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Swiss Agency for Development  
and Cooperation (SDC)

# Participatory Forest and Land Use Planning, Allocation and Management

## The Agro Biodiversity Initiative

2009 - 2020

# Most Significant Change Stories

***Sengphachanh Sonethavixay***

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## Introduction

Much has changed in Laos in the decades since social and economic reforms began in the 1980s. A once “land-locked” nation has become a “land bridge” between China and Southeast Asia and along with roads and telecommunications infrastructure, the market economy has reached into all but the most remote villages. With support from international partners, the government has reduced poverty by half, lessened malnutrition, increased food security, and improved education and health.

All development comes at a cost, even in the advanced industrial economies of the G20 countries. In Laos, part of that cost has been paid in terms of deforestation, loss of biodiversity, and disruption to traditional ways of life in upland communities. The age-old practice of shifting cultivation has been a particular point of contention among environmentalists, development agencies, economists and other stakeholders. The Agro-Biodiversity Initiative (TABI) emerged from these discussions with support from the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC).

### Box: Quick Facts

#### Implementing Agency:

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of the Lao PDR

**Donor:** Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC)

**Project value:** USD 18,100,440

**Duration:** May 2009–September 2020

TABI was part of the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation Agriculture and Food Security portfolio. It has been implemented in-country by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry Department of Planning and through the National Agriculture, Forestry and Rural Development Research Institute with technical support from the Swedish consulting firm NIRAS.

TABI was launched in 2009 and over its three phases identified, tested and disseminated agro-biodiversity-based livelihood models for 30 product value chains that supported the sustainable conservation and use of agro-biodiversity. TABI also developed a participative approach for forest and land use planning and management known by its acronym P-FALUPAM, which quickly became a core approach to support agro-biodiversity-based livelihoods and conservation.

P-FALUPAM is an iterative approach for land use planning at the village and village cluster level. It is a set of tools that provides government agencies, donor partners and NGOs the ability to carry out integrated resource planning and monitoring of forests and agricultural lands in an inclusive way, by engaging and working together with local authorities and villagers.

The approach is based on the recognition of traditional land management practices of upland communities and aims to contribute to better stewardship of the land including science-based rotational agriculture and an increase of forest cover. The overall goal of P-FALUPAM is to ensure the sustainable and equitable use of agriculture and forest land for livelihood improvements for local land users. Interested readers can learn more about TABI and P-FALUPAM at these links and from the documents in the Bibliography section:

Putting Upland Agriculture and Biodiversity on the Map (brochure) file:///D:/2020/TABI%20Laos/Forestry-and-Agriculture-Land-Use-Planing-Brochure.pdf

TABI Mid-Term Review November 2018

file:///D:/2020/TABI%20Laos/tabimid%20term%20review.pdf

www.phakhaolao.la

## The project evaluation process

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E) was built into the project from the beginning and has been continuous. A formal mid-term review was carried out by two international consultants and two Lao experts in October and November 2018.

The M&E team reported positively on TABI’s activities supporting local community efforts to improve agro-biodiversity and land use planning. Reviewers suggested that TABI could make better use of its extensive information base by generating materials that would convey some of the significant lessons learned and the impact the program was able to have. These Most Significant Change stories (MSC) directly address that recommendation. The M&E team also suggested TABI support for engagement in national dialogue on the significance of agro-biodiversity in improving the forest-agricultural interface and rural livelihoods. MSC stories 1, 2 and 3 illustrate how the program has succeeded in that regard.

## The MSC approach

Most Significant Change is a qualitative research methodology that involves project stakeholders in deciding what changes are worth recording as “stories”. MSC stories are meant to illustrate, not quantify outcomes and impacts. These stories help “bring to life” the quantitative data and help TABI project managers and donors understand how changes resulting from the P-FALUPAM process were seen through the eyes of different stakeholders at the local and community levels.

The process began in May 2020 with a desk review of project documents, in-country stakeholder meetings and interviews with key informants. This was followed by field visits to TABI’s focal provinces in Luang Prabang and Xiengkhouang. A third province, Houaphanh, could not be included due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions that came into effect in March 2020.

Interviews were held in Luang Prabang and Xiengkhouang provinces, in two or three districts per province and two or three villages per district (Table 1). Provincial government and TABI staff identified areas where they had observed significant changes resulting from the P-FALUPAM process.

During field visits, information was collected using a combination of focus group discussions (village committee, village elders, women and youth groups) and semi-structured interviews with key informants and government officers. Discussions with interviewees focused on identifying the most significant changes regarding the performance of responsible individuals and village land use and management in the context of P-FALUPAM implementation: farm household characteristics, livelihoods and farming strategies and community participation, especially by women; land use planning rules as embedded in P-FALUPAM; and how village tenure institutions and P-FALUPAM rules interacted with one another.

Not all impacts were at the village level. As these stories illustrate, P-FALUPAM effected significant changes within provincial and district branches of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and at the national level in the form of inputs to policy and land law formulation.

