


## Political Ecology of Livelihood and Land Use in Rural Laos

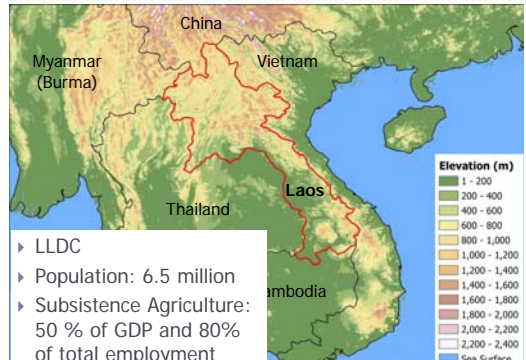
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### Mainland Southeast Asia



- ▶ LLDC
- ▶ Population: 6.5 million
- ▶ Subsistence Agriculture: 50 % of GDP and 80% of total employment

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### Income Generation Activities in Rural Laos

1. Off-farm activities (agri-forest products trading, selling commodities)
2. Farm activities (cash crops and livestock)
3. NTFP (non-timber forest product) gathering

Forest plays a significant role in generating income for people in rural area, especially for the poor.





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### Forest Decrease and Swidden Agriculture

Forest cover: 70% in 1950s → 42% in 2002 (a minimum area of land of 0.5ha with tree crown cover of 20%)

- ▶ Swidden agriculture
- ▶ Rapid population increase
- ▶ Wide-spread poverty

→ Implementing the **Land and Forest Allocation Program (LFAP)** for forest conservation and poverty eradication



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### Process of the LFAP

Protection Forest	Allocating agricultural Land to individual household
Conservation Forest	
Production Forest	
Regeneration Forest	
Degraded Forest	
	Residential Area

1. Classifying village area into 3 categories
2. Classifying forest land into 5 categories
3. Allocating agricultural land to individual household and giving land title

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The actual implementing the LFAP is supporting by Intl. NGO because of a lack of governmental funding.


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### Purpose of the Study

- ▶ Land Use and Livelihood Changes by the LFAP  
Monitoring and evaluation of the LFAP has not often been completed.  
We have little known as to
  - ▶ what agriculture the farmers have switched from their current swidden agriculture
  - ▶ what effect and impact the farmers have had
- ▶ Purpose of the Study  
This presentation discusses people's livelihood and land use changes that have occurred due to the LFAP.

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### Mai Nathao Village



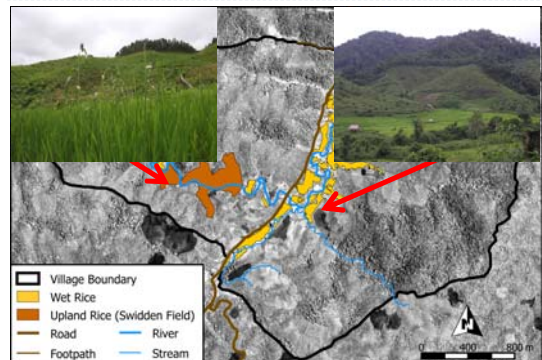
**Mai Nathao village**  
 Ethnic group: Khmu  
 Population: 192  
 No. of household: 33  
 LFAP Year: 2004

**International NGO Activity:**  
 From 2004 to 2006

**Main Activities:**

- ▶ Implementing the LFAP to successfully stop swidden agriculture
- ▶ Developing and promoting natural farming

### Land Use before LFAP in 2004



Legend:  
 Village Boundary  
 Wet Rice  
 Upland Rice (Swidden Field)  
 Road  
 Footpath  
 River  
 Stream

### Peoples' Plant Uses in the Village Area in 2004

For commercial NTFPs



For medicinal use



For edible use

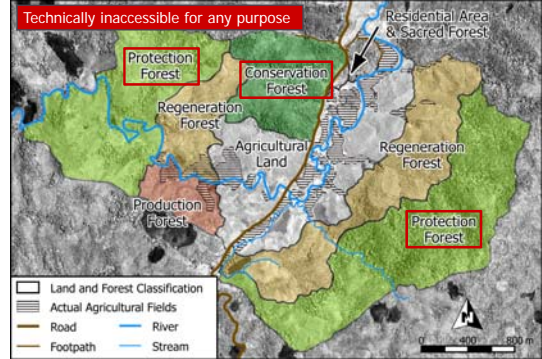


For material use



- ▶ Villagers gathered 138 useful plants from village area, of which 37 useful plants were gathered from swidden fallows
- ▶ Using the dynamics of vegetation changes

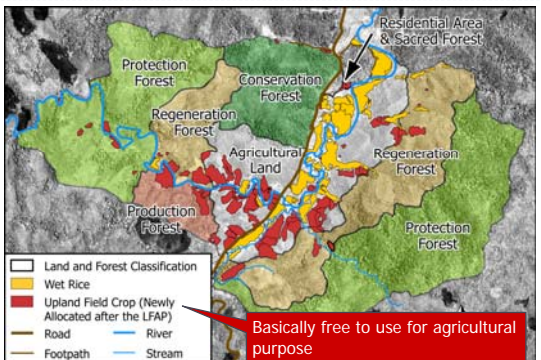
### Land and Forest Land Classification in 2004



Legend:  
 Land and Forest Classification  
 Actual Agricultural Fields  
 Road  
 Footpath  
 River  
 Stream

Basically free to use for agricultural purpose


### Land Use after LFAP in 2007




Legend:  
 Land and Forest Classification  
 Wet Rice  
 Upland Field Crop (Newly Allocated after the LFAP)  
 Road  
 Footpath  
 River  
 Stream

### Newly Introduced Farming by NGO


Fruits trees



Mixed-cropping (maize)



Planting NTFPs



- ▶ Hardly obtaining cash income from new crops which were introduced by NGO
- ▶ Peoples' livelihood got worth as compared before the LFAP

### Starting Contract Farming to Chinese Firms

Green Pepper (Sedentary fields)



Water melon (Second crop of paddy fields)



- ▶ The support of NGO finished in 2006. Then villagers made up a contract farming of green pepper and water melon to Chinese firms, even if the NGO had refused this type of contract farming which uses pesticides.
- ▶ The benefits of the contract farming for villagers: (1) no initial investment and (2) earning cash easily

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### Transboundary Influence of Chinese Economy in Northern Laos

- ▶ Making profit from exploiting local villagers and bringing all agricultural materials such as seeds, pesticides, chemical fertilizers and agricultural films from China
- ▶ Rapidly vanishing forest in Laos by replacing into various field crops and para rubber tree plantation by obtaining a land concession from Lao government

Tobacco



Para rubber tree plantation



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### Changes in Peoples' Livelihood

Aug. 2004



Poor life caused by forest destruction

Affluent life benefited from rich forest

Forest became rich  
People became poor

Jan. 2007



Villagers are selling green peppers to Chinese traders in front of NGO's signboard.


Natural farming introduced by NGO was not accepted.

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### Political Ecology of Livelihood and Land Use

Reasons for rapid changes in peoples' livelihood and land use

- ▶ The LFAP of government
- ▶ Rural development of International NGO
- ▶ Expansion of Chinese economy



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    graph TD
      Int'l NGO --> Rural Development
      Government --> LFAP
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      Int'l NGO --> LFAP
      Rural Development --> Changes in Livelihood and Land Use
      LFAP --> Changes in Livelihood and Land Use
      Changes in Livelihood and Land Use --> Chinese Economy
      Chinese Economy --> LFAP
    
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### Thank you very much for your kind attention

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