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## PROGRAM UPDATE

# Participatory Land Use Planning Encourages Sustainable Land Management in Houaphan



The United States Agency for International Development Lowering Emissions in Asia's Forests (USAID LEAF) program is supporting village clusters in Houaphan Province, Lao PDR, to make more sustainable use of their land, with the goal of reducing local deforestation and forest degradation. Over the last year, USAID LEAF staff, in partnership with the Lao Department of Forestry (DoF) and the Provincial and District Agriculture and Forestry Offices, have been introducing participatory land use planning (PLUP) to local communities in Xam Tai and Viengxay districts. PLUP engages target village clusters in activities to reduce deforestation and forest degradation rates and help USAID LEAF meet its goal of reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the country's forestry-land use sector.

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– Village head Mr. Tongmany

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PLUP, while not having been used extensively in Houaphan before, involves the local community in land use planning for their village and surrounding area. It is intended to provide both security and tenure over land and forest resources, as well as to support and encourage a more sustainable land management system. This is achieved by orienting the target villages towards sustainable management of natural resources through identification of necessary supports and interventions for the development of a future land use plan. Once a plan is developed, village leaders formulate regulations that will guide future land management.

In 2014, USAID LEAF supported PLUP activities in Sobpeng and Tinhou villages in Long Kiam cluster, Xam Tai district. The process was led by the Village Forest and NTFP Division of the Department of Forestry, and covered nearly 1,400 hectares in Sobpeng and 2,800 hectares in Tinhou, incorporating 62 households and 39 households in the two villages respectively.

In May 2015, PLUP was completed in Nam Nga cluster, Viengxay district. The PLUP process was led by a team from the Viengxay District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO), who were recently trained by GIZ Northern Uplands Development Programme (NUDP) and who then implemented PLUP in Soy and Jard clusters.

The Village Head of Naheua, Mr. Tongmany, thanked USAID LEAF for supporting the recent PLUP process, which he believed would be very useful for his village. He said, "Some time ago, we had disagreements with neighboring Naman village because of village boundaries, as well as the inappropriate use of watershed areas by some of our own villagers. Land use planning seems to have resolved the village boundary issue." He continued by describing how violations were still occurring in the watershed areas due to a lack of understanding and limited availability of other land for upland rice cultivation. Mr. Tongmany added, "PLUP should help resolve this problem by giving our people a better understanding of what they are allowed to do on different areas of village land, and, in turn, help preserve the forest."

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For more information:

USAID Asia: [info-rdma@usaid.gov](mailto:info-rdma@usaid.gov) USAID LEAF: [leaf\\_info@leafasia.org](mailto:leaf_info@leafasia.org)