

Foreword

The Government of the Lao PDR is determined to eradicate extreme poverty and move beyond the category of Least Developed Country by the year 2020. To achieve this, the Government has adopted the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (NGPES) as a comprehensive framework for all its development and poverty eradication programmes.

Much of the NGPES is focused on Lao upland communities where poverty and environmental problems are most acute. The NGPES places renewed emphasis on decentralization and participatory approaches to development. This has two major implications. First, it means redefining central-local government relations. Government services are to focus on supporting local efforts and be demand-driven so as to develop a menu of production options in concert with market signals. Second, community-based participation is viewed as a catalyst for diversifying and modernizing the agriculture sector. For participation and bottom-up planning to be effective, a long-term commitment is needed to building capacity at the local level.

NAFRI, NAFES and NUOL have joined hands to produce this sourcebook on "Improving Livelihoods in the Uplands of the Lao PDR" as a means to help facilitate the flow of information between and among those working in the uplands. The sourcebook is meant to be a compendium of best practices and lessons learned in upland resource management. The sourcebook aims to provide fieldworkers and program managers with a range of options to consider when planning activities, rather than step-by-step guidelines or instructions.

Because of the overwhelming interest and the amount of information available, the sourcebook is split into two volumes. The first volume provides the reader with a broad understanding of upland resource management policies, practices and issues. It includes the following chapters: (1) Policy Framework and Issues, (2) Understanding Shifting Cultivation and Upland Livelihoods, (3) Food Security, (4) Land Use and Management Strategies, (5) Marketing, and (6) Approaches. The second volume provides a range of more specific technical options for agriculture, livestock, fisheries and forestry. The chapters include: (1) Annual and Perennial Cropping Systems, (2) Livestock and Fisheries, and (3) Forest and Natural Resources Management.

NAFRI, NAFES and NUOL envision that the sourcebook will not be an end unto itself but rather the first step to develop joint materials and information that can be widely disseminated and used by different actors throughout Lao PDR. To this end, readers are encouraged to provide feedback on this document and suggest ways it can be made more relevant and appropriate in subsequent editions. This English version of the sourcebook will soon be followed by a Lao language edition.

It is hoped that these two volumes will be of special reference to field workers, decision-makers, project staff, provincial and district staff, educators or any other persons interested in upland resource management. Readers are also encouraged to directly contact the original authors or our three organizations whenever more information is needed. It is also expected that the sourcebook will be useful to others in the Asia region working in similar contexts.

This sourcebook is truly a collaborative effort and we would like to extend our gratitude and appreciation to all those who contributed to its development. We are extremely grateful to the financial support provided by the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida), the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), and the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit (GTZ). In addition, we would like to thank all the individuals and organisations which contributed articles to the sourcebook.

Using these two volumes as a starting point, we encourage all organizations and individual working in the uplands to come together to find joint solutions to the complex problems facing the uplands. For it is only through collaboration and cooperation that participation is able to blossom.



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Table of Contents

FOREWORD	I
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS	VI
INTRODUCTION	IX
COMMONLY USED ACRONYMS	XIV

CHAPTER 1: POLICY FRAMEWORK AND ISSUES

Agriculture and Forestry in the National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy	3
Evolving Operational Upland Policies	12
Impacts of Policies on Upland Communities and their Livelihoods	18
The Role for Alternative Development Strategies in Opium Eradication	24
The Rights and Duties of Villages to Land and Forest Resources	29
Upland Poor in the Lao PDR: A Profile	36
Important Gender and Development Concepts	39

CHAPTER 2: UNDERSTANDING SHIFTING CULTIVATION AND UPLAND LIVELIHOODS

Shifting Cultivation Systems and Practices in the Lao PDR	47
Shifting Cultivation Practices in the Nam Nan Watershed	59
Shifting Cultivation: The Phunoy Traditional Management System	71
Weed Control in Shifting Cultivation	78
Diversity in the Uplands of the Lao PDR	85