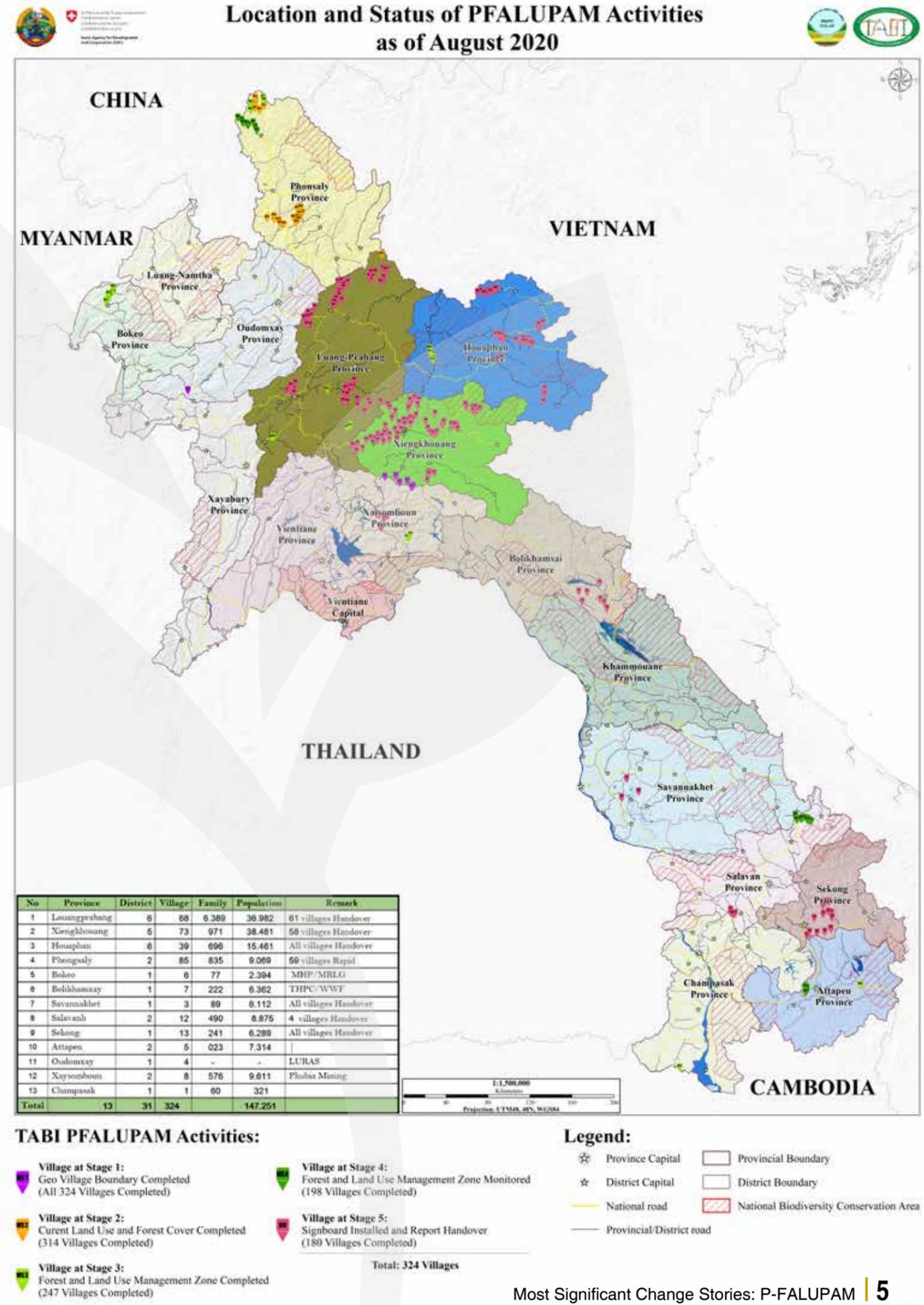
# Story selection

The selection of MSC stories is a participatory process for identifying stories that illustrate positive outcomes and impacts from P-FALUPAM implementation. People discussed what they felt were significant changes in their households and communities. The selected stories were given titles, which were written on large cards and arranged in categories on a wall so they would be visible during discussion and notes could be added. The categories were:

- Women and youth, in terms of time savings or a sense of security in remote fields
- Reductions in conflict between villages or between people over land control
- Fire control after land was consolidated
- Better livestock control and management
- Increases in access to food or cash crop growing areas in farm and forest landscapes
- Increases in natural resources used for income or farming
- An increased sense of land security for investing in agriculture or tree crops
- Good governance and more effective coordination
- Forest protection and an increase in forest cover.

This iterative process of selecting then pooling stories reduces a large number of stories to a smaller quantity about which people can agree. Throughout the interview process, the facilitator worked to ensure that women, youths, and people representing vulnerable groups were given opportunities to contribute and select stories. This process resulted in a small number of stories that everyone agreed were “most significant”. The final selection of stories was based on discussions with TABI’s Chief Technical Advisor and experts, and Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO) counterparts in Luang Prabang and Xiengkhouang provinces and at the central level.

National level	Agency	Center/project
Central Level	MAF-DALaM	Director of Agriculture Land Use Planning Center
	TABI	Chief Technical Advisor
		P-FALUPAM Manager
	CDE	GIS Expert
National level	Province	District
Local level	Xiengkhouang Province PAFO	<b>Phoukoud District PAFO</b>
		Mien Village
		Longjong Village
		Poungmanh Village
		<b>Paek District DAFO</b>
		Tar Village
	Luang Prabang Province PAFO	<b>Phonxay District DAFO</b>
		Heuadoi Village
		Sopjia Village
		<b>Phonthong District DAFO</b>
		Sammeun Village
		Khampom Village
		<b>Nam Bak District DAFO</b>
Phathong Village		
Houayhith Village		



**“Changes in the forestry and land laws on tenure and related issues are under discussion at the highest levels of government.”**



Photo credit: TABI

## **Empowering women's economic development**

Mrs. Pa Lao. 45 years old. Completed primary school. Six family members (husband, three children and one daughter-in-law). Or-an village, Xiengkhouang province.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

Phou San teas have become highly valued by markets in China, Laos and other countries. Tea production in Xiengkhouang province reached 245 tons in 2016, of which 80-90 percent was purchased by Chinese traders.

“In 2006, Chinese traders started to buy tea from our village. Like other villagers, I started to collect tea leaves. My husband and I walked for hours to collect leaves. When our children were young, we had to carry them to the fields as well. We would spend seven or eight hours collecting tea, including three hours each way from home to the tea garden and back. We had to wake up very early so we could get back in time to sell to the traders. If you don't sell your leaves the same day, they spoil. Life was hard. A motorcycle changed all that.”

For Mrs. Pa Lao, collecting and selling tea leaves took up most of her day, leaving her weary and with little time for taking care of herself or her family. Without an approved land use plan, tea cultivation was lucrative, but land tenure for tea gardens was not secure.



Photo credit: Sengphachanh Sonethavixay

### **After P-FALUPAM**

After engaging with the local government authorities through P-FALUPAM, residents of Or-an village now have an agreed land use management plan which is the basis for sustainable trade in Phou San tea leaves. This has allowed for the expansion of the tea growing areas as per the plan.

“I stopped planting rice and maize and started planting a tea garden on land allocated for rotational agriculture,” says Mrs. Pa Lao. “Once I started selling more tea leaves, I was able to save enough money to buy a motorcycle.” She also reports that her family can expand her tea garden because she can spend more time collecting tea and less time traveling.

### **Most Significant Change**

“The motorcycle changed my life. I can get to the tea gardens faster and I don't have to hand-carry big, bulky bags of leaves. I can sell directly to traders or Ms. Khampoui's or Mr. Yey Maya's tea factory. I can easily go to the market to buy foods you can't find in the forest and I have time to take better care of our children.” Now you see many women riding motorcycles in the village, the same as Mrs. Pa Lao.

***“This year, I started collecting tea from my own land. I can collect six to seven kilograms a day.”***



Photo credit: TABI

## ***Creating economic opportunities for youth to return home***

Mr. Leu Ya. 20 years old. Finished high school. Newly married. Or-an village, Xiengkhouang province.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

In the village, livelihoods depended on low-value crops and shifting cultivation with a focus on growing enough rice for household use. There were limited options for income generation, especially for young people. “I helped my parents cut and burn trees to grow maize and upland rice. We have enough rice for our own use, but little money for anything other than necessities,” Leu Ya says. In 2019, Leu Ya finished high school and his parents sent him to Vientiane to learn to be a car mechanic. “After the course, I worked for a car repair shop and was earning 800,000 Kip per month (USD 88.00),” he says. “I had to pay rent, buy food, clothes and other basic things and I couldn’t save any money. I liked working as a mechanic and dreamed of having my own repair shop one day, but Vientiane was too expensive and lonely.”

Land use plans that encouraged high-value crops had not been developed in his home village. Young people like Leu Ya had to leave to look for work in towns and cities and were not interested in looking for livelihood options in rural areas.



Photo credit: TABI

### **After P-FALUPAM**

Leu Ya’s community took part in land use planning with TABI. Using the P-FALUPAM approach, the community prioritized land for tea production. Leu Ya returned after the plans were approved. “I told my parents I want to live here and marry my girlfriend. My parents said if we married, they would give me a piece of land. As promised, they gave me 1 hectare of tea plantation as a wedding gift.” Without the new land use planning and allocation policies, Leu Ya’s parents would not have been able to do this. Leu Ya says, “This year, I started collecting tea from my own land. I can collect 6 to 7 kilograms a day and sell the leaves for 20,000 Kip per kilo (USD 2.20). I can also help my parents plant rice. My wife and I are living with my parents so we can save a bit of money.”

