

## Progress Report

### Community Forest Management In Dongyang Area project (CFM)

Summary of project Progress report, October 2008

Supported by the Rufford Small Grant  
(for Nature Conservation)



#### **Background**

Over the last few years, the government of Lao has made a number of reforms to the Forestry Sector aimed at achieving sustainable forestry through joint forest management initiatives between concession holders and forest fringe communities. Over the same period, Lao adopted Forest Management Certification which led to the development of the Lao Forest Management Certification Standards in line with the Forest Stewardship Council's Principles and Criteria. Together, the national reforms and the certification scheme have the objective of Joint Forest Management that ensures the participation of forest fringe communities in forest management, and also that the benefits derived from the forests are shared with local communities to promote their future development.

### Project objective

The aim of the project is to implement the Community Forest Management within the project area and Forest management capacity and management rights to the local community, a year process. The overall aim is to secure the long-term conservation and sustainable management of the forest, by providing the local community with the capacity to understand and apply the government policy. The project should secure the conservation of endemic, threatened and endangered species by their inclusion inside conservation zones, and by raising awareness about their status, but also by improving the community's capacity to develop other income generating activities, and thus reducing the collection and consumption of threatened, endangered and other species. The project will also seek to ensure the participation of women and girls in the process of participatory planning and implementation of the conservation and management plan, as they play an important role in the collection and use of natural resources. All these proposed activities also aim to reduce the human pressure on the classified forest, populations are currently exploiting these areas.

*The activities of the last three months were:*  
Activities to achieve objectives

#### **1. Identify the role of the different stakeholders in the conservation of the Dongyang forest and primary forest management**

This activity we presented of our role to villages. In order that local people themselves may manage and use the forest, we are supporting the implementation of the "land and forest allocation program" where by the forest that supports villagers' livelihoods is formally registered with the government authorities as "community forest". The rights of the villages to manage and use their forests are being formally established by the government. And this helps to lead to the stoppage of chaotic forest cultivation and development work that has been promoted even without the will of the villagers.



We are also providing training and strengthening the role of "forest volunteers" who monitor the observance of forest regulations, manage the village forest by conducting research and so on, and who act as a focal point in the resolution of problems.

## **2. Build the capacity of the staffs**

### **❖ Background**

A five-days work shop on Community Forest Management was conducted at Houyyang center , Saythany on September 15-19, 2008 by Environmental and Community Development Society (ECDS) Team in collaboration with Water resource and environment Management Agency.

The field-based training was an attempt to enable field based forestry workers in Vientiane to tackle existing practical challenges of sustainable, efficient and equitable management of community forests.

Forest Action organized this type of training in response to increased needs for intensive management of community forests to meet livelihood and conservation goals.

The main purpose of the training was to enable participants to understand the concepts, approaches and techniques of community forest management by analyzing specific social, ecological and political contexts that influence communal forest management decisions and actions. The training covered a wide array of issues in both social and technical aspects of forest management, and the participants have enhanced their capacity to facilitate effective management of community forest resources.

### **❖ Course Contents**

Four clusters of topics around community forest management were covered (see point 1). First, contexts that influence the whole process of community forest management was reviewed in terms of what it is today and the trend over time. Second, basic concept and overview of how community forest management works was discussed. Third, the approach and process of community forest management was covered.

Lastly, tools and techniques for forest resource assessment and social analysis were discussed.

#### *point1. Contents of the Forest Management Training*

##### *a. Contexts of CF Management*

- Social*
- Policy*
- Ecological/forest resource contexts*

##### *b. Concepts of CF Management*

- Overview of community forest management process*
- Resource assessment and planning*
- Silvicultural options in community forestry*
- Knowledge and learning systems in forest management*

##### *c. Approach, Strategies and Process*

- Facilitating participatory forest management*
- Forward looking approach: assessment of best practices and developing vision*
- Sustained yield regulations through space and/or volumes control*
- Forest inventory*