CHAPTER 3: FOOD SECURITY

Key Concepts of Food Security	93
Community Perceptions of Forest Food Resource Management	99
Upland Food Security and Nutritional Diversity	107
A Participatory Methodology for Assessing the Role of Forest Food Resources	113

CHAPTER 4: LAND USE AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Participatory Land-Use Planning and Land Allocation	123
Management of Village Forests	131
Issues from Village Relocation	136
Village Land-Use Planning and Land Allocation: An Alternative Approach	142
Land-Use Planning in Protected Areas	149

CHAPTER 5: MARKETING

Linking Farmers to Markets: An Agro-Enterprise Approach	159
Stimulating, Improving and Sustaining Market Chains: The Role of Business Development Services	166
Market Opportunities for NTFPs: The Case of Bitter Bamboo	170
Community-Based Tourism in the Lao PDR: An Overview	177
Assessing Markets in the North	184
Market Chain Analysis	188

CHAPTER 6: APPROACHES

The Lao Extension System	191
Participation: A Key Element of Sustainable Development	199
Reaching Rural Women in the Uplands	205
Choosing the Local Capacity Building Pathway	211
Livelihood Analysis: A Checklist	218
Using Agrarian System Analysis to Understand Agriculture	222
Agro-Ecosystem Analysis	230
Village Banking in Upland Communities	239
Entrusting Animals: A Revolving Livestock Fund Concept from Phongsaly	245
Quick surveys: A Form for Village Profiles	249

GLOSSARY	253
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Volume 2: Options and Opportunities

CHAPTER 1: ANNUAL AND PERENNIAL CROPPING SYSTEMS

Opportunities for Intensifying Rice-Based Upland Systems
The Role of Highland Paddy Rice
Managing Soil Resources in Southern Xayabury
Concepts of Integrated Pest Management
Lessons in Fruit Tree Development
Integrated Fruit Tree Systems
Intercropping with Rubber for Risk Management
Cultivated Vegetable Options for the Uplands
Community-Based Irrigation Systems Development in the Lao PDR
Using Bio-Fertilisers for Bio-Fertilisers in Small-Scale Agriculture
Ethnoscience Study of Indigenous Soil Classification

CHAPTER 2: LIVESTOCK AND FISHERIES

Smallholder Livestock Systems and Upland Development
Managing Feed Resources in Upland Livestock Systems
Forage Options for the Lao Uplands
Village Veterinary Worker Network as a Private Sector Approach
Participatory Extension Approaches in Support of Technology Development and Adaptation
Livelihood Opportunities for Upland Aquaculture
Management Issues in Community Fisheries
The Importance of Fisheries for Upland Villages in Luangprabang
Integrating Local Ecological Knowledge: Tools and Approaches in Upland Aquatic Resource Management

CHAPTER 3: FOREST AND NATURAL RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

The Importance of Non-Timber Forest Products in the Lao Uplands
NTFP-Based Approaches for Sustainable Upland Development
Main Commercial NTFPs in the Lao PDR
Models for Participatory Forestry Approaches
Village Forestry: Assessment Methods that Enhance Participation
Indigenous Agroforestry Practices of Northern Laos
Benefits, Constraints and Technology Evaluation of Agroforestry Systems
Smallholder Timber Production: Teak in Luangprabang
Tree Species Options for Community Woodlots
Improving Women's Involvement in Forestry Projects
Wildlife Hunting and Use: Results of a Survey
Managing Hunting and the Wildlife Trade
Economic Returns from Conserving Natural Forests in Sekong

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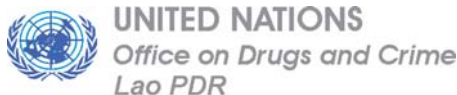


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Introduction

The Lao uplands represent an area of key development interest to both the Government of Lao PDR and most international donor agencies. Marginalised by remoteness, inaccessibility and language barriers, upland farmers have the highest poverty and lowest quality of life indicators in the country. Cash income is very low in most upland areas and for many households the main problem is still to achieve basic food security.