### **Most Significant Change**

Leu Ya was able to return to his village and engage in a viable livelihood as a result of the P-FALUPAM planning. He says he feels more secure in the village than he did in Vientiane. “I am happy to be close to my wife and our parents. If we don’t have money, we can still collect food from the forest. In the village, there is now a clear policy for land use planning and land allocation for agriculture and forest protection areas. For us, the best way to earn more is to expand our tea garden. I also understand how protecting forest areas safeguards our income and food sources.”

***“Cattle raising is now the main source of income for my family.”***



Photo credit: TABI

## ***Leveraging opportunities for income from cattle rearing***

Mr. Sua Tonglao. 52 years. He finished primary school. Eight family members (Six children). Tar village, Paek District, Xiengkhouang Province.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

Like many villagers in rural Laos, Mr. Tonglao tried raising cattle. The lack of designated areas for raising livestock resulted in poor management and conflict. “It’s our savings bank,” he says. “If you have a few cows, you can always sell one if you need money for a wedding or funeral or some emergency. I started with just two calves in 1984. I didn’t have enough money to buy adult cattle. One of the calves died and I had to buy a new one.” After more than 20 years, Mr. Tonglao laments that, at that stage, he had only ten cows. “Like other villagers, I let my cattle graze freely in the fields and forests. One year, my cattle destroyed a maize crop in a neighboring village. I had to pay a fine of 30 kilograms of rice to the maize owner. I also had problems with disease, especially foot-and-mouth disease. I lost an average of one or two cows every year. It was hard to vaccinate them because they were scattered in the fields and forested areas and there was never enough feed for them.”



Photo credit: Sengphachanh Sonethavixay

### **After P-FALUPAM**

In 2014, the village took part in a P-FALUPAM land use planning exercise that resulted in approved plans for land development. The P-FALUPAM committee agreed to allocate land for livestock rearing and fodder grass production for feed. Because of clear land allocation and land use planning, the number of cattle in the village has been increasing. Mr. Tonglao says, “I worked with the P-FALUPAM team. This year (2020) I have 32 cattle. In the last six years, I had only one calf die from diarrhea,” he adds proudly. “Cattle raising is now the main source of income for my family.”

### **Most Significant Change**

Using the P-FALUPAM process, people in this village came to an agreement on land allocation for cattle grazing and fodder production resulting in improved cattle management and reduced conflict. Householders like Mr. Tonglao have been able to increase the number of cattle they raise and their incomes. Says Mr. Tonglao, “I also have more knowledge of cattle rearing so I know how to vaccinate my cattle and reduce losses from disease and bad health and I have been sharing my experience and knowledge with other people interested in raising cattle.” Mr. Tonglao used some of the money to pay for his children’s education and he bought a motorbike and a hand tractor.

**“Tea production has been expanding as a result of land allocation policies developed with P-FALUPAM.”**



Photo credit: TABI

## **Women-led SME development in the tea sector**

Ms. Khamphoui. 37 years old. Finished secondary school. Divorced with six children. Or-an Village, Xiengkhouang Province.

### **Before FALUPAM**

In 2006, Mrs. Khamphoui started planting Phou San tea on her 1,600 square meter plot of land. She says, “I started with two to three hundred seedlings and sold the leaves to a Chinese trader.”

Before land use policies were implemented, tea trees were not protected and were subject to unsustainable harvesting practices. The land was mainly used for upland crops under rotational cultivation. Mrs. Khamphoui says, “As a Lao Loum woman in a Hmong community, I was a housewife and helped my husband collect tea leaves and plant rice. I bought this small plot together with my ex-husband but did not have enough cash to buy more land or expand my tea processing. Expansion of tea cultivation was not encouraged because there was no approved land use plan. In 2007, I went to a tea processing training workshop in Champasack with support from the Lao Farmers’ Products Association. When I came back, I decided to buy a roasting pan to start tea processing. Then I processed my tea and sold it to Chinese traders.”



Photo credit: Sengphachanh Sonethavixay

### **After P-FALUPAM**

Mrs. Khamphoui’s community undertook land use planning with TABI support. One outcome was an approved plan that allowed for the expansion of tea cultivation. As a result, more farmers planted tea and more traders began buying tea from area farmers. Local tea processing also expanded. In 2013, a Chinese tea trader showed Mrs. Khamphoui a new tea processing technique. She says, “I expanded to two roasting pans and drying houses. I started increasing production by buying leaves from other villagers. I now have 15 pans and have increased production to just over 2 tons a year. The quality of my processed tea is very good and well-known by traders and consumers. In early 2020, my tea was granted organic certification by the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry and One District One Product certification by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce.”

### **Most Significant Change**

“Tea production has been expanding as a result of land allocation policies developed with P-FALUPAM,” says Mrs. Khamphoui. “My tea processing business is successful. I have money to send my children to school, I bought a car and built a new house. People respect me more and officials from central, provincial and district offices come to talk to me about my business. My business has given me greater confidence and self-esteem as well as a better livelihood.” Organic certification adds significant value to Mrs. Khamphoui’s product and demonstrates to other villagers the importance of sustainable production practices.

*“I am happy to see peaceful relations between our two villages.”*



Photo credit: TABI

## Reducing intercommunity conflict

Mr. Phimpha. 59 years old. Village elder and head of conflict resolution unit. Six family members (four children). Langchong village, Phoukoud District, Xiengkhouang province.

### Before P-FALUPAM

Ban Langchong and Ban Longhang are neighboring villages in Phoukoud district, Xiengkhouang province. Like many villages in rural areas, the boundaries were based on local knowledge of mountain slopes, rivers, creeks, distinctive vegetation, and natural landmarks. People from these two villages often had issues about who was entitled to use what land for agriculture, or collecting non-timber forest products. Mr. Phimpha says, “As a village elder, I am responsible for conflict resolution. It is often hard to find agreement because people have different ideas about where the boundaries are. Many times we are not able to agree on who is right or wrong or on penalties. Everyone says they are doing things in their own territory.”

Ambiguous boundaries are often an underlying cause of conflicts in upland Lao communities where people are dependent on rotational agriculture systems and adjacent forestland for the collection of non-timber forest products for food and income. Unchecked, these can lead to more serious conflicts and an atmosphere of distrust. Until P-FALUPAM, there was no systematic method or approach to resolving conflict resulting from the uncontrolled extraction of natural resources because the village boundaries were neither clear nor official.



Photo credit: Sengphachanh Sonethavixay

### After P-FALUPAM

In 2014, representatives from Ban Langchong and Ban Longhang jointly identified common boundaries using the FALUPAM process facilitated by district authorities including DAFO and DONRE. Maps were printed and displayed in the villages along with written copies of management plans. “I was a representative for Ban Langchong in the boundary survey,” says Mr. Phimpha. “Village Heads signed an agreement on the boundary between our two villages. The Village Heads organized meetings to inform everyone of the outcome. Now that we have village land use planning and regulations, we have fewer conflict cases and they are not so serious.”

### Most Significant Change

Agreed rules on village boundaries and natural resource collection reduced conflict between villages. “When there is no conflict, I am not stressed. I am happy to see more peaceful relations between our two villages,” says Mr. Phimpha.

