generally low gender knowledge, is a significant barrier to successful integration of gender aspects into the Lao PDR forestry sector as a whole.

The Eight National Socio-Economic Development Plan (NSEDP): 2016-2020, as the Lao PDR's 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 that can be leveraged by the ER-P, 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". However, these specific targets are rather vague and inchoate and do not *ipso facto* inspire a great deal of confidence although it must also be understood that these are guiding principles only as is typical with most SEDPs in transitional societies.

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 PRAPs. GoL 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 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. They stated to the GIZ Study Team and later reiterated to the GID Team 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. However, the GOL partners stated to the GIZ Study Team although not to the GID Team that future guidelines and regulations need to provide concrete guidance on the integration of gender actions with the with activities that not only meet the objectives of the specific project or program but are also gender-responsive not that many of these partners have any idea as to what they maybe.

Thus, the interviews demonstrated that the Provincial and District Forestry agencies might possess only very 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 epitomizes the systemic exclusion of women from effective decision-making and if not addressed does not bode very well for greater levels of gender inclusion.

The most salient point raised by those who were interviewed according to the GIZ Study was for it to be coherent not only with its other study findings but also what the GID Team was able to glean: 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. This requires a political will that the WB has to stress to the GoL in the context of the ER-P, which is made abundantly clear in the revised SESA but was only partially addressed in the original SESA.

## 3 Policy, Political and Institutional Support for Gender Issues

### 3.1 Policy

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 a step in the right direction but it generally lacks any real power to implement projects and programs and has only very limited access to funding, which is unfortunate but is the extant reality.

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 project ("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 quite good, the gender division remains understaffed and therefore with low absorption capacity. 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 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 managerial leadership positions at the Central Level but this hardly a game-changer for women in the ER-P villages because the objective is to have at least 10% of positions filled by women, 20% at the district level and up to 20% of LPRP 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 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. 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. But none of this research focuses on social and environmental issues that impact upon women living in rural villages that is either directly or indirectly linked to natural resource management. However, as the GID Team is also arguing in this Report unfortunately in many of the ER-P villages, especially in the non-Lao-Tai ethnic villages the LWU is not considered to be the voice of most women. Thus, constitutional mandates to one side there needs to be a more focused attempt by the LWU in relation to the ER-P if it really wants to assist women in the ER-P villages.

The current National Socio-Economic Development Plan foresees a 70% LWU membership of women 15 years and older. GIZ argues 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 GID Team argues that GIZ has overstated the reach of the LWU and instead argues that targets set by the NSEDP should be kept in mind but given the TOR for this study the focus has to be on what groundwork can be laid during the 12 months following the signing of the ERPA between the GoL and the WB.

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, according to the GIZ study villagers interviewed stated that the LFNC is a key player in organizing activities related to forest protection and resource management. However, once more that is not what the GID Team found out through interviewing most of the women in the villagers it accessed. The LFNC along with the LWU as mass organizations are systemically captured by elites at all levels for the most part. To deny the existence of “elite capture” is to ignore the evidence that can be quite readily gleaned by listening to what village women have to say. This is strongly emphasized elsewhere in this Study.

There is a quite 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 GoL 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. Organizations, Non-Profit Associations and NGOs which are active in the nexus of forestry and gender in Laos are: RECOFTC - The Center for People and Forests; Green Community Alliance (GCA); Green Community Development Association (GCDA); Love Natural Resources Association (LNRA); and, 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 and education); Participatory Development Training Center (PADETC; participatory community development); and, Association for Development of Women and Legal Education (ADWLE; law and gender).

The GID Team agrees with the GIZ assessment that 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 GoL partners, CSOs and private sector representatives focused solely on the identification of potential inputs to promote gender equality in the Lao forestry sector. MAF’s Strategic Plan to restore forest cover to 70% of the country’s landscape before 2020 (which is actually unrealizable) includes the goal of having at least 30% of all Government positions in conservation work held by women which, is a goal strongly promoted by RECOFTC. That can be seen in RECOFTC’s Country Engagement Strategy for the Lao PDR from 2013-2018 that focuses on social inclusion and gender equity through a rights-based approach, which has been continued with its recently announced strategy for 2018-2023. The GIZ Study argues that this close collaboration leads to the assumption that RECOFTC has valuable and valued cooperation experience with the DoF which can be utilized by other programs. But of course, the GID Team based on its experiences in at least some of the ER-P villages would adopt a cautious approach as per the Action Plan prepared as part of this Study.



