



Summary Report Workshop on



Linking the last mile: best practices in rural communication to improve farmers' and communities' access to information

July 31 - August 1 2007

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Acronyms

AI	Avian Influenza
AIM	NAFRI-NAFES Working Group on Agriculture Information Management
FVI	First Voice International
Kum Ban	Village Cluster Level
LEAP	Lao Extension for Agriculture Project/NAFES
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
NAFES	National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service
NAFRI	National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute
NLMA	National Land Management Authority
URDP/NAFRI	Upland Research and Capacity Development Program/NAFRI
VFI	Village Focus International

1. Introduction

The Lao economy is undergoing a rapid transformation from a subsistence based economy to a market oriented one. In order for farmers and rural communities to cope with these changes, they will need better access to information on a range of topics and issues such as on agriculture techniques and practices, market information and also on land rights and responsibilities.

While a number projects and organizations have tested out approaches and methods to improve rural communities' access to information, much of this has not been widely shared. In addition, there has been little effort to link mass media to development agencies and coordinate information and communication activities.

The Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and the National Land Management Agency (NLMA) are exploring ways to improve communication flows to the farmers and rural communities. Thus, this workshop was organized to identify appropriate rural communication and information practices as well as develop an agenda for improving how information is generated and communicated to the local level.

The two-day workshop brought together more than 160 participants from around Laos (see Annex 1 for Agenda). It was unique that such a diverse range of participants attended. This included: farmer leaders, representatives of mass media, ministry of health and ministry of education along with representatives from government and NGO staff working in agriculture and natural resources management sector

This short summary report provides an overview of the key lessons learned, the recommendations made as well as some immediate actions which can be taken to improve communication practices in Laos. To download or view all the presentations and other workshop information please go to: www.laolink.org

1.1 Objectives and framework of the workshop

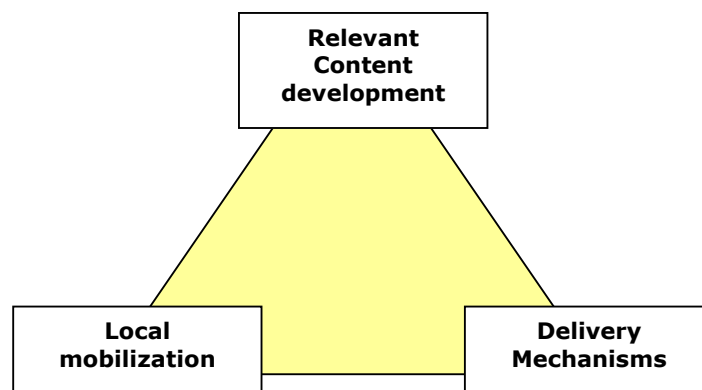
The main goal of the workshop was to identify mechanisms for improving communication and information flows to the local level. The objectives were to:

- Share experience in rural communication and identify best practice
- Identify key topics and issues that need to be addressed to improve rural communication practices
- Develop network of information and communication providers and an action plan to improve coordination.

The workshop used a simple framework to better understand rural communication processes that includes three elements (see diagram below):

- *Content generation*: Developing content on different topics at different levels.

Figure 1: Workshop Framework



- *Delivery mechanisms:* what types of communication mechanisms have been used in Laos and what were the lessons learned. This includes use of radio, TV, theatre groups, posters, telephones, cell phones, etc
- *Local mobilization:* use of production groups, youth groups, theatre groups, listening groups to develop local information systems.

The framework needs to work at many different levels and should not only be seen as a top-down process whereby information is provided at the national level to be delivered in different ways and then used by local communities. Rather the process should be seen as dynamic and working at many different levels.

1.2 Workshop process and elements

The workshop used a dynamic process that included a mix of performances, displays, presentations, plenary and small group discussions. Some of the highlights included:

1. *Performance of the Taouey, Salavanh Theatre for Environment Youth Group:* The group performed a play at the beginning and end of the workshop to show the challenges and opportunities in communication (see box)
2. *Information Market:* more than 20 displays (see annex 2) were presented. The market became the central place where participants shared experiences throughout the workshop.
3. *Presentations on best practice:* Nine presentations were made. This included lessons from both the agriculture sector as well as the health and education sectors.
4. *Mass Media panel discussion:* this included 8 representatives of mass media organizations who presented how they could support improved information to the rural level.
5. *Working Groups:* on the last day, participants were divided into five working groups to discuss how to improve networking and coordination on different topics. While the time for the working groups was short, there were a number of key recommendations from each group (see section 4)



The Taouey youth group performing a play on communication challenges and opportunities



The information market proved to be a dynamic way to share and exchange information

Box 1: Use of Theatre for Development

Community theatre is a new emerging communication tool in Laos. The Taouey Theatre group performed a play to show the importance of information in a market based economy. Their play concerned farmers who heard that corn was promising crop. The first year they invested a lot of money and were provided seeds by a trader. The harvest was not good and the trader paid less than he had promised. The village head then went to the district agriculture office to seek advice. The extension officer helped them organize, provided them with information and the next season they were able to harvest well and negotiate with the traders.