The stabilisation of shifting cultivation is a key programme of the Lao government. The aim is to sedentarise villages and gradually modify, diversify and intensify agriculture production to ensure its long term sustainability under growing population pressure. To this end the government recognizes two types of shifting cultivation: rotational shifting cultivation and pioneering shifting cultivation. The government's priority is to halt pioneering shifting cultivation or the uncontrolled clearance of primary and new forest areas. This does not apply to productive secondary forests that are part of rotational shifting cultivation-NTFP production systems in permanent villages where land has been adequately allocated.

Defining Shifting Cultivation

Shifting cultivation is often defined as any agricultural system in which the fields are cleared by fire and cultivated for shorter periods than they are fallowed. It is also considered as a resource management strategy in which fields are shifted in order to exploit the energy and nutrient capital of the natural vegetation-soil complex of the future site.

Shifting cultivation is also called by various names. It is known as "*hai*" in Lao, "slash-and-burn agriculture" or "swidden cultivation", "swiddening" in English, and "*essartage*", "*agriculture itinérante*", "*défriche-brûlis*" or "*abattis-brûlis*" in French.

What is shifting cultivation?

Shifting cultivation is a complex agricultural system that, under certain conditions, is well-adapted to the environmental limitations of the tropics. It is not primitive or necessarily destructive. It requires in-depth knowledge of the tropical environment and a high degree of managerial skills to succeed. Although shifting cultivation was widely practised in a sustainable manner in the past it is generally recognised that in many places, it no longer can be practised in a sustainable manner without appropriate modifications (or "stabilisation"). This is mainly due to an increasing population pressure resulting in lower land availability and shortening fallow periods.

Where adequate fallow length occurs, it results in ecosystem maintenance. While the highest incidence of poverty are found in the uplands, it is also an area of immense biological and social diversity. The largest number of upland rice gene stock is found in the uplands of Lao PDR, only behind India and different aged fallows provide opportunities for a wide range of non-timber forest products to flourish.

Decreasing fallow periods result in decreasing system nutrient stocks, degrading soils, and decreasing biological diversity. This in turn affects living conditions and nutritional quality.

The Lao shifting cultivation systems are not static and are evolving. Upland farmers are responsive to market opportunities and are also very much influenced by government policies. Besides crop production (for which rice is still the most important crop), Lao shifting cultivators are also involved in other important activities such as animal husbandry, fishing, hunting, collection of NTFPs, as well as off-farm labour. Most Lao shifting cultivators are, in fact, no longer subsistence farmers but directly or indirectly connected to the market economy.

Why a sourcebook?

The complexities of working in shifting cultivating communities with their ethnic, cultural, tenure and biophysical realities, make upland resource management a rather challenging task. The "one solution fits all" approach to extension does not work under the diverse environmental, economic and cultural conditions found in the uplands. The development of this sourcebook offered an opportunity to bring together the learning gained by different projects and programs working in the uplands, and most importantly to provide field level staff with a range of tools, options and approaches to draw upon.

The sourcebook format was chosen for a couple of reasons. First, there were already a number of materials that could be easily repackaged, especially in light of the upland workshop. A sourcebook also provides a vehicle by which this information can be more broadly disseminated. The sourcebook does not contain information from a single source or organization, but rather a wide range of experiences that have been tested in different conditions and settings throughout the country.

Each article 'stands alone' and the book does not have to be read from front to back. Scientific concepts and complex processes are simplified and articles are richly illustrated, shortened and focused to draw attention to the essential messages.

Finally, the sourcebook provided a good opportunity to improve research-extension-education linkages. Research papers and reports generally do not adequately meet the needs of extensionists, who require a different sort of information. With its focus on collaboration, the sourcebook offers one way to share information between and among different organizations which normally find it difficult to do so otherwise.

What is the sourcebook and who is the target group?

The sourcebook is meant to be a compendium of best practices, lessons learned, and experiences gained by those working in the uplands. It is intended to provide field workers (provincial and district level staff) with practical, easy to understand ways to solve problems facing upland development. The compilation can serve as a rich source of ideas and reference materials for trainers. It might also be useful to educators, policy makers, local officials and administrators. While the articles within the sourcebook can be further adapted to create community-based materials, the sourcebook as such is not meant for direct use with farmers or community groups.

