

MAINSTREAMING BIODIVERSITY IN LAO PDR'S AGRICULTURAL AND LAND MANAGEMENT POLICIES, PLANS AND PROGRAMMES (ABP)

Project ID: 00075435

Project Description

The people of Lao PDR depend on the biodiversity of their natural environment on a daily basis, particularly in rural areas, where agro-biodiversity is critical to food security and nutrition. The natural wealth of Lao PDR's natural resources, and therefore people's livelihoods, is being threatened by unsustainable development. Challenges to sustainability include: changing of agricultural practices, land use changes and over-exploitation. To address these issues, the Department of Planning and Cooperation of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is working with the Global Environment Fund (GEF)/United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO) to increase capacity of the central and local authorities to integrate biodiversity conservation into agricultural and land management policies, planning and programmes.



'Training of Trainers' on organised plantation, Phoukhout District, Xiengkouang Province. Photo: UNDP Lao PDR/ Agro-biodiversity Project

Project Summary

- Duration: April 2011 – December 2016
- Geographic coverage: Vientiane Capital, Xiengkhouang Province- Phoukhout District and Luang Prabang Province- Phonexay District
- Focus area: Environment and Energy
- Implementing partners: Department of Planning and Cooperation of Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry; GEF/UNDP; FAO
- Website:
www.la.undp.org/content/lao_pdr/en/home/operations/projects/environment_and_energy/mainstreaming_biodiversity.html

Main Objectives and Outcomes

The main objective of the Agro-biodiversity Project is to provide Lao PDR's farmers with the necessary incentives and capabilities to conserve agro-biodiversity within the farming systems of Lao PDR, as well as supporting institutional frameworks. Therefore, the project has two broad but inter-related outcomes:

Outcome 1: Supporting national policy institutions to create policies that protect biodiversity in agriculture, land use and related sectors and promote its use within production systems. The key expected outputs are:

- Integrating agro-biodiversity into policies
- Promoting coordination on agro-biodiversity
- Enhancing institutional capacity for agro-biodiversity
- Increased understanding among key stakeholders of agro-biodiversity and its significance.

- **Outcome 2:** Collaborating with government at provincial, district and community levels to strengthen capacity of government staff to conserve agro-biodiversity. This is done using the 'Farmer Field Schools' educational method, enhancing their productivity and promoting agro-biodiversity friendly products at local and international markets.

A programmatic approach to agro-biodiversity conservation and utilisation under this project is promoted through working closely with the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation's 'The Agro-biodiversity Initiative' (TABI), which operates under the same Steering Committee as the Agro-biodiversity Project and other partners.

Results and Achievements to Date

As a direct result of the Agro-biodiversity Project, Lao PDR's National Plan and strategy development now systematically incorporates agro-biodiversity conservation. A National Agro-Biodiversity Programme was developed in 2003 and has been revised in collaboration with the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI). Component of the Xiengkouang Provincial Biodiversity and Action Plan have been implemented at the provincial level.

The project has also reached 30 government staff members who participated in the 'Agro-Biodiversity Project On-the-Job Training', resulting in increased capacity and ability to educate villagers in Phoukout and Phonexay districts on sustainable and profitable rice, vegetable, tea and oyster mushroom farming and production, improving the livelihoods of dozens of rural families.

Building capacity and understanding of native rice based ecosystem farming and integrated pest management has also been achieved through this project with 35 trainers now having access to over 50 technical training modules.

The livelihoods of 255 farmers and their families in Phonexay District (Luangprabang Province) and Phoukot District (Xiengkouang Province) who graduated from vegetable-based ecosystems Farmers' Field Schools and benefited from the training. At the end of the training the farmers transferred their new knowledge to 186 neighboring villagers at the 'Farmers Field Day'.

Over 174 students have also benefited from training on preparing organic fertilizers, preparation and application of bio-insecticides and mixed cropping. These farmers and students from three secondary schools are now able to use the 17 field demonstrations of the Agro-Biodiversity Project to practice vegetable farming and agro-biodiversity.

The field demonstration sites are being used to demonstrate improving cultivation and protection of native rice varieties, inter-cropping with vegetables, organic fertilizers, bio pest control, rice and fish co-farming and cricket raising, all contributing to increased food security.

Farmers in Phoukhout District are now able to sell their organic rice with approved certification from the government, as direct intervention of the project. The Agro-Biodiversity Project is supporting some 90 farmers in five villages in producing organic native rice and assisting in obtaining certification resulting in higher income per kilo of rice.

Surveys on identification of edible and poisonous wild mushrooms are ongoing and will contribute to sustainable harvests, market information and species identification. In addition, the project team is providing local knowledge on wild vegetables, leading to the domestication and conservation of a threatened forest tree (Melientha) from which leaves and flowers are sold as vegetables at local markets.

Funding:

- Project budget: USD 2,478,000
- Contributing Donors:
 - GEF: USD 2,265,000
- Co-financing
 - UNDP Lao PDR: USD 313,000

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Link to SDGs