The play highlighted a couple of issues. The first is that rural communication needs to be locally relevant and entertaining. The TV Group usually plays in Taouey language and is a quite popular way to spread messages. Second, the play highlighted one of the key outcomes of the workshop – the need to strengthen local organizations (not one externally initiated) so farmers can improve sharing and their negotiation powers. The play was so popular at the workshop that Lao STAR TV recorded the play and traditional Taouey singing so that it could be broadcasted nationally.

2. Summary of Lessons learned

2.1 Lessons learned from the presentations

Nine presentations were made (see Annex 1) during the plenary sessions representing a wide range of experiences. In addition to presentations focused on natural resource management, presentations from the health and education sectors were also used as examples. Below are some of the key lessons and issues raised.

1. Communication is a two-way process

Many of the presentations reiterated that communication is a two way process, it is not only about disseminating information to the local level but also understanding the needs of local people and what their key concerns are.

In terms of this there were two main points. First, it was clear from most of the presentations that it is not possible to develop materials nationally that will be relevant locally. Thus, a combination of expertise is needed whereby messages and information are adapted to local level needs. Second both presentations from NLMA and the NAFRI/NAFES Agriculture Information Management (AIM) working group that there is a need for feedback mechanisms from the grassroots to the national level. Both agencies are developing mechanisms to ensure problems faced at the local level can be raised and dealt within in a sufficient time period.

2. Communication should be integrated into development activities

The presentations did not focus solely on communication but rather demonstrated how closely connected they are to rural development and poverty alleviation efforts in Laos. Communication should be seen as a tool and an integral part of any activity carried out in development. There is a need to develop communication strategies and activities from the outset rather than seeing it as something that is done after the project or activity ends.

The presentation on Avian Influenza showed the need to build in communication strategies from the outset and use a range of mechanisms to pass along information (including mass media, schools, posters, booklets, etc). It also demonstrated the need to complement materials distributed on a national basis with more specific and adapted information to the local level.

The presentation by PADETC on the link of communication and education for sustainable community development also showed the need to use communication strategies at the outset and that they should be integrated into activities. Proper communication is the precondition to a learning process that will build up peoples' capacities to take control of their own lives. The way content is communicated will either encourage or discourage that process.

3. Communities should be owners of communication processes

Communication should not be seen as only providing farmers or communities with information but rather communities and local groups should be deciding how information is produced and communicated. Many of the presentations emphasized the importance to base communication practices on local needs, preferences and knowledge. Where communication activities are most effective it is where local knowledge and decision making is promoted.

The presentation from Nam Saat (clean water) showed that the sanitation sector is moving from mass media campaigns to locally designed communication process. In this process, key hygiene messages come from the local community, written in national and local language. Here communities decide what the key messages are and how these should be communicated.

Similarly, PADECT presented a process where teachers develop their own stories and content and are taught to make films thus increasing the relevance of the information presented. Also appropriate and innovative mechanisms to spread the information are needed, for example the use of promotion and training inputs during social gatherings and traditional festivals.

The Rural Development Programme in Mountainous Areas of GTZ emphasized the need to provide communities with ways to manage their own information. Often times, plans, monitoring and evaluation and studies are made by outsiders but never returned to the communities who are subjects of these activities. In the GTZ example, villagers are assisted to become 'information managers' and are actively involved in planning and monitoring activities. The key lesson was that communities should have their own mechanisms and procedures for managing and using information.

Finally, it was found that local groups are the most effective mechanism to disseminate information. This way, communication activities can be based on local knowledge of communities and supplemented with appropriate knowledge from the outside. The theatre groups of KAMKID and the Touey TV group showed the importance of using local language and stories that are relevant and entertaining.

4. Opportunities to use new technologies to improve rural communication

Some new technologies and mechanisms to improve local communication were also presented. The satellite radio tested out by First Voice International and Lao National TV showed one way to get information out to remote rural areas using a new technology. Many participants and agencies were interested to see the further use and testing of this technology. The recently initiated Lao Star TV Channel is another way to disseminate information to rural areas.

