

Delivering as One

Newsletter of the Joint UN Sustainable Livelihoods Programme in Lao PDR

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In This Issue...

What is the JSLP (again) ?

And what are the objectives of this joint initiative?

JSLP Situational Analysis

Details on the research study, the upcoming timeline and the members of the research team.

Village Selection

The processes used in village selection and a brief profile of the five target villages out of the 29 potential target villages.

Methodologies

The participatory tools employed and people-centered principles guiding the Situational Analysis research team.

Upcoming Activities

Events and activities planned for the upcoming weeks.

What is the JSLP (again) ?

The Joint UN Sustainable Livelihoods Programme (JSLP) is a joint programme currently being developed by the UN Country Team in Lao PDR. In the spirit of UN Reform and the objective of 'delivering as one', the JSLP will bring together the experience and expertise of several UN agencies and one international NGO under one coordinated initiative.

Building on the Department for International Development (DFID) Sustainable Livelihoods analytical framework and development approach, there are three objectives of the JSLP. Firstly, to improve the livelihood asset base of vulnerable target populations and enhance their resilience to shocks, through the provision of an integrated interagency livelihoods support programme. Secondly, through partnership with the Government of Lao PDR, strengthen the capacity of provincial and district government staff to establish and manage sustainable livelihoods programmes. Finally, the JSLP will feed back to the provincial and national policy dialogue and decision making on sustainable livelihoods issues.

JSLP Situational Analysis

Beginning in late November, 2007, the focus of the JSLP has been the JSLP Situational Analysis. Undertaken by a research team led by international consultant, Mr. Paul Cunnington, the objective of this in-depth

participatory study is to provide an accurate assessment of people's livelihoods in potential target villages in the target districts of Xay and Nga, in Oudomxay province. In turn, this study will provide the basis for the JSLP Group to design programme activities which are beneficiary led and directly address priority concerns.



Timeline

Feb 7 – The research team completes their field work and returns to Vientiane to prepare the final report.

Feb 29 – The draft report is submitted and the executive summary is translated into Lao.

Mar 1 to Mar 28 – All participating stakeholders are invited to make comments, and a revised draft report is submitted.

Mar 25/26 – A debriefing workshop and presentation of findings is conducted with local Government partners in Oudomxay.

April 3 – A presentation of the findings is conducted in Vientiane.





The JSLP Situational Analysis Research Team

Mr. Paul Cunnington, International Consultant and Team Leader, brings over 10 years of experience in Laos, with NGOs as well as UN and Other international agencies. With a core competency in socio-economic research, he has extensive experience in the areas of sustainable livelihoods, community development and integrated rural development.

Mr. Phongsavath Bounphasinh, National Research Consultant, has over five years of experience as an independent research consultant, combined with 20 years of experience with the Government of Lao PDR and the private business sector. He has conducted field research for a number of agencies and organizations, in a diverse range of areas, including poverty alleviation, rural livelihoods, community forestry, and socio-cultural assessment.

Ms. Pafoualee Leechuefoung, National Thematic Research Consultant, has been recruited to focus specifically on gender issues faced by ethnic groups in surveyed areas. Having recently graduated from the Australian National University with a Master's degree in population studies, she has consulted on UN and Government of Lao PDR research studies, and has published papers on gender issues impacting women in Laos.

Mr. Vithanom Keokhounsy, Volunteer Research Assistant, has joined the study on a voluntary basis, providing support to the team and developing his own research skills. He brings over five years of experience as a research assistant on several World Bank, Asian Development Bank, and Government of Lao PDR research projects.

In addition to the research team, government staff from the provincial and district level have participated in the study, providing essential insights based on their local knowledge and experience working in the area.

Finally, staff from the UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP) participated in the Situational Analysis, conducting specific trafficking related research in a select number of villages.