**“The number of wildfires has decreased and there has been an increase in biodiversity as well as closer community and government cooperation.”**



Photo credit: TABI

## **Reducing wildfires and enhancing agro-biodiversity**

Mr. Phonephaneth Louangxay, 43 years old. Technical Staff, District Agriculture and Forestry. Phoukoud District, Xiengkhouang province.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

Fire is a common method of clearing land in rural areas and rice farmers burn the stubble in their fields before the rainy season to prepare for planting. These fires can easily get out of control and become destructive wildfires that damage biodiversity, crops and structures. In Xiengkhouang province, wildfires would typically burn several hundred hectares each year and the number and extent of fires seemed to be increasing. “Since 2005, I have been working with villages in Phoukoud district,” says Mr. Phonephaneth. “I always had trouble keeping records as most fires were not reported and I had no data about the loss of biodiversity.” Without community involvement, some technical knowledge and physical fire barriers, wildfires were difficult to prevent and control.



Photo credit: Senghachanh Sonethavixay

### **After P-FALUPAM**

Mr. Phonephaneth says, “In 2013, I took part in the P-FALUPAM process supported by TABI. We developed plans to allocate land for rotational agriculture, livestock, grassfields, and forest protection. These plans also included regulations about fire control and management. Each village has set up a fire control committee and each family nominates a committee member. We encourage youths to be members.” These committees develop fire control plans as part of the final P-FALUPAM plans, which are then approved by the District Governor and given to DAFO. “As the responsible person at DAFO, I can look at the plans and be better prepared to respond if there is a wildfire,”

Mr. Phonephaneth says. “Every year, the village fire committees update me on their fire control plans. The number of wildfires has decreased and there has been an increase in biodiversity. I talk to villagers who say there are more wild animals such as monkeys and squirrels as well as edible insects, wild vegetables and bamboo shoots.”

### **Most Significant Change**

There has been a noticeable decrease in wildfires as a result of the village fire control plans as well as closer community and government cooperation. For example, in 2015 only 35 hectares of land were adversely affected by wildfires, out of a total forest area of 6,862 hectares in the district. Villagers know how to use constructed and natural fire breaks to reduce damage from wildfires. The P-FALUPAM process also resulted in a consolidation of upland cultivation areas that makes wildfires easier to control. There has been a corresponding increase in biodiversity as measured by informal reports of more wildlife and non-timber forest products.

**“P-FALUPAM saved the Matsutake mushroom.”**



Photo credit: TABI

## **Protecting forest areas critical for the mushroom sector**

Mr. Onsy Sisavath. 63 years old. Mushroom collector. Pongmanh Village, Phoukoud District, Xiengkhouang province.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

The Lao matsutake mushroom is known as het wai by the locals in Phoukoud District. Collectors can find het wai in mixed forest areas but they are mostly found near chestnut trees. It is also known as the pine mushroom because in Japan it grows in pine forests. The peak season for collecting het wai is from late May to early September. Het wai are in high demand among Japanese and Chinese buyers and the price has been increasing over the last few years.

Mr. Onsy has been collecting het wai since 2009. He says, “When I started collecting, the price was low - 1 kilo was maybe 5,000 Kip (USD 50 cents). Now more people are collecting het wai because the demand and prices have gone up.” Increased demand means more competition for Mr. Onsy. “I get up at 1 a.m. No one gets up early like me. I use my flashlight to find the mushrooms.” Mr. Onsy attributes the growing scarcity of het wai to the increased number of collectors, slash-and-burn agriculture, and unsustainable harvesting practices. “Many inexperienced people use a knife or a shovel or a digging bar,” he says. “It’s better to pick them by hand and you should always leave a few, especially the older ones, and cover them with leaves.

This will help them grow in the same place the following year.” The mushroom season is short, mushrooms grow fast and need to be collected at just the right time. Unorganized competition for collecting mushrooms was resulting in low yields and reducing the next year’s harvest



Photo credit: Sengphachanh Sonethavixay

### **After P-FALUPAM**

TABI worked with Pongmanh village and local government to develop a land use and forest management plan that defines specific areas for rotational cropping and the rotational period for the land. It also provides specific plans for forest management including conservation forests, protection forests, and non-timber forest product collection areas. P-FALUPAM plans specified forest areas for het wai collection. Management of these forest areas is important for sustainable mushroom harvesting. Says Mr. Onsy, “I was the main person helping develop the guidelines and areas for mushroom collection and explaining it to other collectors.” In 2019, the price of het wai was 100,000 Kip per kilogram for fresh mushrooms (USD 11.00) and 1.5 million Kip per kilogram of dried mushrooms (USD 160). “In 2019, I earned 5 million Kip (USD 556) from collecting mushrooms. I used the money to pay school fees for my children and to help my older children find work.”

### **Most Significant Change**

“P-FALUPAM saved the matsutake mushroom,” says Mr. Onsy. “There is an agreement now among collectors in my village to follow the guidelines for sustainable harvesting practices. As a collector, I feel more secure that I can continue to find mushrooms in the forest.”

***“People understand now why we need to protect the forest and watershed.”***



Photo credit: TABI

## ***Protecting village forests from powerful companies***

Mr. Neng Yong. 50 years old. Village Head. Tar Village, Paek District, Xiengkhouang province.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

Like other upland villagers, people in Ban Tar rely on rotational agriculture for their livelihoods. “Before we had any land use and forest management plans, we had many problems with uncontrolled wildfires burning forest areas, illegal logging, and loss of biodiversity,” says Mr. Neng Yong. “It was hard to make villagers understand why we need to protect the forest. When I tried to explain to people about why we should not cut the old trees, they would say the forest does not belong to anyone so I can use whatever I need.” The lack of a plan developed with a high level of community participation prevented Mr. Neng Yong from addressing the problems he was facing. It was difficult to have a dialog or come to a shared understanding of the importance of good management of natural resources and farmlands.



Photo credit: Senghachanh Sonethavixay

### **After P-FALUPAM**

In 2014, TABI helped villagers develop a land use and forest management plan together with local authorities that was approved by the District Governor. Mr. Neng Yong says, “Using our new guidelines, we set up a village forest committee to manage and monitor how we use the forest. Government officers from DAFO normally monitor once a month or every two months to review with the community how well we are implementing our plan.”

In early 2020, Mr. Neng Yong was informed by the forest committee that a well-known mining company had acquired approval from the central government to build an access road to the Nam Ngum watershed that passed through the village boundaries - boundaries that were officially approved by the District Governor. The villagers were not happy to have this road passing through land they had designated as protected forest. “Together with the villagers and the village forest committee, I talked to the company representative who was supervising the tractors. He told us they had approval from the government in Vientiane to conduct a survey. We said you can’t build a road through our protected forest. We didn’t let them continue construction and we informed the district authorities. Since then, the company has not come back.”

### **Most Significant Change**

With a land use and forest management plan developed by the community and approved by the government, the villagers were able to stop a large company with strong political connections from encroaching on their land. Now they are confident they can protect their land and forest areas from outside actors. “People understand now why we need to protect the forest and watershed,” says Mr. Neng Yong. “And we applied our village land use and forest management plan as evidence to stop the mining company from building an access road through our watershed.”