Another new technology being tested out in Laos is using community radio. Community radio provides an alternative to mass media and an opportunity for local communities (usually at the district or cluster level) to produce their own programming. This is currently being tested out by UNDP in Khoun District and it is expected that it will be scaled up in the coming years.

One presentation explained how SMS messages on cell phones are being used in Zambia to provide farmer with real time information on prices and traders interested to purchase different commodities. Such mechanisms could be adapted to the Lao context, however, they are also dependent on developing better linkages with traders, farmer groups and Lao telecommunications.

While not focusing on communication tools but on communication networks, the presentation by Sunlabob showed the opportunities that can be harnessed by rural electrification. The communication flow and direct link to the villagers is ensured through support to local business development leading to a franchises network. Close cooperation of private service providers with educational organization, researchers, projects and public institutions is essential get new technology widely distributed.

5. Using the Kum Ban as a communication platform

The Kum Ban was discussed as an important concept and physical unit that has been established by the Government of Lao. The presentation from SADU and NAFRI emphasized using the Kum Ban as a communication platform rather than as a demonstration area. In their work in Xieng Khouang on improving livestock systems, the Kum Ban as a platform has shown three benefits: 1) farmer-to-farmer exchange 2) way to strengthen local business development services 3) as a negotiation channel between farmers and traders.

In subsequent discussions it was emphasized the Kum Ban can act as a catalyst for community development (and communication) if it is seen as a place for community learning and sharing, rather than as another outpost of government line agencies. In this way, the physical location of the Gum Ban should be decided by community members as an opportunity for community organization and strengthening.

6. Lessons in establishing Market Information Systems (MIS)

Improving market information systems is a priority in Laos. Farmers need better access to market prices, potential traders and where they can buy materials and inputs, while traders and local commercial associations are interested in better market information potential markets.

From the presentation on MIS in Bokeo two important lessons were presented. First, market information systems should be established in collaboration with other key stakeholders, such as chamber of commerce, traders etc., rather than having being government run. Second, the presentation reiterated the need to establish farmer production groups so that there was demand for market information at the local level. Without local production groups it would be hard to create a system that was based on needs and concerns of local farmers.

The presentation by SADU on the Kum Ban also showed how the village cluster can be used a platform to improve local marketing information through regular meetings between traders and farmer groups. This could be for price, inputs or getting better information on quality and processing issues.

2.2 Towards developing a network on information and communication

At the end of the first day, presentations were made by the National Land Management Agency (NLMA) and MAF on their future plans to improve information and communication processes.

The NLMA presentation focused on how to improve awareness about land related issues. The agency has been newly established in order to tackle the serious issues of land degradation and transformation. It was mentioned that there are a number of problems related to information including:

- There is minimal communication between land related agencies regarding overall land management policies, strategies and operations.
- There is a paucity of useful information at all levels and when relevant information exists it is often inaccessible.
- Little information at the local level to assist farmers in improving livelihood.
- Lack of capacity at provincial and district land offices to collect and disseminate information to the community.
- Lack of community awareness as to institutional roles which creates confusion.

To improve this, the NLMA is working with a range of government and non-government agencies to improve awareness on land related issues. It not only wants to ensure that information on land rights is disseminated to villages but also that problems and conflicts villagers are facing can be raised up to the national level. Some of the main information activities NLMA will carry out include:

- Create a Coordinated National Land Information Data Base
- Develop a National Training and Empowerment of Local Communities Program
- Undertake a National Public Awareness Program
- Publish a Quarterly Technical Journal on Land and Natural Resource
- Set up an information hotline on land and natural resources management related issues

As part of this, Village Focus International is working closely with NLMA to educate and enable village people, local government staff and NGO field staff about land and natural resource rights and related issues in order to protect village tenure, improve stewardship over land and natural resources and to improve the standard of village life. The program will use a number of tools including:

- Networking and Policy Development
- Content Development and Delivery Mechanism (IEC, training, radio, TV)
- Village Pilot Activities
- Develop a baseline of farmers knowledge using tools such as KAP

The second networking presentation was on the recently established **Working Group on Agriculture Information Management (AIM) between NAFRI and NAFES**. This was based on the recognition that there is a need to improve the flow of information between NAFRI and NAFES as well as ensure that information produced is reaching and meeting the needs of farmers and extension staff. The Group is currently working primarily at the national level but has recently been discussing at the provincial and district level how to improve information and communication activities. Some of the key activities it currently carries out include:

- Information Management (LAD, NALIS, collection of materials at central level)
- Production and dissemination (joint material development and repackaging of information, working with different media and communication channels)
- Facilitating learning and sharing: workshops and learning processes
- Technical advisory services: directory of expertise, call center, etc.
- Providing advise and support to projects and centers on producing and disseminating materials

At the provincial level, the group hopes to improve information and communication flows between national, provincial, district and kum ban level. At an initial workshop between four provinces in the North (Phongsaly, Luang Namtha, Oudomxay, and Bokeo) some of the key issues raised included:

- No system for information and communication at provincial level – mainly carried out on a project by project basis
- Need way to understand problems of villagers and solve these quickly rather than just producing information to disseminate.
- District level problems with using information or planning and decision-making - problems with land use planning and investment
- Few linkages to radio, TV and ways to disseminate information to farmers effectively
- No mechanisms for collecting information on best practice, Kum Ban level issues, etc
- There are opportunities to work with local radio and TV as well as improve horizontal linkages between districts and provinces.

The AIM Group expects to test out methods to improve information and communication processes at the provincial-district level as well as develop recommendations on how to set up information systems at these levels.

2.3 Challenges and opportunities in working with the Mass Media

A panel discussion was organized among key actors in the mass media (Radio, TV and print). The purpose of this discussion was to allow the mass media to present and discuss how it can link up to the agriculture and natural resource management sector more effectively. The agencies participated included:

- Kao San Pratet Lao: publish economic news, foreign news, website, pictures collection and CD ROM.

- Pasason: is the voice of the Central Party and was established even before 1975. It has a trusted database and several products.
- Vientiane Times: established in 1994 provides news in English and French. Focused on providing the foreign community with news on development and the environment.
- Lao National TV: several programs on agriculture and forestry that have been developed with MAF, particularly NAFES.
- Lao Star TV: is the youngest mass media agency and started broadcasting in February. It is still in the testing period but the strength is that it covers the whole country and anyone can receive with a satellite dish.
- Lao National Radio: the radio covers a large area Laos and is listened to by many in the rural areas. It has a diverse range of programs relating to agriculture.
- Oudomsay Provincial Cultural and Information Department: operates the provincial TV and radio and has also been working with IFAD and other projects on rural communication. It has installed speaker systems in 20 villages and broadcast in 4 ethnic languages: Lao, Khamu, Hmong and Akha.

Many of the representatives mentioned that they have found it difficult to coordinate with other government agencies particularly the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry to generate content and interesting shows. There is not a clear mechanism for coordination among mass media and government agencies. In addition, there is a lack of budget and most programs are developed using project funding and when the project ends so does the programming.

In terms of generating content, it was generally recognized that the content produced is not that useful and is often quite old. The main problem identified is lack of budget and skilled staff. The issue of press freedom also came up and it was mentioned that there is full press freedom but it has to be within the law and the policy of the party and most important it has to be accurate to report to the people.

In terms of improving collaboration and content, it was recognized that the mass media have great potential and there is a need to improve programming. Many of the agencies were planning to carry out user surveys to see what they could improve. Only Lao National TV has done this recently. It was also mentioned that the mass media is open for cooperation. It was felt that mass media could play an important role in development and should be considered in development projects. This does not have to be at the central level only but could be at the provincial level as well. To improve coordination it was suggested that there should be focal points set up at MAF or NLMA to improve collaboration and make it clear. Finally, it was suggested the mass media should focus on reporting the existing situation (good or bad) and let people analyze themselves the strengths and the weaknesses.

2.5 Summary of communication mechanisms

Table 1 provides a summary of different communication tools that were presented at the workshop and some of their strengths and weaknesses. It was agreed that it is not a matter of choosing which is best, but rather using communication as a tool to deal with different issues or problems that arise.

Beyond the tools, there is also a need to consider mechanisms for improving coordination and sharing of information. One mechanism raised is the need to have "focal points" in each agency or at different levels to facilitate improved information and communication flows. Without this, there will never be long-term impact.

