

Enhancing Capacity for Village Forestry in Lao PDR

Project Duration January to December 2013

Project Budget USD 100,000

► Overview

The project “Enhancing Capacity for Village Forestry in Lao PDR” was a one-year project developed by Department of Forestry (DOF), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry of Lao PDR with financial support from Korea Forest Service. The Implementation Agreement was signed on 31 December 2012.

The project was proposed to support the DOF to implement village forest management strategy with developed guidelines and field instructions including an assessment of the responsibilities of village and government organizations as well as development of sets of procedures to guide the implementation. It will enhance the capacity of DOF and its line units at the local level as well as empower the local community/village in terms of resource management.

► Objectives

This project’s aim was to contribute to the building up and strengthening of a firm foundation for the effective and sustainable management of forests in Lao PDR. The specific objective was to strengthen forestry administration in support of village forest development and empower village institutions in resources management.

► What have been done!

- Developed guidelines on village forest management planning and forestry administrative operational instructions at decentralized and village levels
- Formed team and network of trainers on village forestry



Meeting with local people at Ban Vang Village.



► The Result

The DOF has been continuing its efforts in internalizing village forestry guidelines developed through the project. Consolidated guidelines on village forest management planning and administrative arrangements of the forestry sector was developed as part of the guidelines on the decentralization of government administration developed at the pilot village (Ban Vang). The guidelines together with lessons learnt from the pilot program were proposed to the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

The project has made tremendous contribution in the restructuring of the forestry administration, thereby leading to the establishment of an additional hierarchy at the district level to focus on forest management at the village level. Key instructions were institutionalized into the new forestry administration setup within the decentralized government administration system.

Satisfactory outcomes were also achieved in the subsequent rollout of the project, particularly with regards to the adoption of concepts and methodologies developed through the project. These methodologies were replicated in 11 villages.

The DOF is now recognized as a nodal point playing a central role in village forestry development. Project's outcomes have been continually disseminated through various means by DOF such as a various forms of consultation, national fora, meetings, training, etc. This has so far been very positive in pulling various efforts by different projects either within or outside the forestry sector dealing with natural resources management at local level towards a common pathway. Synergy is developed and a couple of projects are ready to implement projects in their own areas. There is an increasing request for assistance from project teams to the Division for Village Forestry and NTFP of DOF to provide training and supply local staff at their respective project sites. This is a promising sign of coordinated efforts in the future that will help scale up village forest management at a

rapid rate. Hence, a constant training process and refresher courses focusing on the renewal and refinement of skills, and the incorporation of new components is needed. A core group of trainers as well as a strong of network of trainers need to be maintained, strengthened and gradually expanded.

► The Future

The project has made a meaningful contribution to the restructuring of the forestry sector at the decentralized level and led to the establishment of two new additional hierarchies in the forestry administration. Although small in scale, the project has built up a firm foundation for village forestry development for the forestry sector especially the training of a group of core trainers and the maintenance and gradual expansion of the network of village forestry trainers. Exchange and dissemination of concepts and methodologies through various channels has allowed village forestry to gradually emerge as an important agenda for sustainable forest management in the country.

Aligning village forestry with the decentralized policy and the three-tiers/dimensional development approach of the government is key for its applicability and replication of the methodologies. There is need to go over the guidelines to make it more simple by readjustment of processes so as to be able to cover a wider geographical range of village forestry at more rapid rate in order to gain momentum. Systematic documentation of best practices needs to be introduced to continuously improve the quality of the guidelines as well as to integrate feedback back into the training course.

All of the measures to ensure the continuity and sustainability of the project will require a high degree of political will and financial and technical support. The DOF should consistently remain committed in pushing village forestry forward in a highly coordinated manner.

The ASEAN-ROK Forest Cooperation (AFoCo) is a regional cooperation mechanism in the forest sector between ASEAN Member States and the Republic of Korea. It was formalized by the "Agreement between the Governments of the Member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations and the Republic of Korea on Forest Cooperation", which was entered into force in August 2012. The AFoCo aims to tackle the issue of deforestation and forest conservation in the context of sustainable development, and broaden the scope to other Asian countries.