**“After the P-FALUPAM plans were implemented by the communities forest cover increased from 50% to 64% of the district.”**



Photo credit: TABI

## Increasing forest cover and biodiversity

Mr. Khamphout Keobounma, Director of District Agriculture and Forestry Office, Phonxay District, Luang Prabang province.

### Before P-FALUPAM

Since 2006, Mr. Khamphout has been the Director of the District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO) in Luang Prabang District in Luang Prabang Province. “We faced big challenges to manage the forests,” he says. The importance of his statement is significant considering the multiple threats to forests and biodiversity which are essential to rural communities dependent on forest and upland rotational agriculture. “It is difficult to make villagers understand the idea of sustainable use”, says Mr. Khamphout.



Photo credit: Sengphachanh Sonethavixay

Sustainable forest management was facing many challenges including uncontrolled wildfires, illegal logging, hunting, and unsustainable harvesting of nontimber forest products. “We tried to introduce alternative agriculture practices without success,” says Mr. Khamphout. “Villagers were set in their ways and villages are scattered and hard to reach, especially in the rainy season.”

### After P-FALUPAM

“In 2017, my team took part in the P-FALUPAM process as one TABI activity and developed a forest management plan with communities and agreed on areas for crop cultivation, conservation, and protection,” says Mr. Khamphout. “Working with the villagers, we developed regulations for fire control and management, and we urged each village to include women on their committees.” In this way, each village has set up a forest management committee that reports on their six-month, one-year and five-year plans.

Plans ensured that agreed areas for crop cultivation are consolidated and each year the farmers rotate to another consolidated area, making fire control easier, enabling farmers to collaborate more efficiently for field operations and harvesting. Plans are also used to generate awareness of the need to protect forests and the biodiversity they support. Mr. Khamphout says, “I talk regularly to Village Heads about forest management plans so we can keep up to date and revise the plans as needed.”

### Most Significant Change

Clear management plans have contributed to an increase in forest cover in Phonxay District. The total area of the district is 241,150 hectares, of which forest covered 50% in 2015. After the P-FALUPAM plans were implemented by the communities, 64% of the district had forest cover by 2019. Wildfires are less common, and government and communities say that there has been an increase in nontimber forest products such as broom grass, mulberry leaves for making paper, mushrooms, bamboo shoots, edible insects, and wild vegetables.

**“The P-FALUPAM land use plan ensured there is a steady supply of broom grass for local broom makers and for selling to traders.”**



Photo credit: TABI

## **Creating sustainable markets for local broom production**

Mrs. Kheum Houmphone. Housewife, 35 years old, two children. Sopjia Village, Phonxay District, Luang Prabang province.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

“I was born in Phoungvane village, not far from here,” Mrs. Kheum says. “In 2000, I married and moved to Sopjia, my husband’s village, where we first lived with his parents. We were able to save enough money to buy a small piece of land and build our own house. In 2005, my husband inherited 5 hectares and we bought another 5 from his parents in 2006. I always saw the broom grass that grows here used to feed livestock and we also use it to make brooms.” Broom grass grows on fallow fields and is part of the rotational agriculture system. Rotation has to be systematic to ensure there is enough broom grass for livestock feed and to support local broom production. Broom grass is one of the top five non-timber forest product exports from Laos, mainly to Vietnam and Thailand. Broom grass is killed by livestock overgrazing and wildfires.

### **After P-FALUPAM**

Sopjia village took part in P-FALUPAM land use planning as part of the TABI intervention. During the process, villagers identified areas for cattle rearing, pastureland, and crop production areas for growing broom grass. In 2016, Mrs. Kheum attended a TABI training workshop on how to make brooms, which she soon started making for sale. “I thought I could earn a little money so I planted broom grass on our own land where I can protect it from wildfires,” Mrs. Kheum says. “In 2017, I attended another TABI workshop on new broom making techniques with a trainer from Bokeo province. I started buying broom grass from other villagers, at first about 150 kilograms.” Demand for her brooms increased and Mrs. Kheum bought another 200 kilograms of grass at 10,000 Kip per kilogram (USD 1.10/kg). “With 1 kilo of broom grass, I can make three brooms, which I can sell to traders for 14,000 Kip each (USD 1.50),” she says.



Photo credit: Sengphachanh Sonethavixay

### **Most Significant Change**

While TABI provided the skills for Ms. Kheum to make and market brooms, the P-FALUPAM land use plan ensured there is a steady supply of broom grass for local broom makers and for selling to traders who take it to Vietnamese and Thai broom factories. Designating specific areas for grass cultivation helps protect broom grass from wildfires and uncontrolled cattle grazing. As a result, villagers like Mrs. Kheum can depend on a steady supply for making brooms. Mrs. Kheum’s example will encourage other people to make brooms, which will attract more traders and increase household incomes.

*“I am happy that my wife and I got into forage seed production.”*



Photo credit: TABI

## Changing local perceptions about land use and livelihood options

Mr. Souphaiphone Soulivanh. 30 years old, married, no children. Sopjia Village, Phonxay District, Luang Prabang province.

### Before P-FALUPAM

Mr. Souphaiphone was an English teacher at a school in Sayaboury province from 2012 to 2014. He was only “partial” staff as the government quota is limited. “In 2014, I resigned from my teaching job to work as a musician,” Mr. Souphaiphone says. “I got married in 2016 and moved here to Sopjia village. We did not have our own land, so I helped my in-laws cultivate upland rice and raise cattle.” Mr. Souphaiphone wanted to try growing fodder grass for his family cattle. Before P-FALUPAM, people in Sopjia let their cattle graze freely. No one in the village had experience of growing fodder grass on pastureland or for seed production. Demand for both was growing. “There was resistance to trying something new”, Mr. Souphaiphone says. “Fodder grass is not an annual crop and needs land allocated long term to get returns. Due to free grazing practices, this was not possible.”



Photo credit: Sengphachanh Sonethavixay

### After P-FALUPAM

With support from TABI, the community and local government agreed to plan their land use using the P-FALUPAM process. Villagers used this opportunity to designate areas for rotational agriculture and cattle rearing. They had not previously considered raising cattle on pastureland or growing their own fodder or producing grass seed. Mr. Souphaiphone’s wife was allocated 3 hectares of land from her parent’s 10hectare allotment as part of the P-FALUPAM agreement. He started planting fodder grass with support from an Asian Development Bank (ADB) livestock project that provided the seeds. Free grazing was still allowed so he constructed fences to protect his land, which was possible as a result of the P-FALUPAM agreement. “In 2016, I was able to sell 500 kilograms of grass seeds at 12,000 Kip per kilo (1.30 USD),” says Mr. Souphaiphone. “In 2017, I started to raise six cattle and feed them with the grass we grew on our land. I have been planting two grass varieties, ruzi and guinea. In 2019, the price of ruzi seed was 10,000 Kip per kilogram and guinea seed was 50,000 Kip (5.50 USD).”

### Most Significant Change

Mr. Souphaiphone’s example is changing villagers’ ideas about how to raise cattle and the opportunity for selling grass seed. Mr. Souphaiphone says, “I am happy that my wife and I got into forage seed production. Traders are coming from Sayaboury province to buy from our village. I expect to harvest more seeds in 2020 and I now have 12 cattle.”