A sourcebook is not an extension manual or a set of guidelines. It is meant to offer menu of choices whereas an extension manual provides step-by-step instructions and focuses more on technologies and field techniques. The sourcebook is meant to be a source of ideas and options to consider when planning programs and activities.

How was this sourcebook developed?

In January 2004, NAFRI held a workshop in Luangprabang on shifting cultivation stabilisation and poverty eradication. Attended by more than 300 people, the workshop demonstrated that projects working in the uplands have gained a wealth of knowledge and experience. During the workshop, one working group explored ways in which these experiences and lessons could be shared and disseminated more widely. A key recommendation of this group was then to develop a "sourcebook" focused on shifting cultivation stabilisation, poverty eradication and sustainable resource management.

An English version was proposed since many experiences have been written up in English but not translated into Lao. By shortening articles and simplifying the language, it would be much easier to eventually translate into Lao and it might have a better chance to be read than long scientific papers.

While it was decided at the workshop that NAFRI would take the lead, it was also recommended that the sourcebook be developed in partnership with other agencies. In addition, two major considerations needed to be taken into account: capacity building and participation.

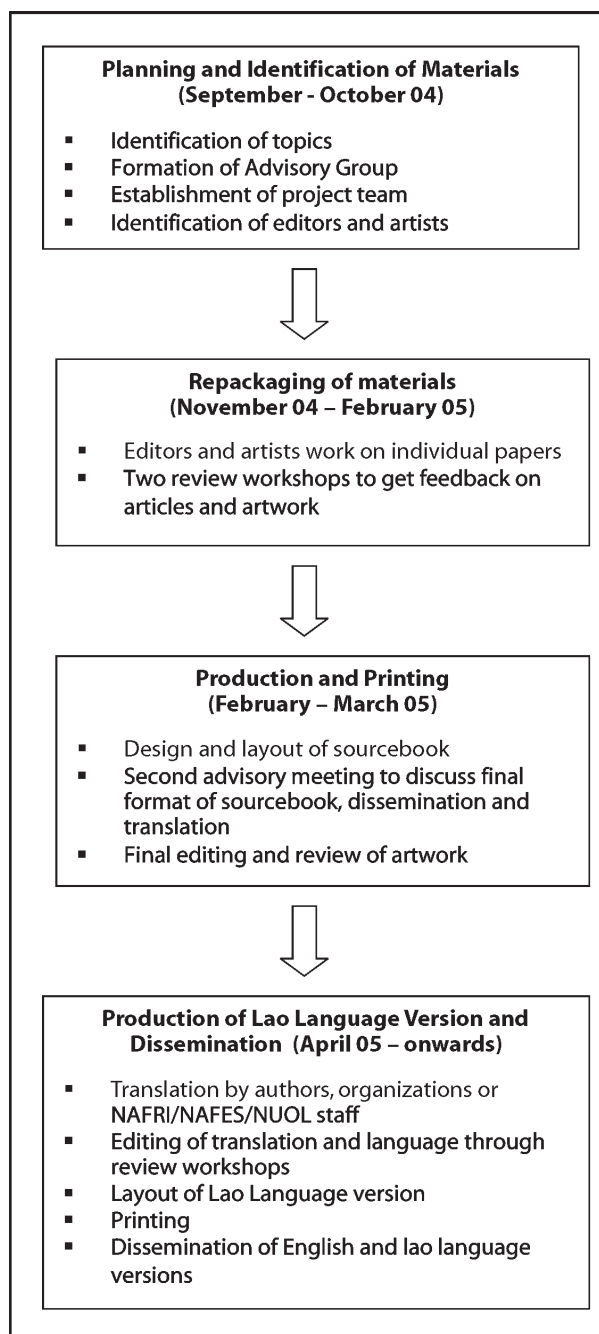
Capacity building was important because nothing of this kind had been done in Laos before. It is hoped that those who have been involved will adapt the process to develop other types of materials in the future. Participation was important so as to ensure that the sourcebook encompassed a wide range of topics and issues. In addition this book should not be seen as an end unto itself but rather as the first step of NAFRI, NUOL and NAFES to develop materials jointly.