## 4 Priorities of Women in the ER-P Villages

### 4.1 *Priorities*

The following Table 21 captures the priorities of women by ethnicity in the ER-P Villages that the GID Team visited. It may come as a surprise to previous studies that focused on issues associated with dignity and respect by local and provincial authorities but obviously for the three upland ethnic groups there appears less dignity and respect than women are hoping for. This is an issue of the “moral economy” rather than the “political economy” of rationality. Many women told the GID Team that local and provincial authorities simply do not listen to them unless they are from the same ethnic background and even then, the interactions are largely gratuitous and patronizing. These women are not “feminists” (they have no idea generally what “feminism” entails but of course neither do most officials) but they do generally know a lot more about the forests than local authorities or technical experts as they have been living in or depending on the forests for far longer than local authorities or technical experts. Therefore, one positive step forward from the outset would be for “owners and managers” of the forests to carefully listen to what local women have to say. Will they listen? It requires a “cultural change” but the ER-P may assist such a change. There is no need to dally with obtuse concepts such as the “Theory of Change” that baffles everyone but to “cut-to-the-chase” and LISTEN to local women. In fact, the cornerstone of the Action Plan is to LISTEN rather than TALK or TELL

Year-round food security a significant minority do not consider this to be a priority because for over 30 years they have generally achieved this outcome as demonstrated by the poverty assessments that have been undertaken in the Lao PDR. Unfortunately, the other ethnic groups still think this is a very important priority because despite studies that might suggest they have achieved full household food security this is not what the GID Team found through empirical investigations in the ER-P villages. How this might be achieved will to some extent depend on how effective climate-smart agricultural interventions turn out to be but it is important to recognize that the ER-P by itself can only contribute but not fully resolve the lack of full household food security. Affordable access to health and education is prioritized by all women but the solutions belong to the same genre as full household food security. The ER-P cannot guarantee this outcome although it can assist by leveraging where possible other projects and programs. The same applies to improved transport connectivity but the GID Team reject the conservationist logic that improved transport connectivity spells the “death-knell” of the existing natural resource base.

**Table 21 Livelihood Preferences of Young Women in ER-P Villages (%)**

| Activitiy   | Lao-Thai | Mom-Khmer | Hmong-Mien | Sino-Tibetan |
|---|----------|-----------|------------|--------------|
| Seeking to Work in SEZs in the Lao PDR                  | 35       | 25        | 10         | 5            |
| Temporary Labor Migration to Neighboring Countries      | 65       | 50        | 70         | 85           |
| Prepared to Work in Vientiane or Other Larger Towns     | 50       | 85        | 30         | 15           |
| Develop Own Agricultural Cropping Land and Agroforestry | 45       | 20        | 10         | 10           |
| Derive Local Livelihood Primarily from the Land         | 25       | 15        | 30         | 20           |
| No Clear Ideas at Present but Not Satisfied with Life   | 35       | 15        | 30         | 15           |

*Table note: During the FGDs participants were afforded the opportunity to provide more than one option and also to state whether they had clear ideas to their preferences as expressed to other participants*

The issuance of permanent LUCs will have to await the passage of the new Land Law because in the present context such an issuance is reported as problematic. GIZ claim in Houaphan a 70 % issuance rate but this is neither good enough nor does it guarantee permanency. Women need permanent LUCs for agricultural land and production forestry land that they are accessing and would like to control. These same women also argue that village forestry land should be vested in the whole village and not just the entourage surrounding the Village Head Person, who is appointed by the GoL and not elected by the villagers themselves. Even though these women do not use the term “elite capture” during FGDs they were able to explain how such a process works in their own village: these women are neither “stupid” or “ignorant”!

The Lao-Tai women did not place too much of a priority on robust restrictions on outsiders harvesting NTFPs as did the Hmong-Mien and Sino-Tibetan ethnic women’s groups but part of the reason for this lack of prioritization – at least according to the Mon-Khmer – is that because these other three ethnic groups are not inherently opposed to collecting NTFPs wherever they can. Whether this is wholly correct is difficult to prove but it is an observation that should be reported for further investigation during the preparation of BSPs. Likewise, varying percentages of women do not like their own communities being “blamed” for illegal logging but are cowered into silence by a non-transparent “deforestation regime” in and around the villages’ they reside in. To ignore this issue of “silent intimidation” is doing an injustice to these women and flies in the face of UNFCC and WB Safeguards.

The last priority relates to the ability and willingness of the GoL to supply or at least ensure that the private sector supplies quality inputs. Indeed, many of the Chinese investors have been doing this but only to households that have entered into contract farming arrangements with such investors and the story being told here in this Report is that only some households benefited in the past. The Action Plan, as mentioned above, is looking to climate-smart interventions and based on what women told the GID Team this is one activity where there is likely to be a consensus. However, in the final analysis it is not an issue of just one priority being ranked as the top priority and all other priorities of secondary importance but generally the priorities in the above table are all priorities that should be treated as holistically as possible,

#### 4.2 *Action Plan for Gender Integration for the ER-P*

Below in Table 22 is the Action Plan based on the GID Team’s analysis of the extant gender issues in the ER-P Accounting Area and they complement and build upon the analysis in the revamped SESA and the ESMF. Typically, the WB has referred to the Action Plan as the GAP and there is no reason why this Action Plan cannot be retitled the GAP if so desired by the GoL and WB but for the purposes of this Study the GID Team has decided to retain the term Action Plan as per the ToR that was agreed upon in late May 2017.