**“Changes in the forestry and land laws on tenure and related issues are under discussion at the highest levels of government.”**



Photo credit: TABI

## **Moving benzoin cultivation towards a sustainable path to development**

Mr. Bounlerd Soulivanh. 38 years old. Six family members (four children). Finished primary school. Khampom Village, Phonthong District, Luang Prabang province.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

Benzoin resin has been known for centuries for its sweet fragrance and uses for incense and medicines. Lao benzoin (*Styrax tonkinensis*) has unique properties distinct from other species and locations that make it highly sought after in the perfume industry. The trees were once abundant in upland forest areas of Laos. The resin can be harvested from trees five to 15 years old. The trees are tall and harvesting the resin is a physically demanding process requiring strength and skill. Over the last few decades, the tree count has declined and the skills for harvesting are in danger of being lost because government policy discouraged the long-term rotational agriculture systems needed for the trees to flourish.

Without a land use management plan approved by district government that allows farmers to manage trees and have land tenure over a longer time period, the potential economic benefits of benzoin could not be realized. Farmers know prices can fluctuate unpredictably year-to-year, but they lack reliable, up-to-date information on prices, uses, and value of the resin. Mr. Bounlerd, a collector himself, says, “I don’t know what the resin is used for. I do know I need to collect it before other people get to it, but if I gather it too early the quality is not good.” Mr. Bounlerd collects about 60 kilograms of resin a year. In 2017–2018, 1 kilogram of resin sold for 200,000 Kip (USD 22.00), then in 2020 the price dropped to 90,000 Kip (USD 10.00).



Photo credit: Keooudone Souvannakhommane

### **After P-FALUPAM**

TABI provided an opportunity for local government and Khampom village to make long-term land management plans using the P-FALUPAM process. They developed a nine-year rotation system, identified specific areas for benzoin production from which the community leaders could then establish tenure arrangements for cultivation. “The trees produce resin for 15 years, so now we are confident to extend the management period,” says Mr. Bounlerd. “We also developed a fire protection plan as part of the process. We know how and we are responsible for building fire lines.”

### **Most Significant Change**

Farmers in Khampom village now have confidence in the tenure arrangements which will allow them to plant benzoin trees with the confidence that they will be able to harvest resin for a long time to come. Benzoin farmers have been expanding their production areas and are working to address challenges presented by price fluctuations. A local fire-control committee, established during the P-FALUPAM process, has increased capacity to prevent damage to benzoin trees by wildfires in their production areas.

**“As a result of the P-FALUPAM process, it was agreed that cardamom could be planted in forest areas.”**



Photo credit: KeoOudone Souvannakhoummane

## **Ensuring the successful expansion of cardamom**

Mrs. Mone Sengpanya. 30 years old, five family members (three children). Finished secondary school. Sammeun Village, Phonthong District, Luang Prabang province.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

Mrs. Mone Sengpanya, a mother of three, reports that, “In my village, most people depend on upland rice so we have food to eat, but we don’t have much money. Before TABI helped us develop land use plans for our area, I didn’t have land to grow anything until I was married. When my husband came to live in my village, I received some land from my parent’s allotment and we decided to try growing cardamom because it can sell for a good price. It wasn’t easy at first.”

Cardamom farmers have little knowledge about the end uses of their crop, no system of knowledge exchange among growers, and few traders come to their production areas. “I heard that Chinese people use cardamom as a food ingredient, but I don’t know how,” Mrs. Mone says. In fact, seeds from Lao cardamom varieties are used in Chinese medicines and not consumed as food. While problems exist for marketing and overall knowledge of the sector, farmers are still interested due to the attractive prices. They have not been able to expand cardamom because it is a perennial plant that will live for decades but only starts producing after three years. It grows best in shaded forest areas. Approved land use plans that allow for long-term cropping of cardamom in forest areas and protection of these areas from wildfires are crucial for stable production and expansion.



Photo credit: TABI

### **After P-FALUPAM**

As an outcome of the P-FALUPAM process, forest areas were designated where villagers were allowed to plant cardamom and the plans approved by the District Governor. “It grows much better in the forest,” says Mrs. Mone, “because it is less affected by lack of rain.” She goes on to say, “I started planting cardamom in 2017. I bought seeds in Phongsaly. There are two types of cardamom: Guangdong and Paksong. The Guangdong variety takes longer to grow and has a higher price. Paksong is easy to expand and grows fast.” Growers must travel to the market in Mai district in Phongsaly province to sell their cardamom. The price was high in 2019; 150,000 Kip per kilogram for Guangdong (USD 16.68), and 40,000 Kip for Paksong (USD 4.45).

### **Most Significant Change**

As a result of the P-FALUPAM process, it was agreed that cardamom could be planted in forest areas where it is more resilient to bad weather. This is a significant achievement since the government generally discourages planting crops within forest areas. Cardamom growers can now turn their attention to expanding production, marketing, and cooperation among farmers.

*“By expanding galangal product, I can make more money.”*



Photo credit: KeoOudone Souvannakhoummane

## ***Making space for galangal cultivation in forests***

Mr. Khamding Sikasak. 33 years old. Six family members, (four children). Finished primary school. Sammeun Village, Phonthong District, Luang Prabang province.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

Upland rice cultivation is the main livelihood system for Mr. Khamding's parents. "They gave me land for growing rice," says Mr. Khamding, "but since 2010, I have been planting galangal on half a hectare to start." Galangal, or Thai ginger, is a popular spice used in Southeast Asian dishes. The emerging opportunities for upland cultivation of galangal come from the sale of seeds for Chinese food, especially soups. On his small plot, Mr. Khamding can harvest 30 kg. of dried seeds. The plants become most productive after the second year. Before they can be sold, the raw seeds need to be steamed for 10 minutes and then dried in the sun or roasted. "It's a good crop and I can earn money, but I don't know how they use my galangal seeds," says Mr. Khamding. While galangal is relatively easy to grow and care for and does not need fertilizer, it is a perennial crop that requires long-term land tenure on land traditionally used for rotational agriculture.



Photo credit: Joost Foppes

### **After P-FALUPAM**

TABI provided an opportunity for Sammeun village to participate in the planning of their village lands using the P-FALUPAM process. At that time, the villagers agreed on what land would be used for galangal production and what land would continue to be used for rotational crops. The plans were approved by the District Governor. Mr. Khamding has been expanding galangal production into his upland rice areas, slowly replacing his rice with this cash crop. He says, "By expanding galangal production, I can make more money than with rice. In 2017, I could sell galangal seeds for 50,000 Kip per kg (USD 5.50). In 2019, I expanded my plantation area to 2 hectares, but the price has dropped to 35,000 Kip (USD 3.90). I was told that my seed is good quality, so I am not too worried."

### **Most Significant Change**

This profitable and environmentally sustainable cash crop is being expanded in Sammeun village. Mr. Khamding's experience, as well as those of others in the community, are changing their cultivation strategies from rice to galangal to take advantage of the economic opportunities. Now that the P-FALUPAM plans have ensured land use tenure, Mr. Khamding is earning a reputation as a source of quality galangal seeds.

*“Now that it’s allowed, I have started growing rattan on half a hectare in my allotted rotational area.”*



Photo credit: TABI

## **Helping expand rattan cultivation for food and profit**

Mr. Onsy Manivong. 41 years old, four family members (two children). Primary school teacher. Phathong Village, Nambak District, Luang Prabang province.