Table 1: Summary of mechanisms to improve rural communication

Mechanism	Strength	Weakness
Community Theatre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Entertaining and carried out by local groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming to develop new inputs • Needs facilitator/trainer
Local material development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Builds capacity of villagers to make content and messages • In local languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Time consuming and hard to scale up
TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Broad coverage • Up-to-date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need access to electricity, exclude poor people
Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can reach also the remotest and poorest families • Up-to-date 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Content not locally determined, not all content relevant
Satellite Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can be used in remote areas • Supports local development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Technology needs to be established in each village, costly
Community Radio	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Needs based • Carried out by local community • In local languages 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need commitment of local groups and people as well as investment
Kum Ban	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local peer group exchanges • Strengthen local private business development • Strengthen local ownership 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not yet common understanding on Kum Ban approach

3. Working Group Outputs

Five working groups were formed to discuss how to improve coordination in the future. The working groups included:

1. Development of national information network for agriculture and NRM
2. Role of PAFEC, DAFEO and Information Service Center at Cluster Level
3. Community mobilization and mechanisms to share at cluster level
4. Developing communication program on land and legal rights
5. Market information system development

Three basic questions were asked of each working group. The first one focused on identifying the key issues to develop an information network around. The second question focused on mapping out the different actors and mechanisms for improving communication flows. Finally, participants were asked to come with an action plan.

Below is a short summary of each working group. The outputs of the working groups are shown in Annex 3 and the key action points of each group have been incorporated into the conclusions and recommendations.

Working group 1 focused on developing a national level network. The group identified key issues and agencies involved at the national level. It recommended that each agency at the national level should have a focal point for information and communication and that regular planning meetings with the media should be initiated.

Working group 2 focused on improving information management at the provincial and district levels. It recommended that tools for information and communication should be developed at the provincial level and that focal points should be appointed at the district and provincial level to improving information and communication systems.

Working group 3 focused on improving the Kum Ban as a communication platform. The group identified a number of important information needs of farmers and also identified the roles of key actors at the provincial and district level. It recommended that the Kum Ban should be seen as a place for community learning and support.

Working group 4 focused on land rights and responsibilities. It identified key problems in terms of land management and concessions and the negative impacts they are having on local livelihoods. The group identified a number of ways to improve awareness on lands rights and decided that a meeting of key stakeholders will be held towards the end of the year to develop a program on lands rights and responsibilities.

Working group 5 focused on marketing information systems and contract farming. In terms of marketing the group identified inconsistency in prices, lack of marketing information and the variable quality of products as key problems. It was suggested that the Kum Ban could play a leading role in market information at the local level and possibly new methods such as SMS should be investigated. For contract farming the key problems included lack of understanding on contracts and lack of information for farmers on contracts. In terms of follow-up awareness campaigns should be carried out on contracts should be developed.

4. Conclusions and recommendations

The workshop was considered to be an important step in the process to establish horizontal and vertical communication and information links. The 11 presentations, the information market with its 20 display booths, the panel discussion, the five working groups and the theater performance lead to a set of outputs, which are the basis for these conclusions and recommendations.

Recommendation 1. There should be more opportunities to exchange lessons and experiences across sectors

The exchange and spreading of lessons can be considered as highly successful. It was agreed that it was useful to bring participants from a different sectors together (agriculture and natural resource management, health, education, mass media, community level, etc) as there are many lessons to be shared across the sectors.

It was also agreed that there should be more opportunities to share lessons and experiences across sectors and possibly another sector (health or education) could organize such an event in the future. Finally, this workshop should be seen as a first step to develop improved coordination among projects, government agencies and mass media to improve communication and information linkages.

Recommendation 2. Local groups should be strengthened and supported

One major output of the meeting was the agreement on an underlying principle: Setting up and operating a sustainable knowledge and information network needs functioning community groups. These groups can be production groups, village forest groups, radio or newspaper groups, women groups, theater groups, handicraft producing groups, and so on.

Participants agreed that there is a need to further support, strengthen capacity and work through local groups, based on their identified needs and knowledge. This is considered as an important step towards communities' ownership of communication and information processes.

Recommendation 3. The Kum Ban should be seen as a communication platform

It was agreed that the Kum Ban is a highly relevant and important concept for rural development and community mobilization. It was suggested though that the Kum Ban should be seen as a community tool rather than another level of government administration. Thus, community centers of learning where communities and different sectors can come together should be promoted rather than having each government agency establishing its own office or outpost at the Kum Ban Level

Recommendation 4. Central Level Knowledge and Information Network to be established

To continue the exchange of best practices and complement capacities and competences, coordination and networking is essential. The goal of the central level network is to support the establishment of networks on provincial, district and local levels and to facilitate the information flow to and from all levels.

It was recommended to initiate an information network by establishing focal points for information management at each stakeholder level. The network should connect to and utilize the existing structures and initiatives, like the framework of the Agriculture Information Management (AIM) group. Along with NGOs, projects, public and private services, the network should include the media services, which have been neglected in the past.