**Table 22 Gender Action Plan**

| Action  | Interventions   | Pre-ERPA   | Post-ERPA  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <b>Action 1</b><br><b>Agreement on Participatory Approaches to ER-P</b> | <b>Targeted Interventions:</b> National REDD+ Program secures agreement with each of the ER-P Provinces that where possible and practical a formal commitment will be made to the adoption of participatory approaches to ER-P implementation that will also be socially and gender inclusive, especially of marginalized forest-dependent village women. | Buy-in based on GAP is necessary from all implementing agencies but ERPA not | For the 12 months following the signing of ERPA it will be necessary to analyse what |

| Action  | Interventions  | Pre-ERPA  | Post-ERPA  |
|---|--|---|--|
| <b>Implementation</b>   | <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> Lao People’s Revolutionary Party, National and Provincial REDD+ Offices, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry, (Department of Forestry and Division for the Advancement of Women), Provincial and Department of Forestry in six ER-P provinces, Lao Front for National Construction and Lao Women’s Union. If possible civil society groups or organisations with a knowledge of and experience in participatory approaches that could be replicated for the ER-P will be invited to participate.</p> <p><b>Estimated Cost:</b> It is proposed that the National REDD+ Office facilitate a 2-day workshop in Luang Prabang with one participant from each of the Vientiane-based ER-P entities, four representatives from each of the six ER-P provinces, and ten women including five ethnic minority women from each of the ethnic minority groups in the ER-P provinces. (Travel expenses: surface and air of approximate US\$3,500; Accommodation and Meal Expenses for 40 participants of approximately US\$8,000; and, Facilitation and Miscellaneous Expenses of US\$5,000 for a total of US\$16,500 plus contingencies of 5%: US\$17,350 to be sourced from the existing FCPF-REDD+ grant from the WB to the GoL).</p> <p><b>Monitoring Indicators:</b> 1) Targeted representatives participate in the workshop of whom 70% should be women; 2) Districts and villages identified for the Socio-Economic and Environmental Resource Needs Assessment (SERNA); and, 3) Modalities for SERNA agreed upon.</p>  | contingent on this except where safeguard issues are triggered.   | agreements have been reached to ensure they are gender responsive.   |
| <p><b>Action 2</b></p> <p><b>Facilitation of SERNA at Selected Localities in the ER-P Accounting Area</b></p> | <p><b>Targeted Interventions:</b> Identify at least one district in each of the six ER-P provinces where it would be practical based on existing processes of land management (both agricultural and forestry) to undertake a Socio-Economic and Environmental Resource Needs Assessment that targets local forest-dependent villages and especially women within these villages and households headed by women.</p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> The Lao People’s Revolutionary Party at district, village cluster and individual level, DAFO, LFNC, and LWU who will work with all village households to ensure socially inclusive SERNA.</p> <p><b>Estimated Cost:</b> Two facilitator’s fees and expenses for 30 days at approximate US\$9,000; participation fees of local official and mass organizations for 5 days at approximate US\$2,500; participation fees of villagers (for loss of income) based on 150 villagers over 16 years of age for 15 days of approximate US\$15,000 (includes meals and travel), miscellaneous expenses of approximate US\$1,500 and contingency of 5%: US\$17,115 for each SERNA. Thus, total for six SERNA would be approximately US\$102,690. It needs to be noted that in neighboring Vietnam each SERNA leading to the establishment of a Forest Management Entity has cost between US\$45,000 and US\$110,000). This is to be sourced from the existing grant to the GoL by the FCPF-REDD+ from the WB pre-ERPA and post-ERPA from the advance paid to the GoL by the Carbon Fund supported by the WB.</p> <p><b>Monitoring Indicators:</b> 1) SERNA involving all women in the villages identified during the Luang Prabang Workshop; 2) Women involved in deforestation activities targeted to see what</p> | <p><b>Pre-ERPA</b></p> <p>Villages to be identified will be undertaken at the Luang Prabang Workshop based on an assessment at to which villages have the demonstrated “absorptive capacity” for women to be actively involved.</p> | <p><b>Post-ERPA</b></p> <p>Villages to be identified will be contingent on meetings at the provincial, district, village cluster and individual village level with the most important criteria in the context of gender a demonstration that women are able and willing to participate in the SERNA.</p> |