### **Before FALUPAM**

“I have been collecting rattan shoots for food since I was young,” says Mr. Onsy Manivong. Most rattan is found growing naturally in forests but was becoming harder to find due to wildfires. The shoots and fruits of some species are edible. As a food, the cooked inner stems are mixed with soups and stews or chili pastes. Small-scale cultivation of rattan is common but as a perennial crop, it requires long-term investment and planning to scale up.

### **After P-FALUPAM**

TABI supported Phathong village efforts to apply P-FALUPAM to identify important species, forest, and agriculture areas, and make land use plans that prescribed future uses and strategies. The villagers and district authorities agreed to allocate specific forest areas for rattan collection and protection. They also agreed to allow rattan cultivation on rotational agriculture areas under long-term tenure arrangements. Mr. Onsy says, “Now that it’s allowed, I have started growing rattan on half a hectare in my allotted rotational area. In 2016–2017, I was able to sell rattan seeds for 200,000 Kip per kg (USD 22.00). So far this year (early 2020) no traders have come. I think it’s because of the COVID problem, but I will continue to grow rattan.”



Photo credit: Sengphachanh Sonethavixay

### **Most Significant Change**

Villagers are protecting the wild rattan in the forest areas and growing more as a plantation crop as they see it has great potential, even with the current marketing difficulties. There is more rattan now for household use, especially as food, and more to sell to traders. Rattan farmers still have marketing issues such as the lack of infrastructure that links rural rattan harvesting areas to markets. The government tax, permit and quota system for rattan is a constraint that continues to be worked on at many levels. Chinese traders are now coming to buy seeds to be used in the jewelry sector.

***“I come to buy three times a week now. The bamboo shoots are bigger and better looking, which makes them easier to sell in the markets.”***



Photo credit: TABI

## ***Linking agro-biodiversity to income and small enterprises for women***

Mrs. Phanh Bualaphone. 35 years old. five family members (three children). Bamboo shoot trader. Namthoum Village, Nambak District, Luang Prabang province.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

Mrs. Phanh lives in Namthoum village, which is 32 km. from Phathong village. Phathong is in a more remote area that is difficult to get to. The trip between villages takes a few hours because of the mountainous terrain and poor road conditions. “I was a meat seller in my village,” Mrs. Phanh says. In the past, Phathong villagers collected bamboo only for food but free-grazing livestock would eat many of the young bamboo shoots so there was never a big supply. A villager from Phathong complained that no one would come to buy bamboo shoots. With no demand for their bamboo shoots, there was little interest in growing to sell.”

### **After P-FALUPAM**

In 2016, TABI supported Phathong village in a land use planning exercise using P-FALUPAM where they identified current agriculture land and forest use and important species they collect and sell. The villagers and local government officials agreed to allocate land in the village for livestock grazing and specific areas for bamboo conservation and harvesting. “This year, I started buying bamboo shoots from Phathong village. I buy two kinds, nor koud (curry shoots) which I buy for 2,000 Kip per kilogram (USD 0.22) and nor khom (bitter shoots) which I buy for 7,000 Kip per kilogram (USD 0.78). Nor khom tastes better than nor koud. After buying the raw shoots, I boil them to keep their quality and taste before selling, especially nor khom. I can make a small profit of 3,000 kip per kilogram (USD 0.33). I don’t gain much as it is a long drive by car up to this village and petrol is expensive,” Mrs. Phanh says. “I come to buy three times a week now. The bamboo shoots are bigger and better looking, which makes them easier to sell in the markets.”



Photo credit: Sengphachanh Sonethavixay

### **Most Significant Change**

P-FALUPAM resulted in a better income earning opportunity for bamboo collectors and traders. The forest, which has been protected for bamboo shoot harvesting, is now considered a small “bank” by the villagers. A villager, who was selling bamboo shoots to Mrs. Phanh during the interview, said, “When my kids want snack money or need to buy a pencil for school, I can just collect and sell a few kilos of bamboo shoots.” Local traders like Mrs. Phanh can access reliable quantities of high-quality bamboo shoots from village collectors for processing and selling at a profit.

*“ I am in charge of taking care of the money and I join in all the discussions in the village.”*



Photo credit: TABI

## Creating leadership opportunities for women

Mrs. Mit Chittaphone. 36 years old, six family members (four children). Studied at Primary School. Heuadoi Village, Phonxay District, Luang Prabang province.

### Before P-FALUPAM

Mrs. Mit Chitaphone did not complete her primary school education. She was busy helping her parents plant and harvest rice in their upland fields. As a married woman, she continued cultivating upland rice and caring for her household, her children, and her husband. Ethnic Hmong society is still strongly patriarchal and “a woman’s place is in the home”. Women are generally not considered for management roles on village committees and a woman had never been elected to a village leadership position. In 2017, TABI supported Heuadoi village in implementing land use planning, using P-FALUPAM to plan their land use visions.

### After P-FALUPAM

“In 2017, the village started applying the P-FALUPAM process,” Mrs. Mit says. “They had to have women participating and I was asked to join the process. I took part in many meetings about planning.” As a member of this committee, Mrs. Mit was able to demonstrate her leadership skills in helping the community make decisions about future land management that affected everyone in the village. Based on her active leadership and inputs from a woman’s perspective on the village P-FALUPAM Committee she was invited to take other leadership positions. “In 2019, I was elected as a village leader,” she says. “I am in charge of taking care of the money and I join in all the discussions in the village.”

### Most Significant Change

Mrs. Mit has more responsibility and is involved in decision making at the village level. She says, “My husband agreed that I could be a village management committee member. Other people, including other committee members, who are all men, respect me. I am happy to represent women in the village by doing this and I can show other women they can take part, too.” She is now a good role model for young women in her community



Photo credit: Sengphachanh Sonethavixay

**“Changes in the forestry and land laws on tenure and related issues are under discussion at the highest levels of government.”**



Photo credit: TABI

## **Supporting national dialog on land and forest policy with data**

Lao Forest and Land Use Development Policymakers, Vientiane Capital.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

The official position on slash and burn or shifting cultivation has been to slowly eradicate the practice. It was considered as a main cause of deforestation and biodiversity loss. A major obstacle has been the common understanding that these practices are simply “slash and burn” or “pioneer cultivation” that destroy forestland, and the practices were strongly discouraged. In reality, the practice is based on “rotational agriculture” with up to a 12-year rotation period and governed by local customary land rights not recognized under national laws. Rotational agriculture lands were subject to top-down land use planning and management processes with little input from communities. There was little quantitative data that would inform a better understanding of rotational agriculture systems and livelihoods for better decision-making.



### **After P-FALUPAM**

P-FALUPAM was a participatory process that engaged communities. Using P-FALUPAM, stakeholders collected valuable quantitative data and information about current land use practices and created inventories of biodiversity that were part of the rotational agriculture system. Analysis of the P-FALUPAM data by Berne University’s Center for Development and Environment in Laos was presented to the National Assembly as a way of informing members of the reality of upland agriculture practices and their inherent sustainability and importance to rural livelihoods.

Since the early 1990s, the term “pioneer shifting cultivation” has been on the table for discussion in the National Assembly. Rotational shifting cultivation is a traditional practice and as yet there is no alternative that would convince villagers to stop it. This is accepted by many leaders including National Assembly members, especially those who come from rotational shifting cultivation backgrounds. Discussions are ongoing but not yet at the technical level. A change in the 2019 Forest Law includes recognition of customary rights and is supported by the Mekong Regional Land Governance Program and involves traditional shifting cultivation which includes pioneer and shifting cultivation.