Village Selection

Before arriving in the field, the research team had no preconceptions about which villages they would survey, but planned to select a small number of representative villages based on on-site information learned from discussions with provincial and district level government staff, as well as brief scoping visits. With the objective of identifying five villages that broadly represent the range of issues faced by the 29 potential target villages, the research team grouped similar villages according to ethnicity, accessibility, poverty, relocation history, history of opium cultivation, and type of agricultural system. Based on these criteria, the research team selected the following five villages for detailed research and analysis:

Ban Lak 32, Xay District

Straddling National Road 13 North, 32 km from the provincial capital, this village is easily accessible all year round. Functioning as the administrative centre of Kum Ban Phatthana Hua Nam Nga, the population of Ban Lak 32 is comprised of a diverse mix of Lue, Khamu, Hmong, Phunoi and Ho ethnic groups. This village has not been targeted for relocation, but has been the resettlement destination for several villages and households from various locations, and has a population of over 2,000 people. Ban Lak 32 reportedly ceased opium cultivation in 2004. With a poverty level rating of one, based on a scale of one to six in a ranking exercise conducted with Xay district staff (one being the least poor; six being the most poor), Ban Lak 32 has an improved water supply system, a health clinic and a primary and secondary school.

Ban Laova, Xay District

Situated near the Oudomxay-Luangprabang provincial border, access to Ban Laova requires a 10km walk off National Road 13 North.

Participating JSLP Agencies, Organizations and Programmes:

FAO
GAA/Deutsche Welthungerhilfe
IFAD
ILO
Office of the Resident Coordinator
UNDP
UNESCO
UNFPA

UN-Habitat
UN Inter-Agency Project on Human Trafficking (UNIAP)
UNICEF
UNIDO
UNODC
UNV
WFP
WHO

Ban Laova is comprised entirely of Hmong Khao (White Hmong) people, and reportedly ceased opium cultivation in 2004. Targeted for relocation to Ban Lak 44, situated on National Road 13 North, this village was given a poverty level rating of six.

Ban Hoei Oh, Nga District

With an entirely Khamu Rok population, and no reported history of opium cultivation, Ban Hoei O was given a poverty level rating of six, based on a scale of one to seven in a ranking exercise conducted with Nga district staff (one being the least poor; seven being the most poor). Located 50 km southwest of the Nga district capital, Ban Hoei Oh can be accessed by vehicle in the dry season via a newly constructed road, but can only be reached by foot in the wet season. This village does not have an improved water supply and while it has not been targeted for relocation, it has a history of frequent movement in the recent past and has been proposed as the resettlement destination for two villages and several households in the area.

Ban Khanyai-Nyai, Nga District

Located 72 km from the Nga district capital, and 10 km from the Mekong River, Ban Khanyai-Nyai is only accessible by vehicle in the dry season. Comprised of a mix of Lue and Khamu ethnic groups, the village has no reported history of opium cultivation. Ban Khanyai-Nyai was given a poverty level rating of two and has an improved water supply system, but has been slightly impacted by UXO contamination. There are no plans for the village to be resettled, but some households from elsewhere may be resettled to this village.

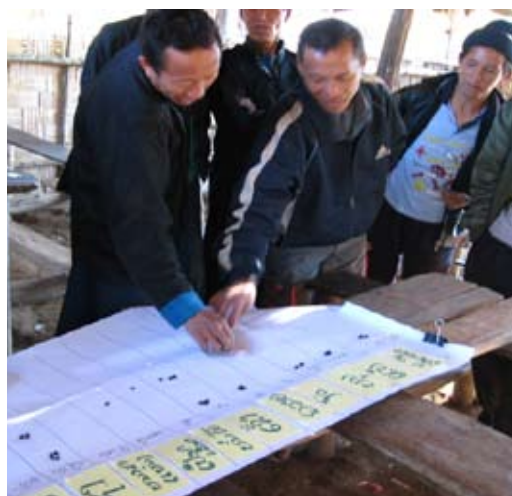
Ban Hoei Lom, Nga District

Comprised entirely of Khamu Rok people, Ban Hoei Lom is located 76 km from the Nga district capital, and six km from the Mekong River. Accessible by vehicle only during the dry season, the village does not have an improved water supply system and has been the resettlement destination for several households and villages in the recent past. Ban Hoei Lom has no reported history of opium cultivation.