| Action   | Interventions  | Pre-ERPA   | Post-ERPA   |
|--|--|--|---|
|  | <p>interventions could reduce such activities; and, 3) Agreements to establish forest management entities in 18 sites within 12 months.</p>  |  |   |
| <p><b>Action 3</b><br/><b>Establishment of Local Forest Management Entity</b></p>            | <p><b>Targeted Activities:</b> On the assumption that there is an agreement based on the SERNA reached between forest managers and forest users a local forest management entity will be established to ensure that the objectives of the ER-P are achieved. As part of this process benefit sharing plans will be prepared to take advantage of carbon payments based on the MRV process that local women members of the management entity will also participate in. It is anticipated that such payments will be made for a range of ER-P related activities including forest protection activities, targeting households, groups or villages contributing to deforestation and degradation to a greater extent than other households, groups or villages, and resolving issues such as poor demarcated boundaries.</p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> The Lao People’s Revolutionary Party at district, village cluster and individual level, DAFO, LFNC, and LWU who will work with all village households that agree to participate in the forest management entity. If possible, a civil society organization could assist with developing this entity but it would need to demonstrate very clearly from past performance that it understands gender and forestry issues and it is able and willing to work with other stakeholders to ensure the highest possible degree of gender responsiveness.</p> <p><b>Estimated Costs:</b> For Pre-ERPA entities there should be additional cost of approximately US\$5,000 on a per annum basis with Year 1 being funded by the FCPF-REDD+ WB fund. However, for Post-ERPA entities they will initially be funded by the Advance Grant that the GoL has requested from the Carbon Fund. Thus, realistically the estimated cost over the first 12 months for the six SERNA village sites would be US\$30,000 and Post-ERPA for the other nine villages the approximate cost would be US\$60,000. Total cost US\$90,000.</p> <p><b>Monitoring Indicators:</b> 1) Number of Benefit Sharing Plans initiated by local village women signed; 2) Effectiveness of measures such as boundary demarcation; and, 3) Percentage of women involved in ER-P activities including forest protection work and MRV activities.</p> | <p><b>Pre-ERPA</b></p> <p>It may not be possible to achieve the outcomes of this activity prior to the ERPA for all six sites selected but ideally at least one should be completed.</p> | <p><b>Post-ERPA</b></p> <p>Dependent on the outcome of the Pre-ERPA forest management entities within 12 months of the ERPA being signed there should be at least 3 of these entities in each of the 6 ER-P Provinces</p> |
| <p><b>Action 4</b><br/><b>Identification of Climate-Smart Agricultural Interventions</b></p> | <p><b>Targeted Activities:</b> It is necessary to identify climate-smart agricultural interventions that not only ensure a greater degree of food security but also the possibility of generating income that cannot be generated at present while also simultaneously reducing the pressure to clear existing forest cover for agricultural cropping. The intention is also to reduce on a voluntary basis the forms of shifting cultivation that are still undertaken in upland areas. However, it is also necessary to identify with women what are “climate-smart” interventions as these are often vaguely defined and are of a more generic nature.</p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> All women who agree to participate in the ER-P should be involved but where women do not agree to be involved</p>  | <p><b>Pre-ERPA</b></p> <p>Villages to be identified will be undertaken at the Luang Prabang Workshop based on an assessment at to which villages have the</p>                            | <p><b>Post-ERPA</b></p> <p>Villages to be identified will be contingent on meetings at the provincial, district, village cluster and individual village level with the most important</p>                                 |