A first coordination meeting was hosted by NLMA one day after the workshop and included representative from URDP/NAFRI, LEAP/NAFES, GTZ/RDMA, NLMA, VFI, UNDP, World Bank/Water Sanitation Programme and the SDC Agro-biodiversity Programme. It was agreed that there should be immediate follow-up in order to keep the momentum generated at the workshop going. It was also agreed that a full-day meeting would be organized to map out existing networks and systems and develop a plan of action.

Recommendation 5. Focal points to coordinate with media to be established

The meeting suggested that each stakeholder should arrange a focal point to cooperate with the different media service providers on national and local levels. The public and private media services have a broad out-reach, and are important for spreading information quickly. In the past the use of their services had not been utilized to the full capacity. Thus, it was recommended that there should be some form of coordination and planning between the media and the agriculture and natural resource management sectors. It was suggested that a planning meeting be organized between key agencies in MAF, NLMA and NGOs to begin this process and should be led by the NAFRI-NAFES AIM Working Group.

Recommendation 6. Establish a programme on village land rights and responsibilities

Land management, land allocation and land use are important issues relevant to all provinces and districts throughout the country. Discussions are often controversial, based on a lack of reliable information and uncertainty.

Thus, it was agreed a programme on village land rights and responsibilities should be established to improve farmers and communities understanding on land and legal rights. It was recommended that:

- Training should be established for NGOs and government staff on land and legal rights
- NLMA should coordinate with a range of organizations to improve understanding on land and legal rights including the Lao Bar Association
- Produce reading materials in local and understandable language and disseminate to villagers.
- By the end of 2007, NLMA will invite all stakeholder to discuss more on land issues and how to develop an integrated program
- An information hotline at the National Land Management Agency should be developed as a part of their communication strategy because there are currently no mechanisms to feedback problems and conflict and ensure local voices are heard.

Annex 1: Workshop Agenda

Day 1: Tuesday, July 31, 2007

Time	Agenda Point	Chair /Presenter
8:00 – 8:30	Registration	
8:30 – 9:00	Welcome and introduction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Opening speech by MAF ▪ Opening drama to illustrate difficulties in linking last mile 	MoC Somxay Sixanoh VFI Youth Group
9:00 – 9:15	Introduction into Information Market	Phoutthasinh
9:15 – 10:30	Information Market	
	Session 1: Overview of issues and opportunities in rural communication	Chaired by NAFES
10:20 – 10:30	Overview of workshop process, objectives and outputs	MoC
10:30 – 11:00	Community Design of Hygiene Promotion IEC Materials	Mr. Ving Sengsirichanh Nam Saat Central
11:00 – 11:30	Developing communication strategy for Avian influenza and understanding local perceptions and attitudes to AI	By Dr. Anothay Kongsayasak, Center for Information and Education for Health, MOH
11:30 – 12:00	Global experiences in rural communication with a focus on use of satellite radio	By Sharon Smith, First Voice International
12:00 – 12:15	Discussion	
12:15 – 1:15	Lunch	
	Session 2: Experience in community mobilization and group based approaches	Chaired by NAFES
1:15 – 1:45	Local Knowledge for Development: The example of CAMKID's participatory communication work in rural villages.	By KAMKID and RRDC
1:45 – 2:15	The Kumban: A new platform for rural communication	By SADU staff
2:15 – 2:45	Electrifying the last mile	By Sunlabob and LIRE
2:45 – 3:15	Coffee Break	
	Session 3: Towards a network on communication and information	Chaired by NAFES
3:15 – 3:45	Overview of program on improving awareness on land and natural resource management rights and responsibilities	Village Focus International
3:45 – 4:15	Presentation by AIM on approach to link last mile focused network and ISCVC – issues and opportunities	Somxay Sixanoh, NAFES
4:15 – 4:30	Wrap-up: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ How to develop a network of organizations to improve information and communication in agriculture and NRM 	Bandith/ Phoutthasinh