Development of the sourcebook began in earnest in September 2004. During the planning stage, an advisory committee was formed comprised of staff from NAFRI, NAFES and NUOL as well as key support projects. In addition, a project management team was formed within NAFRI to oversee the process throughout. Potential articles were identified from three broad sources:

1. Papers from the 2004 up-lands workshop
2. Previously produced reports, publications and materials.
3. New articles on identified gaps or where experiences had not been written up.

Once articles had been identified, artists and editors were asked to repackage them. In a repackaged article, original articles are shortened and a clear focus provided. Language is simplified and complex concepts are broken down into easy to understand steps. It was also decided to tap the pool of talented young Lao artists to help illustrate each article. Artwork is a key part of the sourcebook as the illustrations bring the concepts and key messages to life and make the publication user-friendly.

Staff from NAFRI, NAFES and NUOL were asked to review and provide feedback on the draft articles at two review workshops. The objectives of the review workshops were to provide an opportunity for staff from key organizations to comment and critique draft articles and ensure feedback from a range of disciplines. The review process also allowed staff to critically review articles outside their normal area of



expertise. Some of these staff are also expected to assist with the Lao language production process and in the promotion of the publication.

With the English language version of the sourcebook finalized, activities will focus on production of the Lao language version and widespread dissemination. In order for the sourcebook to reach its intended audience, the adaptation and translation into the Lao version will be an important step. A process has been proposed whereby articles are first translated and then review workshops held to test out and get feedback on the translated articles. It is expected that the Lao language version of the sourcebook will be available in October 2005. For more information regarding the Lao version please contact NAFRI.

Dissemination and use of the sourcebook

Dissemination will be broad and go beyond conventional means of sending out the materials through mail. It is expected that key organizations will receive multiple copies and that eventually posters and other promotional materials could be developed. In addition, it is hoped to link up with other organizations to further dissemination and use. All articles as well as selected artwork can also be found on the NAFRI website (www.nafri.org.la).

Readers are encouraged to select a range of articles and produce smaller booklets. Articles could be used as training handouts and posters or as reference materials. For example, they could be recast and the main points used to develop locally appropriate posters or used in a farm-radio broadcast. They could also be used in higher secondary schools and agriculture and forestry colleges. Indeed, it is hoped that the Lao language version will be readily available to all students and faculties at the agriculture and forestry colleges. Newsletters and newspapers could also serialize the sourcebook materials.

Revisions, adaptations and further translations of these are welcome and encouraged. There is intentionally no copyright and the book has been designed and formatted to ensure easy photocopy and reuse of articles. If articles are reused or adapted, please acknowledge the authors and publishers. In addition, NAFRI is interested to learn how the sourcebook has been used and would be grateful for any comments and feedback so as to improve subsequent editions.

Commonly Used Acronyms

AD	Alternative Development
ACF	Action Contre la Faim
ACIAR	Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research
ADB	Asian Development Bank
AEZO	Agriculture Extension Zone Offices
AFD	French Agency for Development
ARC	Agriculture Research Centre (NAFRI)
CBNRM	Community-based natural resource management
CD	Community development
CETDU	Central Extension and Training Development Unit (NAFES)
CGIAR	Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research
CIAT	International Centre for Tropical Agriculture
CIRAD	French Agriculture Research Centre for International Development
CPC	Committee for Planning and Cooperation
DAFEO	District Agriculture and Forestry Extension Office (formerly DAFO)
DAFO	District Agriculture and Forestry Office
DDV	District Development Volunteer
DED	German Development Service
DMC	Direct Mulch-based Cropping
ETU	Extension and Training Unit
EU	European Union
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FFEM	French Global Environmental Facility
FFS	Farmer Field Schools
FIPD	Forestry Inventory and Planning Division (Department of Forestry)
FLSP	Forages and Livestock Systems Project (CIAT)
FRC	Forest Research Centre (NAFRI)
FoF	Faculty of Forestry (National University of Laos)
FoS	Faculty of Sciences (National University of Laos)
FSP	Forages for Smallholders Project
FSR/E	Farming Systems Research/Extension
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GMS	Greater Mekong Subregion
GoL	Government of the Lao PDR
GTZ	German Technical Cooperation
HH(S)	Household(s)
HRC	Horticulture Research Centre (NAFRI)
ICRAF	International Centre for Research in Agroforestry (World Agroforestry Centre)
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IMSPD	Information Management and Strategic Planning Division (NAFRI)