- *Operational Plans*
- d. *Tool and Techniques*
  - *Participatory Resource Assessment*
  - *Mapping*
  - *Sampling*
  - *Measurement*
  - *Data analysis*
  - *Socio-economic Analysis*
  - *economic profile of community*
  - *Interest group analysis*
  - *Need analysis and visioning techniques*
  - *Facilitating OP Development*
  - *Matching socio-economic and resource information*
  - *Drawing management prescriptions*
  - *Contents of operational plan*
- e. *Wrap up, Action Plan Preparation and Follow up*

❖ Participant

This training was attended by 22 participants who included ECDS (13), NGO and project professionals (3), and forest division and other line agencies (7) were from 9 different organizations from 17 hills and Xaythany districts. While most of them had some experiences in social or technical aspects of forest management, a few were new to the process. Facilitators had to respond to the challenge of variation among participants by adjusting facilitation schemes and strategies.



❖ Methodology

Training flow and facilitation schemes

After reviewing the contexts in the first initial day, the concepts of CFM were discussed in the third day. Social analysis and forest resource assessment was discussed in the next day. One day field exercise was then conducted, followed by analysis of social and resource data, discussions on silvicultural options, facilitation

techniques, and operational plans.

Additional concepts and theories were integrated with field observations and exercises, and facilitation schemes allowed participants to move to and from concepts, process and tools of forest management throughout the training sessions. Facilitation scheme was interactive, challenging to learners, involved the use of examples, stories and

cases, relevant energizers. Resourceful participants were encouraged to contribute to the specific themes of their expertise to enhance their confidence.

#### *Residential venue and informal interactions*

The residential venue allowed for unlimited sharing and interaction among participants, and between participants and facilitators beyond planned sessions. Additional themes (such as point sampling) were also covered in the evenings as per the interests of specific groups of participants.

#### *Group works and assignments*

Around 10 group assignments were completed through the training. Homogeneous as well as heterogeneous groups were formed depending on the contents and facilitation methods. Group outputs were typed and distributed as handouts.

#### *Training aids*

Use of audiovisuals was done to enrich the learning process. Two films related to PRA tools in community forestry and lessons from Ladas on physical concept of development were showed and discussed as part of the training topics. Over 50 useful publications and reports were made available to participants for reference during the training. Precise field equipments were used in forest survey and inventory.

#### *Field exercises and Reflections*

Field exercise was conducted at phoukhaokhouay located at 26 km north of Vientiane. Participants worked in groups to develop an integrated understanding of the community's social, economic, political and ecological contexts of forest management. They got an opportunity to visualize the entire process of operational plan preparation by doing social analysis as well as forest survey and forest inventory. Social as well as forest resource data collected were analyzed, and the forest products demands of the community and supply potential of the forest was also compared. Possible objectives and strategies of forest management and appropriate silvicultural options were also explored, and implications for external facilitation support were drawn with respect to specific issues identified.

#### **❖ Action plan and follow up**

Towards the end of the training, participants prepared action plans to put new learning into action, and to generate new knowledge with additional questions. The salient features (detailed individual action plans are also accessible) of the action plan are as follows:

- ✓ Sharing with the organizational teams
- ✓ Design and conduction of forest management trainings to ECDS and other Organization
- ✓ Preparation and/or revision of community forest operational plans balancing social and technical processes and use of innovative tools and techniques.
- ✓ Social analysis using innovative PRA tools
- ✓ Establishment of permanent sample plots in community forests
- ✓ Establishment of trial plots in community forests to evaluate silvicultural options

- ✓ This is designed to provide participants an opportunity to share experiences, reinforce learning and help to create coherent cross context learning group that may continue to interact and share beyond the workshop.

### ❖ Evaluation

At the end of the training participants were asked to fill anonymous evaluation form. The analysis of completed forms shows (see point 2) that the training was a useful experience, and the only thing that needs to be improved is logistics.