| Action   | Interventions   | Pre-ERPA   | Post-ERPA  |
|--|---|--|--|
|  | <p>initially for whatever reason they should have the option to participate if at a later date they think the ER-P interventions could work for them. However, initially with grant financing the ER-P needs to identify those households that contribute for whatever reason to deforestation for agricultural cropping purposes and work with them. <b>The</b> Lao People’s Revolutionary Party at district, village cluster and individual level, DAFO, LFNC, and LWU who will work with women. It also necessary to identify a specialist with a demonstrated working knowledge of climate-smart agricultural interventions in the upland areas of Mainland Southeast Asia.</p> <p><b>Estimated Costs:</b> Approximately US\$2,000 per village is likely to be required as an upfront investment that would serve as a revolving fund to target all women in the village. A specialist would need to be mobilized at an estimated cost of US\$12,000 per person month worked for up to 6 months and thus US\$72,000. The advance payment from the ER-P could be utilized for such purposes although at six of the villages if they have agreed to be part of a forest management entity could draw on the existing FCPF-REDD+ grant to fund such activities. Post ERPA and once advance payment is made the ER-P would cover these costs. Initial total of US\$132,000 plus 5% contingency. Thus, US\$138,600.</p> <p><b>Monitoring Indicators:</b> 1) Impact of grants on livelihoods of women involved in non-sustainable forest activities; 2) Percentage of women electing to practice climate-smart agricultural and forestry activities; and, 3) Replication and up-scaling in villages over the initial 12 months of the Action Plan (excluding pre-ERPA phase).</p> | <p>demonstrated “absorptive capacity” for women to be actively involved. But post SERNA also based on agreement to participate in the local forest management entity.</p>  | <p>criteria in the context of gender a demonstration that women are able and willing to participate in the SERNA.</p>  |
| <p><b>Action 5</b><br/><b>Strengthening Village’s Legal Rights to Use and Benefit from Forest Land</b></p> | <p><b>Targeted Activities:</b> The new “Land Law” that has now acquired the status of a LPRP Resolution is likely to recognize and protect land use rights held by individuals, legal entities, collective entities and customary rights including in relation to non-allocated forest land. However, all proposals to date do not clearly specify that women possess the legal right to use and benefit from forest land as this is vested in the Village Leadership, which for the most part with the exception of the LWU involve very few women. It is being proposed that all different types of land tenure explicitly and legally establish the rights of women not just the village to avoid the continuing capture of forest land by primarily men at the village level.</p> <p>How tenure reforms and certifications can have an impact on women’s rights and access to forest resources</p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> Lao People’s Revolutionary Party (proposed new Land Law likely to be a Party Resolution rather than a “law” passed by the National Assembly), MONRE (Department of Land Administration), MAF (Department of Forestry and Division for the Advancement of Women), Provincial and District (those in the ER-P Accounting Area) Administrations in each of the six ER-P provinces, Village Clusters, Village Households, LFNC and LWU.</p> <p><b>Estimated Costs:</b> There are no initial costs involved because this is a longer-term intervention although as part of the SERNA it will</p>  | <p><b>Pre-ERPA</b></p> <p>Process begins during the SERNA in the targeted villages but ERPA not contingent on legal recognition because at present there is no legislative or political authority to legitimize such legal rights.</p> | <p><b>Post-ERPA</b></p> <p>Whether the LPRP Resolution on the “New Land Law” will be accepted by the Central Committee within the next 12 months is somewhat problematic. However, by the end of 12 months in the ER-P villages it will be possible to quantify what rights women have to use and benefit from existing forest land (especially production</p> |

| Action  | Interventions   | Pre-ERPA   | Post-ERPA  |
|---|---|--|--|
|   | <p>be necessary to assess existing forms of land, both forestry (especially forest production) and agricultural land.</p> <p><b>Monitoring Indicators:</b> 1) Quantitative assessment of different types of land tenure in ER-P villages and 2) Recognition by LPRP of recommendations made by ER-P for strengthening female villager’s rights to use and benefit from forest land.</p>   |  | <p>forest land) in anticipation of this “New Land Law” being accepted by the LPRP.</p>   |
| <p><b>Action 6</b></p> <p><b>Enhanced Gender Responsiveness in ER-P Management Activities</b></p> | <p><b>Targeted Activities:</b> The ER-P PMU at the national and provincial levels will need to ensure that gender inclusive actions that will benefit women based on the GAP are actually implemented. It will also be necessary to ensure that the suite of safeguards (Resettlement Policy Framework, Ethnic Minority Planning Framework, Environmental and Social Management Plan and Process Framework) are implemented in ways that also safeguard specific gender interests. To this end each of the PMUs should have a target of 30% of their staff being female with at least 10% of the female staff being from ethnic minority backgrounds.</p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> All female beneficiaries/participants of the ER-P in general but specifically women who are working in each of the ER-P PMUs.</p> <p><b>Estimated Costs:</b> The average monthly salary for managerial positions in PMUs is US\$565 (excluding allowances) but ERPA there would be no payments made because the ER-P PMUs are yet to be established. But assuming at the national level there will be at least three female staff appointed and in each of the provincial PMUs one female staff appointed over 12 months following the signing of the ERPA the total estimated cost would be US\$59,245.</p> <p><b>Monitoring Indicators:</b> 1) Percentage of women appointed to managerial positions in the ER-PMUs; 2) Assessment of GAP outcomes in the first 12 months post-ERPA; and, 3) Resolution of safeguard grievances lodged by village women relating to the ER-P.</p> | <p><b>Pre-ERPA</b></p> <p>No action because the ERPA yet to be signed.</p> | <p><b>Post-ERPA</b></p> <p>Initial 12 months any necessary site-specific Resettlement Plans and Ethnic Minority Development Plans that are prepared demonstrate the necessary degree of gender responsiveness and reflect the provisions of the ER-P Gender Action Plan.</p> |
| <p><b>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST OF ACTION PLAN FOR ACTIONS 1 TO 6</b></p>                              |   | <p><b>US\$408,350</b><br/><b>(LKP3,497,120,000)</b></p>                    |  |
| <p><b>Proposed Additional Actions</b></p>   |   |  |  |
| <p><b>Action 7</b></p> <p><b>Need to involve Women in Policy Processes and Decisions</b></p>      | <p><b>Targeted Activities:</b> Need to improve ways how women are involved in policy processes and decisions related to climate mitigation and forest devolution; and how to support women movements as they work with emerging and evolving policy in projects. For example, improving women’s standing in the proposed new Forest Law and Land Law so that they can be given equal rights.</p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> The ER-P at the national level working with the key GoL ministries (DNRE, MOA, and MEE), the LPRP (because at present it is in direct control of the Land Law). But NAFES needs to be involved it developed the Forestry Strategy to the Year 2020 of the Lao PDR and this strategy is quite reasonable in the context of a gender-responsive approach to both agricultural and forestry</p>   | <p>No Action Prior to the Signing of the ERPA</p>                          | <p>Initial 12 months the ER-P needs to embark on a series of iterative actions, including applied research by independent local researchers</p>  |