IPM	Integrated Pest Management
IRR	Internal rate of return
IRRI	International Rice Research Institute
IUARP	Integrated Upland Agriculture Research Project (NAFRI)
IUCN	The World Conservation Union
IWM	Integrated Watershed Management
IWMI	International Water Management Institute
KBS	Knowledge-Based System
LA	Land Allocation
Lao PDR	The Lao People's Democratic Republic
Lao-IRRI	Lao-IRRI Rice Research Programme (NAFRI)
LARReC	Living Aquatic Resources Research Centre (NAFRI)
LCDC	Lao National Commission for Drug Control and Supervision
LCNJ	Lions Club of Nagoya Johoku (Japan)
LDC	Least Developed Countries
LEAP	Laos Extension for Agriculture Project (NAFES)
LECS	Lao Expenditure and Consumption Survey
LEK	Local Ecological Knowledge
LFAP	Land and forest allocation programme
LRP	Lao Revolutionary Party
LSUAFRP	Lao Swedish Upland Agriculture and Forestry Research Programme (NAFRI)
LTSP	The Lao Tree Seed Project (NAFRI)
LUP	Land Use Planning
MAE	French Ministry of Foreign Affairs
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
MMSEA	Montane Mainland Southeast Asia
MRC	Mekong River Commission
MSEC	Managing Soil Erosion Consortium (IWMI)
NAEP	National Agro-Ecological Program (NAFRI)
NAFES	National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service
NAFReC	Northern Agriculture and Forestry Research Centre (NAFRI)
NAFRI	National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute
NCAW	National Commission for the Advancement of Women
NERI	National Economic Research Institute
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NGPES	National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy (previously called NPEP)
NPA	National Protected Area
NPEP	National Programme for the Eradication of Poverty
NPV	Net present value
NTFP	Non-Timber Forest Product
NUOL	National University of Lao PDR
PAFEC	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Extension Centre (formerly PAFES)
PAFES	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service
PAFO	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office

PDDP	Rural Development Project of Phongsaly District
PLLUP	Participatory Landscape Land Use Planning
PLUP	Participatory Land Use Planning
PM&E	Participatory monitoring and evaluation
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PVS	Participatory Variety Selection
RDMA	Rural Development in Mountainous Areas Programme (GTZ)
RDP	Rural Development Project
SADU	Small-Scale Agro-Enterprise Development in the Uplands (CIAT)
SALT	Sloping Agricultural Land Technology
SCSPP	Shifting Cultivation Stabilisation Project
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SEP-Dev	Sekong Ethnic People's Development Program
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
Sida/SAREC	Sida/Department for Research Cooperation
SLU	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences
SPFS	Special Programme for Food Security (FAO)
TLUC	Temporary Land Use Certificates
UADC	Upland Agriculture and Development Centre
UNODC	United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNGASS	United Nations General Assembly Special Session
UXO	Unexploded Ordnance
VA	Village Authority
VDC	Village Development Committee
VDP	Village Development Project
VES	Village Extension System
VEW	Village Extension Worker
V-FORCAP	Village-based Forest Conservation and Afforestation Project
WCS	Wildlife Conservation Society
WFP	World Food Programme (UN)
WWF	World Wildlife Fund

Please note that English spelling used for all Lao provinces and districts comes from: State Planning Committee. 2001. Basic Statistics of Lao PDR, 1975 - 2000. National Statistics Centre. Vientiane, Lao PDR