#### *Point 2. Summary of evaluation of training by participants*

- Overall response: Very good 75%, good, 15%, Not so bad 10%
- Course content: good 100%
- Tools and techniques: participatory 90%, usual 10%
- Role of facilitators: empowering, efficient, coordinated, perfect relations with participants
- Participants: diverse but well adopted the situation very soon, perfect relations among each other
- Training materials: enough but need to be provided in advance
- Flow of content and connection: natural and lively
- Most useful contents: forest assessment and social analysis techniques (participatory tools)
- Topics not covered as per the design: nothing
- Training and time frame and duration: efficient use of time but still inadequate
- Weakness of the training: lodging, transportation and communication
- Future clients of the same kind of training: DFO staff, CF workers and users
- Training fees: sufficient 75%, not enough 15%, costly 10%
- Major learning: conceptual clarity on CF process and practices; exercises
- Overall impressions: closeness with participants and facilitators, learning environment and coverage of the content

## 7. TRAINING FACILITATORS

Prof Souphap Kouangvichit (5 days), Dr phouangparisak (5 days) and Mr Chanty (4 days) jointly facilitated the training. The three resource persons together had needed expertise in social, economic, political, ecological and technical dimensions of forest management along with required facilitation, analytical and managerial skills.

### 3. Creating boundaries:

Creating boundaries and borders within the forest are necessary within the framework of the forest management, so the village knows its area of responsibility. The boundaries are mainly based on the ancestral boundaries of each village. In order to create these boundaries, meetings were held with all the members of each village involved.

Dongmakhai Dontew and After two meeting with the villagers of these villages, the Area Head of the Ministry of Forestry and the representative of the rural district of Xaythany district, the two communities decided on the boundaries. Posts have been put

up to mark out this boundary from the east to the west of the Houayang forest; they will be painted at a later date. In these two villages there was relatively little dispute about where the boundary should be.



Boundary area between two villages One of the Houayang forest. Picture: Nidonekeo

### **Results and outcomes**

Most of the project activities outlined above have been initiated, and implementation is on schedule. There has been significant progress in terms of community mobilization and awareness raising on the forestry laws and the rights and responsibilities of forest fringe communities in forest reserve management. The project has produced educational materials for local communities, and the related training and capacity building programmes are now on-going, for distribution to forest fringe communities as part of the awareness raising strategies on their roles and responsibilities in forest management. Development of the SRA has been initiated, with adoption by local communities taking place towards the end of the official project timeframe.

### **Successes**

Some aspects of the project have been particularly successful. The project has managed to include more communities in meetings that were not part of the earlier awareness and sensitization programmes. The benefits of the project are therefore extending beyond the reach of the initial project focus to communities not included in the original project plan.

Since the start of this project, the Producers Group management has facilitated the development of appropriate SAP in line with current forest laws in six communities in the Xaythany District. This will be extended to the remaining communities in the near future. A District SAP has also been formed in this District. Education and awareness creation through workshops and seminars for communities have also been undertaken

around issues of forestry laws and regulations, with particular emphasis on SAP, forest protection against illegal logging, and the rights and responsibilities of communities in sustainable forest management. This programme has now been extended to the Pakngum District in the Southern Region.

### **Summary**

This project is meeting its goals and expectations and by the end of the project, all objectives should be met to a satisfactory level. Education, awareness raising and training activities are still on-going, as is the formation of SAP and CFCs, the abridged version of forestry laws and regulations detailing communities rights and responsibilities in relation to forest management has been completed. The next step is to distribute these to communities during awareness raising exercises to ensure they fully understand their rights and responsibilities and can share their understanding with others. Problems have arisen but these are gradually being overcome. It is important to recognise and address problems as they arise because this will inform future project planning and help avoid or better overcome such situations should they arise in the future.

### **Difficulties met to date**

In general, there have not really been any obstacles to carrying out the direct activities of the project, however, there have been problems with the institutional framework and the national strategies according to the government. Often, it has been necessary to wait for certain strategies to be updated; these are updated to ensure better coordination of the project and the government in the future. These changes require more workshops and consultations with all the environmental actors in the area to be held, thus postponing the completion of certain activities of the project