Day 2: Wednesday, August 1, 2007

Time	Agenda Point	Facilitator/Chairman
	Session 4: Developing relevant content	Chaired by NAFRI
8:30 – 9:00	Experiences from PADECT in developing information for rural communities	PADETC Production Unit
9:00 – 9:30	Tools to communicate with villagers	By Khankeo Ounpravanh, GTZ/RDMA
9:30 – 10:00	Development of Market information systems in Bokeo	By Stuart Ling, VECO
10:00 – 10:30	Coffee Break	
10:30 -11:00	Communication and education for sustainable development	Sombat Somphone, PADETC
	Session 5: Dissemination Mechanisms	Chaired by Hongthong Sirivath, VFI
11:00 – 12:00	Panel Discussion on use of mass media to disseminate information	By LNTV, LNR, Lao Star, Vientiane Times, Vientiane Mai, Oudomxay Provincial Info and Culture Depart.
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch	
	Working Group Session	
1:00 – 1:15	Introduction into working groups	Bandith Ramangkoun
1:15 – 3:00	Potential Working Groups <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. National: Development of national information network for agriculture and NRM 2. Provincial-district: Role of PAFEC, DAFEO and Information Service Center at Cluster Level 3. Village and cluster: Community mobilization and mechanisms to share at cluster level 4. Developing communication program on land and legal rights 5. Market information system development 	
3:00 – 3:30	Coffee Break	
3:30 – 4:15	Presentation of results	Chaired by NAFRI
4:30 – 4:45	Closing ceremony <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ VFI Youth group to act out play to show what has been learned in last two days ▪ Summary of key issues and recommendations 	VFI Youth Group NAFRI/NAFES

6:30 pm – Farewell dinner at Lane Xang Hotel

Annex 2: List of presenters at the Information Market

	Organization	Focus
1.	NAFRI and NAFES Agriculture Information Management Working Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Key activities of the group such as Lao Agriculture Database, NAFES Cooperation with Lao National TV, Uplands sourcebook, wisdom bag, Lao LINK Outcomes of the provincial and district workshops
2.	First Voice International	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Satellite Radio and experiences from around the world
3.	CIAT/SADU	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Poster: Kumban networking, Field Guidelines
4.	FAO	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials and posters from FAO work
5.	RRDTC/Kamkid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Theatre for Development; Charted information including pictorial language for the non literate; hands on workshops focus group discussions; local language presentations, Action Research on local knowledge, etc
6.	Integrated Pest Management programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials and display on using IPM as a communication tool
7.	AI Communication Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials, information and super chicken
8.	GAPE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community mobilization activities
9.	Sunlabob	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Solar equipment and information on village electrification
10.	ACF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Newsletter, materials, etc.
11.	World Bank	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Comic materials on the environment
12.	PADETC	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Videos and other materials
13.	WWF	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials on fisheries
14.	UNDP Khoun Radio Support Project	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Khoun Radio in the making – overview of Khoun Community Radio
15.	Mekong River Commission	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Display of mapping information systems and Mekonginfo
16.	Nam Saat	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials produced for the rural level
17.	Lao Star TV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Videos and overview of Lao Star TV
18.	Pilom Soumsouthi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> IEC for development materials
19.	LIRE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information and videos on planting and producing bio fuel
20.	Sustainable Agriculture Forum	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Materials, extension materials and manuals on sustainable agriculture



Annex 3: Outcomes from Working Groups

Group 1: Developing of national information network for agriculture and NRM

This group was comprised of national level actors including the mass media. The key types of information needed to provide are included below.

Type of information	Who involved
1. Land and Legal Rights: Resolution of recent national land management conference	National Land Management Authority
2. Technical information on agricultural productions	NAFRI, NAFES, MAF Line agencies and Ministry of Education
3. Information on Avian Flu and preparedness	DoLF, NAHICO, Ministry of health
4. Hydrology and Meteorology	National Water and Environment Agency
5. Information on regulations, policies and laws relating agriculture and forestry	Permanent Secretary Office, MAF
6. Best practices on agriculture productions	NICE/NAFES
7. Marketing such as prices, demands and quality	Markets, Trade promotion center, trade chamber

The group recognizes the need to improve communication between content development actors (NGOs, projects, government, private sector, etc) and mass media information. The group agreed to establish a focal point for each organization. This focal point will play a role as a mechanism on making sure information flow between content providers and mass media. The main follow up activities included:

- Each organization to appoint a focal point
- AIM to organize a meeting with key stakeholders (and Mass media) to develop further plans for improving coordination and communication.

Group 2: Improving linkages at the provincial and district level

The key issues and information needs included:

- Technical information
- Farmer's need, local conditions and trends including, Marketing, production means and credits, Meteorology and Hydrology and Ethnicity and gender
- Rules and regulations
- Development plans for village/village cluster, production strategies
- Lesson learned, best practices and failures from all levels.
- Information on how to organize farmer's group and mobilization
- Information on Rights and Responsibilities on Land Management

In terms of what mechanisms can be used to disseminate information to farmers and to improve feedback mechanisms, the following was discussed:

- Information service center at cluster level is the key mechanism and new approaches and tools should be developed
- More support should be provided to improving knowledge and information sharing networks between farmer-farmer; village-village, district-district, province-province, rather than just at national level.
- Establish a team (focal point) on information management (agriculture and rural development) with a clear roles and responsibilities.
- Develop training system and then provide training to other stakeholder on information management

To improve linkages between different levels, the following was recommended:

- Make clarification with all stakeholders on the importance of information and communication
- Projects or processes should be tested out based on existing capacities (i.e. PAFEC, DAFEO, ISVC), rather than building new structures
- Develop tools, materials on collecting, compiling and disseminating information
- Identify coordination mechanisms with mass media.