How to recognize customary rights in the land laws is still technically unclear, especially when that land is inside state forest areas. Both land law and forest law must be interpreted and disseminated. Dr. Luck Bounmixay (see below) took part in a series of events to discuss technical support for laws on shifting cultivation issues such as customary rights and was able to draw on P-FALUPAM data.

### **Most Significant Change**

National Assembly members have accepted that rotational cultivation exists and is a legitimate agriculture practice. P-FALUPAM collected detailed data and some customary rights are well understood by the implementation team, and some rights related to rotational shifting cultivation are documented and approved at the district level. The status of rotational shifting cultivation land inside state forest areas remains unclear, but the issue is under discussion.

***“You must understand the realities on the ground and have sound technical knowledge if you want to participate in land policy discussions.”***



Photo credit: TABI

## ***Enabling a young woman from a rural village to become a land use planning expert***

Dr. Luck Bounmixay, P-FALUPAM Manager, TABI, Vientiane Capital.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

Dr. Luck Bounmixay has a PhD in land management and was TABI's P-FALUPAM Manager from 2017 to 2019. She says, "I was responsible for developing and implementing the FALUPAM approach, which meant working with government ministries and departments, NGOs, international organizations and research partnerships, involving forest and land tenure in 13 provinces. Among other duties," Luck adds, "I developed and oversaw the data collection and analysis protocols for P-FALUPAM and delivered training to government staff at national, provincial and district levels."



Photo credit: Dr. Luck Bounmixay

Dr. Luck comes from a small town in Houaphanh province. It is difficult for a woman from a rural area to work her way into a position where she can influence policy at a national level. It requires an understanding of the realities faced by rural communities and access to opportunities for education outside Laos to acquire the technical knowledge needed to take part in policy dialog. Women's participation in land issues in Laos is still limited at the rural level and even more so at the national level.

Dr. Luck's advice to her female colleagues: "You must understand the realities on the ground and have sound technical knowledge if you want to participate in land policy discussions." Dr. Luck has her own personal challenges including losing her own house to the newly constructed railway to China, raising her two children and assisting her elderly parents.

### **After P-FALUPAM**

After working on P-FALUPAM in the TABI project, Dr. Luck had the opportunity to represent TABI at government subsector meetings on forestry and land policy. She presented P-FALUPAM data and outcomes and made sure TABI had a voice in these discussions. P-FALUPAM work enabled her to become a voice for the poor who face inequities in land issues. At the national level, Luck contributed to the formulation of the new land laws and the forestry laws as a voluntary advisory group member. This included meeting frequently to discuss options and analysis. "It's an intensive and time-consuming task," says Luck, "but the intermediary role of an advisory group member is becoming more important."

### **Most Significant Change**

Dr. Luck says, "I have earned respect from government staff, students and land experts as a result of my experience with TABI and the P-FALUPAM process. People are willing to consider my contributions." Luck is now working for the World Bank and government ministries preparing a seven-year Lao landscape and livelihood project. She continues to bring land inequity issues faced by the poor to fora that can make a difference and ensure that women have a voice in policy discussions.

***“ When DALaM started, few staff had a background or training on land issues. The role and responsibilities were clear, but staff did not have the knowledge or the tools needed.”***



Photo credit: TABI

## ***Building government staff and organizational capacity in land use planning***

Mr. Phaythoune Philakone, Director of Agriculture Land Use Planning Center, Department of Agriculture Land and Management (DALaM), Vientiane Capital.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

“TABI is the initiative, and P-FALUPAM was one of the core processes we used,” says Mr. Phaythoune Philakone. He goes on to explain, “The process helps build trust between communities and government officials by creating land use maps that recognize villager-defined land uses, using those plans as the basis for sustainable development planning, negotiating trade-offs, and implementing the plan through collaborative management of shared resources.”

The Center is under the Department of Agriculture Land and Management or DALaM. A main responsibility of DALaM is to oversee and supervise the implementation of agriculture land management, including land use planning and zoning. “When DALaM started, few staff had a background or training in land issues. The role and responsibilities were clear, but staff did not have the knowledge or the tools needed,” Mr. Phaythoune says.



Photo credit: Sengphachanh Sonethavixay

### **After P-FALUPAM**

As the main partner for the P-FALUPAM process within TABI, DALaM was given a budget and equipment for developing agriculture land use planning at the village level, and guidelines on agriculture land use planning and GIS. “Gradually, we increased our capacity to implement the P-FALUPAM process through on-the-job training,” Mr. Phaythoune says. “I was the key staff member from DALaM to develop P-FALUPAM processes. I used my team experience and practice on the ground. When we found gaps in the guidelines, we made improvements. For example, there was too much emphasis on agricultural land at the expense of forests. In 2019–2020, I developed two new guidelines for P-FALUPAM, one on agriculture land use planning, and another on land demarcation.”

### **Most Significant Change**

Decision-makers and stakeholders now recognize and respect DALaM for the knowledge and skills of its staff, who successfully apply the P-FALUPAM process and train others, especially other staff at the provincial and district levels. DALaM staff now have the technical capacity to apply the guidelines successfully and the capacity to develop and improve guidelines on their own. DALaM is attracting more collaboration and partnership opportunities to expand the use of P-FALUPAM guidelines, most notably with Nam Thuen 2 Hydropower and Phou Bia Mining. In addition to the four provinces where TABI used P-FALUPAM, DALaM has scaled it out to nine other provinces.

***“The Meung District tea project was going well and contributes to the regular income of farmers.”***



Photo credit: MRLG

## ***Scaling NGO capacities to support land tenure issues***

Ms. Vansy Senyavong, Director of Maeying Houamjai Phathana (MHP). Muang District. Bokeo province. Working in partnership with the Mekong Region Land Governance (MRLG) project.

### **Before P-FALUPAM**

Bokeo is a mountainous province in Northern Laos with a high population of ethnic minorities, including Hmong, Khmu, Akha and Lahu. Tea is grown by many households who collect tea leaves from an indigenous “1000 year old” variety of tea tree. But not all farmers were aware of the high value potential of this wild tea species. Therefore, these old tea trees were often being destroyed during the rotational rice farming cycle. Further, the wild tea forest has also been at risk from encroachment for commercial banana farming. Maeying Huamjai Phattana had been working in the area and recognized the threats to the old tea trees and the impacts on the livelihoods of the ethnic people. MHP helped the local communities find possible solutions to address the tea tree issue.



### **After P-FALUPAM**

With the technical assistance from the Agro-Biodiversity Initiative Project (TABI) on land tenure, land use planning, and land use management the ethnic communities in six villages successfully worked with local authorities to secure government agreements that recognized communal land use rights including the rights to non-timber forest products which helped to protect the wild tea trees forest for their sustainable use. MHP then helped the villagers to form a tea cooperative and link their products to domestic and international markets.

Photo credit: MRLG

### **Most Significant Change**

The tea cooperative has started to contribute to reducing poverty among ethnic farmers. They produce tea products ranging from green, black, and red varieties to boutique products such as hairy tip, silver tip and mao-cha tea. The quality meets standards for international markets, attracting buyers from France, Canada, Switzerland, China and Sri Lanka.

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