| Action   | Interventions  | Pre-ERPA  | Post-ERPA  |
|--|--|---|--|
|  | <p>land issues. It also sensible to have the LWU involved because GIP Team have noted that it has not demonstrated a deep understanding of gender and forestry issues.</p> <p><b>Estimated Costs:</b> Approximately US\$36,000 to cover researchers' expenses and meetings among key stakeholders both at the national level and in at least one of the ER-P provinces (possibly Luang Prabang or Luang Namtha)</p> <p><b>Monitoring Indicators:</b> 1) Development of Stakeholder Engagement Plan that demonstrates how village women can be involved in ER-P activities associated with climate mitigation and forest devolution; 2) Evaluation of initial participation of village women in ER-P activities (% from different ethnic groups and poor households; and, 3) Specific clauses in the New Forest Law that effectively embody gender equality.</p>  |   | <p>with a demonstrated capacity to understand gender and forestry issues.</p>  |
| <p><b>Action 8</b><br/><b>Women must be Involved in Discussions on Climate Variability</b></p> | <p><b>Targeted Activities:</b> Women are heavily involved in agriculture and need to find ways on how they should be involved in discussion on what are the gender impacts of climate variability (as opposed to climate smart crops)</p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> Women in selected villages ensuring that ethnicity and poverty criteria are utilized, village development committee, PAFO and DAFO, VWU, and where clusters of villages are targeted the Khumban</p> <p><b>Estimated Costs:</b> Based on 12 villages and stakeholder involvement (also includes village women who give up their time) the costs should be absorbed under Action 4 because they are related.</p> <p><b>Monitoring Activities:</b> 1) Village women's specific understanding of climate variability; 2) Capacity of PAFO, DAFO and VWU to understand climate variability; and, 3) Data disaggregated by district and province.</p>   | <p>No Action Prior to the Signing of the ERPA</p> | <p>Initial 12 months consultations need to be facilitated among women from different ethnic groups in each of the 6 ER-P Provinces</p>   |
| <p><b>Action 9</b><br/><b>Improve PLUP/LUP Processes</b></p>                                   | <p><b>Targeted Activities:</b> Women are often not actively included in decision-making steps of land use planning. Women and men have the same rights to land. Land tenure is often not secure in Lao and as an attempt to improve this LUP/PLUP aims to the try to add some form of security by assigning land through a land use plan. The reality is, however, that security of land tenure is not much improved in legal terms as no title is issued and women are not much involved in the PULP/LUP process. Therefore, need to introduce and improve ways to involve women in this important process.</p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> Women in selected villages ensuring that ethnicity and poverty criteria are utilized, village development committee, PAFO and DAFO, VWU, and where clusters of villages are targeted the Khumban</p> <p><b>Estimated Costs:</b> US\$25,000 per village based on GIZ estimates in Houaphan Province for a total of US\$288,000. Funding for this would need to come from the advance funding that the GoL will be seeking from the Carbon Fund as per the ER-PD.</p> | <p>No Action Prior to the Signing of the ERPA</p> | <p>In the initial 12 months the ER-P needs to identify 1 village in each of the 6 ER-P provinces to trial genuinely participatory land use planning and assess to what extent this can be replicated and upscaled.</p> |