Methodologies

The underlying framework utilized in the Situational Analysis is the DFID Sustainable Livelihoods analytical framework and development approach. Acknowledging both the strengths and criticisms of this approach, the research team has conducted the study with the core, people-centered principles in mind, while employing complementary alternative approaches where appropriate.



Prior to initiating in-depth, village based research, the research team engaged in a series of meetings with relevant government officials to investigate the district, provincial and regional context, including government policy, strategy and economic activity.

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Topics of JSLP Working Group Presentations:

Lessons Learned on Enhancing the Effectiveness and Efficiency of UN Joint Programmes (Key Points from the UNDG Report on Lessons Learned) – Office of the UN Resident Coordinator

Key Findings and Recommendations from the *WFP Field Study on Ensuring Sustainable Livelihoods in the Context of Environmental Changes* – WFP

Overview of the *UNDP Programme on Governance and Public Administration Reform Support to Better Service Delivery and Citizens Report Cards* – UNDP (GPAR-SBSD)

Proposed Plan and Research Protocol of the JSLP Situational Analysis – JSLP Situational Analysis Research Team

The Impact of Community Radio and Lessons Learned from the UNDP Khoun Radio Project – UNDP

Everybody's Business: Strengthening Health Systems to Improve Health Outcomes - WHO





Upon making the final selection of target villages, the team developed a village-level research protocol, employing a number of diverse research tools and methodologies. Spending four or five days in each target village, the team began with an initial village committee meeting to develop an overall understanding of the village context, including village history, statistics and wealth-ranking. A series of focus group discussions (disaggregated by both gender and poverty level) and individual interviews were then conducted, with a diverse array of informants, drawing on detailed Topical Guidelines based on issues identified by the consultants, JSLP agencies and other stakeholders.

With an emphasis on open-ended questions and the creation of a relaxed atmosphere, the team attempted to draw out villagers' own perceptions of their problems and priorities, using several participatory rural appraisal (PRA) and rapid rural appraisal (RRA) tools, including resource mapping, seasonal calendars, Venn diagramming, ranking and scoring. The team adapted the DFID Gender Analytical Framework to focus on gender specific issues, and gather relevant quantitative information, such as crop production levels and demographics.

Upcoming Activities

After the submission of the JSLP Situational Analysis report on February 29, the JSLP Working Group will organize a debriefing workshop in Oudomxay on March 25-26 for the provincial and district governments. Facilitated by the JSLP Situational Analysis Research Team, the goal of this workshop is to share the findings from the JSLP Situational Analysis with relevant government departments at the provincial and district level, and provide an opportunity for them to give their comments and share their ideas on programme activities and ways forward in the development of the joint initiative. Taking place over two days, the workshop

will begin with an overview of UN Reform and the JSLP, to give participants a clear understanding of the context, followed by a presentation of findings by the JSLP Situational Analysis Research Team. The remainder of the workshop will be focused on small group discussions, designed to bring out participant feedback, ideas on programme needs and activities, and some direction on the way forward for programme formulation.

Following this, on April 3, a second JSLP Situational Analysis debriefing will be organized in Vientiane to share the findings from the study and invite comments and feedback from government partners at the central level.

After the submission of comments and the completion of the final JSLP Situational Analysis report on April 11, a period of six to eight weeks will be allocated for participating agencies and partners to discuss, both internally and as a group, ideas for the formulation of the joint programme. This will include proposed programme activities, management structures, and financial systems.

In June, an international consultant will be recruited for one month, to conceptualize the joint programme and prepare the joint programme document. Through a consultative process, involving group and individual discussions with all of the participating agencies, organizations and government partners at the central, provincial and district level, the consultant will gather ideas and formulate the joint programme. The outputs of this consultancy will include the JSLP joint programme document, budget and activity workplan. These outputs will then serve as the key documents for the JSLP Working Group to approach potential donors for support of this initiative.

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