Group 3: Community mobilization and mechanisms to share at cluster level

Question 1: The key information needs included:

<p>1. Marketing information based on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Demand • Price • Marketing for industrial plants • Community market • Prices offered by companies 	<p>2. Cropping</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seeds and cropping techniques • Harvesting • Commodity productions • Tree plantation techniques (rubber, Jatropha, Agar Wood) • Best practices • Fruit tree planting, Vegetables • Pest and Diseases and plant production • Sustainable agriculture
<p>3. Livestock</p>	<p>4. Information on development activities in the village</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Land use • Statistic • Land classification • Land concession • Forest and Land allocation for each villagers

Question 2: In terms of improving linkages to different levels and communication flows, the groups came up with the following roles for different levels:

Roles	Activities
District	Coordination, facilitation, providing information and summarize information from village level
Private	Provide credits and production means
Project	Provide technical assistant, funds, training, coordination, M&E
Cluster	Summarize village information, presenting it and organize meeting
Village	Disseminate information, organize village meeting, reporting and implementing

Question 3: What are ways that the Kum Ban and Information Service Center at the Kum Ban level can be used as a communication platform?

What	How	Who involved
Build capacity for village cluster, production groups and farmers Improve coordination Improve information service in village level (village board, library)	Training Study tour Information dissemination Meeting Village board, library, etc	Projects, District Extension agents

Group 4: Developing communication program on land and legal rights

What are the main issues in terms of land and legal rights that need to be addressed?

- People have lost their land due to land concessions for rubber plantation
- People do not know where to go for help when a company or investor comes to clear land and cut down trees
- People do not know how to investigate the legal aspects of land rights
- Rules regarding rubber plantations in some areas are not fair to local people including, people are fined due to their livestock damaging the rubber and people do not understand why they are not allowed to do shifting cultivation without planting rubber half of the plot and will be fined about 50 \$ if they break the rule (some districts).
- Investors use their money to influence decision makers to allow concessions that create poverty for people.
- Land concessions are encroaching into protected areas and productive forests
- Concession fee is too low, lower than the value of trees/forest that were cut.
- In some areas people have lost their livelihood and are forced to move or find other work.
- Information system in the present from central to village cluster is too complicated which allows a gap in mis-communication from field to central level.
- A lot of land is sold to foreigners in the name of Lao people-do not know how to solve this problem?

Ways to solve the problem

- Clearly classify land such as Government, public and private land
- Close monitoring/checking every year
- Widely disseminate information on land and forest law to people and government staff
- Provide training on NRM to people and government officers at different levels at least once a year with close monitoring
- Produce reading materials in local and understandable language and disseminate to villagers.
- NLMA should coordinate with other potential projects on carry out land use in local level.
- Organize advocacy on land law at district level
- Produce simple information materials for dissemination
- By the end of 2007, NLMA will invite all stakeholders to discuss more on land issues.
- Since NLMA released the declaration, all organizations could report problems on land issues directly to them.
- Coordinate with Lao Bar Project and PLE to disseminate information and solve problems.
- Disseminate information through radio, TV and newspaper, especially to ensure voices from villagers are heard.

Group 5: Market Information Systems

Information Problem	Source	Method for communicating
Market		
Price not consistent	Ministry of Trade Department of planning and investment Company Traders	- develop network for information methods for communication: radio, photos, boards, TV and village boards
Market information lacking	Dept. of culture and information PAFO Dept of communication (improve roads) Traders and companies	- radio - kum ban meeting or zonal meeting - Village speakers - posters, pictures - experiment with SMS price information system
Quality of products variable	Ministry of Trade MAF Companies traders	- Advertisements - newspapers - Extension materials
Contract farming		
Laws on contracts not available to farmers	Ministry of trade Provincial, district, village leader	- Disseminate laws and regulations on contract farming - training on contract farming and production - appoint group to be responsible to contact
Little understanding of contracts by farmers	Provincial, district, village leader Extension staff	- Disseminate laws through theatre - Develop a CD - Disseminate extension materials

In terms of follow up there should be more coordinated efforts to deal with market information as well as contract farming. It was suggested that further meetings or a networking efforts should be focused on these issues.

Annex 4: List of Participants

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