| Action  | Interventions   | Pre-ERPA  | Post-ERPA  |
|---|---|---|--|
|   | <p><b>Monitoring Activities:</b> 1) Hectares covered by PLUP activities; 2) Number of plots registered either in the name of women or conjointly with spouse; and, 3) Number of land titles issued in targeted areas.</p>   |   |  |
| <p><b>Action 10</b><br/><b>Women's Involvement in Markets and how can Access to Markets be Improved</b></p> | <p><b>Targeted Activities:</b> Action to find out how to overcome the constraints (and what are the constraints) for women's involvement in markets and how can access to market be improved</p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> Village women either currently involved in trading activities, especially of NTFPs, and women who are seeking to be involved, trading intermediaries and wholesalers and retailers.</p> <p><b>Estimated Costs:</b> As this will involve some cross-border visits and intra-district and intra-provincial visits it is estimated for all of the 6 ER-P provinces upwards of US\$100,000 needs to be allocated. This could be sourced from the advance payment sought by the GoL but could be deducted from the payment of carbon credits during implementation of the ER-P.</p> <p><b>Monitoring Activities:</b> 1) Number of cross-border and intra-district and intra-provincial visits undertaken by village women; 2) Increase in quantities of NTFPs sold to trading intermediaries; and, 3) Price increase/decrease as a result of closer linkages with the market.</p> | <p>No Action Prior to the Signing of the ERPA</p> | <p>Activities to be undertaken that involve women from the villages, trading intermediaries and wholesalers and retailers in district, provincial and cross-border markets in Thailand, Vietnam and China.</p> |
| <p><b>Action 11</b><br/><b>Need to Improve Women's Management of NTFPs</b></p>                              | <p><b>Targeted Activities:</b> Find ways to improve management of NTFPs with women "collectors" having more of a say. What kinds of products harvested and overall access arrangements and do different proportions of men and women in user groups influence how forests are managed?</p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> Village women (and men) who are either directly or indirectly involved with the "collecting" of NTFPs.</p> <p><b>Estimated Costs:</b> To be absorbed under Action 3 because it is planned that the ensuing BSPs will include the more sustainable management of NTFPs.</p> <p><b>Monitoring Activities:</b> 1) Women perceive they have "greater voice" than in the past; 2) Kinds of NTFPs harvested and improvements to overall access arrangements; and, 3) Improved management of NTFPs than prior to this Action.</p>   | <p>No Action Prior to the Signing of the ERPA</p> | <p>As part of BSP that will be developed in the first 12 months in 3 villages in each of the 6 ER-P provinces.</p>   |
| <p><b>Action 12</b><br/><b>Summarising Progress on Gender Issues – Taking Stock of the Situation</b></p>    | <p><b>Targeted Activities:</b> Action to support a summary of the issues facing women and previous work in the ER-P provinces. What gender related topics and themes have been of interest in the past decade and what new investments are needed to keep abreast with new demands in the forest sector?</p> <p><b>Stakeholders:</b> MAF in general, PAFOs and DAFOs, VWU, National Assembly, and LPRP.</p> <p><b>Estimated Costs:</b> Lump sum of US\$30,000 to undertake and publish the independent research.</p> <p><b>Monitoring Activities:</b> 1) Similarities and differences in gender and forestry issues facing women; 2) Extant causes of changes in</p>  | <p>No Action Prior to the Signing of the ERPA</p> | <p>Independent research commissioned by the ER-P to provide an evidence-driven analysis of past, present and future issues</p>   |



| Action                                       | Interventions  | Pre-ERPA                                    | Post-ERPA |
|--|--|---|-----------|
|  | these issues and outcomes for women; 3) Changes necessary that reflect new demands in the forest sector. |   |           |
| <b>TOTAL ESTIMATED COST FOR ACTIONS 7-12</b> |  | <b>US\$454.000</b><br><b>(LKP3.888,067)</b> |           |

### 4.3 *Conclusions*

The Action Plan prepared by the GID Team in conjunction with potential stakeholders at the village, district and provincial level based on the empirical socio-economic and environmental conditions found in the villages that were accessed during fieldwork on an intermittent basis from June 2018 until February 2019 is considered to be the most doable Action Plan possible within the 12 months of the ERPA being signed. It is also based on the updated analysis undertaken for the SESA, which as has been argued in this Study and was recognized by the WB in the first instance was quite inadequate in terms of being gender responsive. Additionally, the ESMF that has been recently completed has also been utilized to ensure there are effective synergies between all instruments required for the ER-P in the Lao PDR. The timeline that has been necessary to comply has been imposed by the World Bank as per the ToR that the GID Team agreed to but the Action Plan also needs buy-in at the national level to ensure that it becomes an integral component of the ER-P. There are some activities incorporated in the Action Plan that may present some difficulties (especially relating to the vexed issue of secure access to and use of forest land, forms of management that village women could effectively participate in, and equitable and transparent forms of benefit sharing for carbon and non-carbon benefits) and the GoL and the GID Team are seeking to ensure that these difficulties are resolved prior to the ERPA being signed between the GoL and the WB.

It has been recognized by the GID Team that the ER-P Accounting Area is not as socially and environmentally as homogenous as it might appear on land-use maps or as implied in the ER-PD that was accepted into the Carbon Fund in June 2018. The issue is that the ER-P will be dealing with women not only from quite different ethnic groups but that the approach of these different ethnic groups to the forests in the ER-P Accounting Area required the ER-P to adopt a strategic approach that recognizes such differences. For instance, primarily lowland Lao women who also use the forests have quite a different worldview to the Khmu or even the Hmong or the Yao, even when some of the latter three groups can be found relying on both lowland and upland based livelihood activities. It can also be seen how different systems of inheritance have and will continue to impact upon women. The initial SESA did not address such complex issues but unfortunately, they are issues that have to be addressed. Similarly, how forest resources are managed or sometimes mis-managed have to be seen through the lenses of ethnicity and not just rural location but the Action Plan has been developed to try and build upon what all village women in the ER-P villages might have in common irrespective as to their ethnicity. However, the GID Team has also recognized the salience of poverty and vulnerability and as such there is a complicated melange of gender, ethnicity, and poverty issues that has influenced the Action Plan.

Evidence from consultations with over 400 women in selected ER-P villages of the six provinces clearly suggests that few women know anything about the Lao PDR REDD+ Program let alone about the ER-P. This might not be totally surprising but it does not auger well for village women, irrespective of their ethnicity taking into account the subtle nuances between women of different ethnic backgrounds, degree of forest-dependency that does vary from village-to-village, district-to-district and province-to-province, or specific indices of poverty and vulnerability. The GID Team has prepared a roadmap for the ER-P post ERPA signing to disseminate relevant information in an idiom that is understandable by these women taking into account not all women,

especially older women from non-Lao-Tai groups are competent in the use of the Lao language. To reach out to these women required a sensible approach to effective stakeholder engagement that is effective. Effectiveness means these village women being able to understand and buy-into the ER-P. However, the GID Team found that if it were patient enough and worked with women in the language of their choice at least some rudimentary understanding became possible but more time and effort needs to go into working with these women.

It is important to understand that buy-in also requires a recognition that nearly every village woman that was consulted is concerned about whether they have secure access to land for agricultural cropping purposes and will still be able to harvest NTFPs including the collection of firewood for domestic uses. The situation at present is that GoL policies and laws do not provide women with this security of tenure or at least uncontested right to use the land they are using. While it might be argued that at the local level there is a fair degree of “ambiguity” and “flexibility” this hardly inspires confidence and for the ER-P to be implemented effectively and meet its stated objectives there needs to be higher or greater level of confidence among village women than exists at present. This observation is evidence from the field gleaned by the GID Team and of course it is possible that there are exceptions that other Teams might have been able to document although for instance from the GIZ studies this is not clearly stated but the ER-P cannot dismiss empirical evidence.

On the question as to who at the institutional level, whether it be at the village, village cluster, district or provincial level or whether it involves simply DAFO, PAFO and the Provincial REDD+ Office or also includes the LPRP and the LFNC and LWU, there are issues that remain unresolved. Gender-mainstreaming has not been a strong point within MAF and this is reflected in the PAFOs and DAFOs but even the LWU while understanding with this implies has not demonstrated this in relation to the preparation of the ER-P. But the GID Team argues that there has to be systemic institutional linkages developed and this is what the Action Plan has also been developed to achieve even if the specific timeline is only 12 months. The reality is that “cultural change” will not be achieved in such a short period and theories associated with the “theory-of-change” are somewhat abstract and esoteric in this respect. Cultural change is a complicated anthropological issue that often technical experts in forestry because they lack a good grounding in the social sciences simply do not understand. Thus, there has to be more focus on “social forestry” rather than just “technical forestry” but this is hopefully based on the revised SESA will be doable. The last thing the GID Team want to argue is that because of so many “negatives” it is not possible for the ER-P to benefit village women. Throughout this Study it has been stressed that it is possible to ensure the ER-P does benefit village women.

The issues associated with a more collaborative approach to sustainable forest management, modalities for a gender-sensitive benefit sharing program and women’s active participation in monitoring, reporting and verification activities have been flagged. Now of course such activities are not going to generate spectacular outcomes within 12 months but incrementally during the implementation of the ER-P it is argued they are likely to contribute to some important socio-economic and environmental changes. Poorer and more vulnerable women will not all move out of poverty based on the ER-P alone but the social and economic empowerment that hopefully will materialize can benefit this category of women (and their families). The GID Team are also arguing that the nexus between carbon and non-carbon benefits needs to be explicitly understood and it may well be that the non-carbon benefits of the ER-P (especially climate-smart agricultural interventions) will benefit forest-dependent village women to a greater extent than the carbon benefits.

In conclusion the GID Team caution against over-generalization as the “worldview” of village women is really not quite the same as the “worldview” of the Lao PDR National REDD+ Office or indeed the MAF. Village women need to be able to sustain their livelihoods not just based on land-based income-generation activities but also off-farm or non-farm income-generation activities and they are not necessarily going to embrace the ER-P in its entirety. Simply conserving the

forests is a “luxury” to many of these women because despite what may be thought by experts that are not village-based or understand the socio-economic “rationality” of village women, irrespective as to their ethnicity, many of these women want to take advantage of whatever opportunities are presented to them and their families. Simply imploring that village women contribute to a reduction in carbon emissions to stave off or mitigate global warming is “drawing a long bow” and as a concluding remark the GID Team argue unequivocally there is the need to engage with these women on their own terms as well. To do otherwise is both androcentric and ethnocentric.

## 5 Bibliography and Appendix

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## **5.2            *Appendix***

TBA